

RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Constituent Body: Nottingham Lincolnshire & Derbyshire RFU

Venue: NEWARK RFC

Date: 17/08/2021

JUDGMENT

Club: West Bridgeford RFC

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.) Dilwyn Evans (Chairman) 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 asked 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.

The club 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, members/officials of West Bridgeford RFC acted in such a way during the course of the match that the referee was forced to abandon the game.

Examination of events

Earlier in the evening we undertook an assessment of Mr. Hills conduct which is relevant to this case. Please refer to that separate judgement:-

- 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 Cattel 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 Evans spoke for the club, he was apologetic from the start but could not / has not found who the person from the crowd who shouted the obscenities or abuse mentioned in the referee's report.
- c) Mr Evans went on to stress how much the club in general were appalled at the behaviour and how much it went against the clubs usual conduct.
- d) The panel listened to how determined the club was to not become a club with a poor reputation.
- e) We also listened to their thought process surrounding the clubs internal disciplinary hearing for their coach and the incident in general.
- f) We were convinced that the club had taken the necessary steps to prevent a reoccurrence and move their club forward coping with their new league position. As well as taking the efforts to ascertain the individual from the crowd responsible for that abuse.
- g) Without contradicting our thoughts mentioned in a) there was sufficient doubts as to the exact words, distances and persons involved.

Aggravating Features

Whilst NLD have successfully requested that all matters involving match official abuse are automatically aggravated by 2 weeks. As this charge is to the whole club this factor is not applicable in this case.

Mitigating Factors

The club has already taken some major steps towards a prevention of any possible reoccurrence. They have had their own internal hearing, dealt with their coach Mr Hill and demonstrated to their club this is not an acceptable way to behave.

Decision

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

Sanction

The panel decide the sanction would be one of multiple folds:
A 5 League point deduction from the clubs RFU league records. This is suspended until the end of the current season. Should any reoccurrence of this offence take place this deduction will be immediately imposed. The new incident will be dealt with separately.

The club will re-visit their coaches charter

Production of an open letter to all club members surrounding the expected behaviour at matches

A coaches meeting to further discuss expectations surrounding behaviour and / or coaches attendance at the presentation by Mr Hill.

A commitment by the club to the continued excellent experience all referees have had up to this incident. All West Bridgeford members present readily agreed to this point.

As with Mr Hill's judgement this judgement and relevant sanctions above to be posted on the clubs website for 28 days following receipt.

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.

