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# Decision of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee

passed on 12 February 2026

**DECISION BY:**

**Michael Goodwin (Papua New Guinea)**

**Chair of the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee, acting pursuant to  
Article 87 of the OFC Disciplinary Code**

**ON THE CASE OF:**

**Lars HOPP**

**(Decision OFCDEC-003)**

**REGARDING:**

**Law 12 of Laws of the Game – *Sending off***

## I. SUMMARY OF FACTS

**Competition:** OFC Professional League 2026  
**Match:** South Melbourne FC – Vanuatu United FC  
**Date:** 8 February 2026  
**Venue:** PNG Football Stadium, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

1. The Match Report notes that Lars Hopp, the coach of Vanuatu United FC, received an expulsion with the corresponding reason:

- Lars HOPP (34 - Other; Leaving the technical area to protest a decision).

2. The Referee Incident Report of the above-named match states the following:

- Brief explanation of the facts of the incident:

*“After a red card was shown to the Vanuatu number 8, Head Coach Lars Hopp left the technical area and entered the field of play to protest the decision.”*

- Brief explanation of the context of the incident, i.e. any injury as a result, did the player return to the match, etc:

*“Coach was dismissed from the Technical Area and vicinity of the field of play.”*

## II. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

1. It is accepted that the applicable Regulations for this matter are:

- a. The OFC Disciplinary Code 2019 (**Disciplinary Code**);
- b. The OFC Professional League Competition Regulations 2025 (**Competition Regulations**); and

- c. The Laws of the Game as laid down by the International Football Association Board (**Laws of the Game**).

**a. Jurisdiction of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee**

2. Pursuant to Article 48 of the Competition Regulations:

48.1 Disciplinary incidents during the Competition are dealt with in compliance with the OFC Disciplinary Code in force as well as with the relevant regulations, circulars, OFC Statutes and directives, with which the Participating Clubs undertake to comply.

3. In accordance with the OFC Disciplinary Code, Article 2 provides that the Disciplinary Code applies to every match and competition organised by the OFC and pursuant to Article 85 of the Disciplinary Code, the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee (**Committee**) is authorised to sanction any breach of OFC regulations, which does not come under the jurisdiction of another body.
4. On that basis, it is accepted the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee has competence to decide over this matter.

**b. Jurisdiction of the Chairman ruling alone**

5. Article 87 of the OFC Disciplinary Code provides:

1. The chairman of the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee when acting under this Code may take the following decisions alone:
  - a. suspend a person for up to three matches or for up to two months;
  - b. impose a fine of up to NZD 500;
  - c. rule on a request to extend a sanction (cf. art. 142);
  - d. settle disputes arising from objections to members of the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee;
  - e. pronounce, alter and annul provisional measures (cf. art. 138).
2. If the chairman is prevented from attending and/or participating the deputy chairman replaces him. If the deputy chairman is prevented from attending and/or attending the member holding the most senior position will replace him.

6. The current Chairmen of the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee are as follows:

- a. Member Michael Goodwin (Chairman of OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee); and
  - b. Member Mark Anthony (Chairman of the Investigatory Chamber of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee).
7. It is accepted that Member Goodwin may act in accordance with Article 87 of the Disciplinary Code for this matter.

**c. OFC Disciplinary Code**

8. It is held the following provisions of the Disciplinary Code are applicable to the facts set out above:

**Article 19 Expulsion**

1. An expulsion is the order given by the referee to someone to leave the field of play and its surroundings, including the substitutes' bench, during a match. The person who has been sent off may be allowed into the stands unless he is serving a stadium ban.
2. Expulsion takes the form of a red card for players. The red card is regarded as direct if it sanctions serious unsporting behaviour as defined by Law 12 of the Laws of the Game; it is regarded as indirect if it is the result of an accumulation of two yellow cards (cf. Art. 18, par. 2).
3. An official who has been sent off may give instructions to the person replacing him on the substitutes' bench. He shall, however, ensure that he does not disturb the spectators or disrupt the flow of play.
4. An expulsion automatically incurs suspension from the subsequent match, even if imposed in a match that is later abandoned and/or cancelled and/or forfeited. The Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may extend the duration of the suspension.

**Article 20 Match suspension**

1. A suspension from a match is a ban on taking part in a future match or competition or to attend it in the area immediately surrounding the field of play.
2. The player who has been suspended shall not be included on the players' list for the match.
3. The suspension is imposed in terms of matches, days or months. Unless otherwise specified, it may not exceed twenty-four (24) matches or two (2) years.
4. If the suspension is to be served in terms of matches, only those matches actually played count towards execution of the suspension. If a match is abandoned, cancelled or finally forfeited (except of violation of art 73), suspension is only considered to have been served if the team to which the suspended player belongs is not responsible *for the facts that led to abandonment, cancellation or forfeiture of the match.*

5. *A match suspension is regarded as no longer pending if a match is retroactively forfeited because a player took part in a match despite being ineligible (art. 73). This also applies to the match suspension imposed on the player who took part in the match despite being ineligible.*
6. *If a suspension is combined with a fine, it is prolonged until the fine has been paid in full.*

#### **d. OFC Professional League Competition Regulations**

9. It is held the following provisions of the Competition Regulations are applicable to the facts set out above:

##### **Article 29 Laws of the Game**

29.1 All Matches shall be played in accordance with the Laws of the Game in force at the time of the Competition and as laid down by the International Football Association Board. In the case of any discrepancy in the interpretation of the translations of the Laws of the Game, the English version shall be authoritative.

##### **Article 30 Red and Yellow Cards**

30.1 ...

30.2 If a Player or Team Official is sent off as a result of two yellow cards during the same Match, or a direct red card for reasons other than those set out in Article 30.3, they will be automatically suspended from their Participating Club's next Match in the Competition. In addition, further sanctions can be imposed in line with the OFC Disciplinary Code in force at the time of the Competition.

30.3 If a Player or Team Official is sent off as a result of a direct red card for:

30.3.1 Serious foul play;

30.3.2 Biting or spitting; or

30.3.3 Violent Conduct (each as defined in the Laws of the Game),

The default period of suspension for that Player or Team Official shall be their Participating Club's next three Matches. The OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee may reduce or extend the default suspension as it considers appropriate to the conduct of the Player or Team Official. In addition, further sanctions can be imposed in line with the OFC Disciplinary Code in force at the time of the Competition.

#### **e. Laws of the Game**

10. It is held the following provisions of the Laws of the Game are applicable to the facts set out above:

##### **Law 12 Fouls and Misconduct**

###### **Sending-off**

Sending-off offences include (but are not limited to):

- delaying the restart of play by the opposing team e.g. holding onto the ball, kicking the ball away, obstructing the movement of a player
- **deliberately leaving the technical area to:**
  - **show dissent towards, or remonstrate with, a match official**
  - **act in a provocative or inflammatory manner**
- entering the opposing technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner
- deliberately throwing/kicking an object onto the field of play
- **entering the field of play to:**
  - **confront a match official (including at half-time and full-time)**
  - **interfere with play, an opposing player or a match official**
- entering the video operation room (VOR)
- physical or aggressive behaviour (including spitting or biting) towards an opposing player, substitute, team official, match official, spectator or any other person (e.g. ball boy/girl, security or competition official etc.)
- receiving a second caution in the same match
- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or action(s)
- using unauthorised electronic or communication equipment and/or behaving in an inappropriate manner as a result of using electronic or communication equipment
- violent conduct

### III. CONSIDERATIONS OF THE DISCIPLINARY AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

11. The Committee reviewed the Referee Incident Reports, and in accordance with Article 106 of the Disciplinary Code it is presumed to be accurate.
12. The Committee reviewed the video footage. It confirms that immediately following the red card issued to his player, Mr Hopp left the technical area, entered the field of play and approached the referee to protest the decision.
13. Under Law 12 of the Laws of the Game, deliberately leaving the technical area to remonstrate with a match official and entering the field of play to confront a match official are both sending-off offences for team officials.
14. The Committee notes that while Mr Hopp's conduct constituted clear dissent and improper behaviour, there is no evidence of abusive language, threatening behaviour or physical contact. The Committee is not aware of any previous disciplinary sanctions against Mr Hopp. Further, the referee incident reports note there were no issues with Mr Hopp's conduct following the incident.

15. As the sending-off was not for serious foul play, violent conduct or spitting, Article 30.3 of the Competition Regulations does not apply. Accordingly, Article 30.2 provides that the default sanction is a one-match suspension, with the Committee retaining discretion to extend the sanction if warranted.

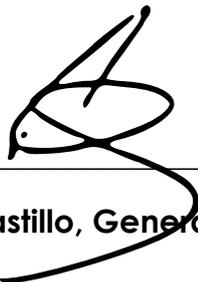
16. For the reasons set out in paragraph 14, the Committee will not impose any additional sanctions.

#### **IV. SANCTION**

17. The Committee imposes the default suspension of a mandatory one (1) match pursuant to Article 30.2 of the Competition Regulations. This suspension will apply to the next OFC match played by Vanuatu United FC.

18. The Committee is satisfied that this sanction appropriately deters similar conduct and reinforces the importance of player and official safety and professionalism.

OCEANIA FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION INC.



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**Franck Castillo, General Secretary - CEO**

**NOTE RELATING TO LEGAL ACTION:**

Pursuant to Article 127 of the Code, an appeal may be lodged to the OFC Appeals Committee against any decision passed by the Disciplinary and Ethics Committee unless the sanction pronounced is:

1. A warning;
2. A reprimand;
3. A suspension for less than three (3) matches or up to two (2) months; or
4. A fine of less than NZD1,000 on a Member Association or a club and of less than NZD500 in other cases. (refer Article 127 of the Code).

Eligibility to appeal is governed by Article 128 of the Code and the grounds of appeal are set out in Article 130 of the Code.

Notice of intention to appeal must be received by the OFC Secretariat of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee within 15 days of the communication of this decision.