

## WRITTEN REASONS OF THE FAST TRACK TRIBUNAL



### IN THE MATTER OF A FAST TRACK NOTICE OF COMPLAINT

**Name of Club - Celtic FC ("Club")**

**Name of Player - Ryan Christie ("Player")**

1. These are the Written Reasons for a Determination made by a Fast Track Tribunal ("Tribunal"), which convened on 6 January 2020.
2. A Fast Track Notice of Complaint was issued by the Compliance Officer to the Alleged Party in Breach on 31 December 2019. It alleged a breach of Disciplinary Rule 200 said to have occurred during the Scottish Premiership match between Celtic FC and Rangers FC on 29 December 2019.
3. It was alleged in the Fast Track Notice of Complaint that the Alleged Party in Breach's actions in or around the 60<sup>th</sup> minute amounted to the sending off offence of Violent Conduct.
4. Evidence was put forward by the Compliance Officer including the Fast Track Notice of Complaint: Statements of the referee and assistant referees, statements of 3 former match officials, player discipline report, written submissions by the Compliance Officer and video evidence of the alleged incident.
5. The Breach was denied by the Alleged Party.
6. Written submissions and video evidence were not submitted on behalf of the Alleged Party in Breach.
7. A hearing took place at Hampden Park on 6 January 2020 at 2:00 pm.
8. The Alleged Party in Breach attended via video link. The player's legal representative attended the hearing in person to represent the player and was accompanied by a club official, who neither represented the player nor spoke on his behalf at the hearing.
9. The submission of the Compliance Officer was that the Alleged Party deliberately committed a violent act whereby he struck an opponent in the groin, with excessive force when not challenging for the ball. It was submitted that this was not a reflex action or an unintended consequence. It was advised that this constituted an act of violent conduct, an (A2) sending off offence. The match officials all confirmed that they did not see the alleged act at the material time. Given the sensitivity of the area of the body targeted by the Alleged Party, the Compliance Officer categorised the act as one involving brutality and also submitted that this was manifestly apparent from the video footage available of the incident. The three former match officials, following a review of the video footage had each separately confirmed that the alleged act amounted to a sending off offence for violent conduct. Two of these former match officials believed that brutality was also evident. In the foregoing circumstances, the Compliance Officer submitted that Disciplinary Rule 200 had been breached and the Alleged Party in Breach should be sanctioned accordingly.
10. Two preliminary matters were raised on behalf of the Alleged Party in Breach. Firstly, issue was taken with the merits of the available video footage and whether this video evidence was

competent. Secondly, and somewhat linked to the first preliminary matter, the fact that the specific element of the physical act constituting a breach of Disciplinary Rule 200 that was unseen by the match officials was disputed by the Alleged Party in Breach, also raised competency concerns for the specification of the breach made in the Notice of Complaint.

After careful consideration of these preliminary matters, it was decided that the Tribunal could apply its discretion, interpret the video footage and either accept, reject or rely on any part of it as appropriate whilst considering all available evidence (including that of the three former match officials) in accordance with Judicial Panel Protocol 10.10.6. Consequently, the video footage was accepted as competent in terms of Judicial Panel Protocol 13.2.2.

Given that the Alleged Party in Breach would give evidence on his own behalf, it was also decided that the second preliminary matter would be evaluated whilst considering the entire case in its totality. Also, in accordance with Judicial Panel Protocol 10.8.4, it was of course an option for the Tribunal to amend the terms of the Notice of Complaint if deemed necessary.

Taking account of the foregoing, it was decided that it would not be manifestly unjust, or likely to lead to an irrational decision for the Fast Track Tribunal to proceed.

11. The Tribunal viewed the available footage of the incident and considered the submissions from both parties. After due consideration of all the available evidence produced by both the Compliance Officer and from and on behalf of the Alleged Party in Breach, the Tribunal found the Notice of Complaint proved and the sending off offence for Violent Conduct was applied.
12. The mandatory suspension for the offence is a 2 match suspension.
13. Determinations of a Fast Track Tribunal are final and binding and there is no right of Appeal.