

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Constituent Body: Nottingham Lincolnshire & Derbyshire RFU

Venue: NEWARK RFC

Date: 17/08/2021

JUDGMENT

Club: West Bridgeford RFC Specifically Greg Hill

Match: West Bridgeford RFC (Colts) V Keyworth RFC (Colts).

Match Date 1/5/2021

Match Venue: West Bridgeford RFC

Panel: Tim Bembridge (Chairman) Russ Boyack, Nick Corrigan

Secretary: Andrew Statham

Attending: Greg Hill, (Coach involved.) Dave Ponting (President), Vicky Bailey (Secretary) All West Bridgeford RFC.

Preliminary Matters

The panel introduced themselves. The Chairman informed those present how matters would proceed, then Masked if they objected to the formation of the panel and / or its members.

Charge and Plea

Charge

Conduct prejudicial to the Union or the conduct of the game contrary to Rule 5.12 of the RFU Rules.

Mr Hill pleaded guilty to the charge

Particulars of Offence

In the match between West Bridgeford RFC U17's/Colts and Keyworth RFC U17's/Colts played on Friday 14th May 2021, Greg Hill acted in such a way during the course of the match that the referee was forced to ask him to relinquish touch judge duties and leave the field of play. It is further alleged that he verbally abused the referee when asked to leave the side line and sit in his car. As a result of his actions and those of other spectators/players/club members, which are subject to a separate charge, the referee was forced to abandon the game late in the fourth quarter.

Examination of events

We undertook an assessment of Mr. Hills conduct:-

- a) The panel spoke to the referee (a young match official) before the hearing, not wishing to put him through a "hearing" style cross examination. Hayden Cottel remembered the incident well and spoke clearly of his recollection of the evening. He was certain the words used in his report were uttered exactly as his written report. As such his evidence was taken as a factual account of the incident.
- b) Mr Hill was apologetic from the start but equally certain he did not utter the words written in the report. He did acknowledge he should have been supporting the referee once he took the touch judges flag and NOT coaching his team. These are two entirely separate roles that should never be undertaken by the same person.
- c) The panel accepted that Mr Hill had genuine concerns for his players safety, it is alleged there was a number of high or dangerous tackles. However Mr Hill now agrees he should have approached the referee in a different way and manner, most probably through his captain on the field, or other coaches. He was the touch judge and as such should have been supporting the referee.
- d) Once asked to leave the field Mr Hill, (as a hugely experienced player, coach & administrator of the game,) should have done so without question, quickly and apologetically. He should have discretely asked another coach to look after his team and raise concerns in the appropriate manner.

e) Without contradicting our thoughts mentioned in a) there was sufficient doubts as to the exact words, distances and persons involved. That apart the incident was a clear matter of match official abuse from someone who “should know better” and who should be demonstrating a far better example to his young, impressionable team.

Aggravating Features

NLD have successfully requested that all matters involving match official abuse are automatically aggravated by 2 weeks. That apart now other aggravating matters were present.

Mitigating Factors

Mr Hill has many involvements in our game, he has coached for many years at numerous levels, he continues to coach age group teams for his club. He is putting a lot of work back into the game. He continues to play as well.

Decision

1. The Panel found Mr Hill guilty of the 5-12 charge

Sanction

The panel decide the sanction would be one of multiple folds
A ban from the touchline of any game he would normally coach. This is for 6 weeks, reduced by 50% due to mitigation to 3 weeks then aggravated by 2 weeks (as above). A total of 5 weeks.

For the benefit of clarity, this is not a playing ban, Mr Hill can continue playing. Also it is not a ban from his club (By NLD Discipline, the club can do as they wish in this regard). Mr Hill can continue to bring his son to games and watch him, BUT ONLY FROM A DISTANCE.

In addition, Mr Hill is to:

1 successfully complete(and provide proof to NLD discipline secretary) a referees course.

2 Compose and present a presentation on how he'd failed to meet the games expectations on the day in question, what he's learnt from the incident, his

commitment to his players, and his expectation of his players as far a discipline and respect for all match officials.

The clubs chair of discipline to sit in on this presentation and confirm to NLD its relevancy.

3 a personal letter of apology to the referee concerned.

4 The points above along with this judgement to be posted for 28 days on the clubs website.

Costs

Standard £30-00 costs will be invoiced separately

Right of Appeal

There is a right of appeal against this decision. Any such appeal must be lodged with the RFU Head of Discipline by 28 days from receipt of this judgement.