



Oceania Football Confederation  
62-80 College Road, St Johns  
Auckland 1072  
New Zealand

[Secretariat-ofcdisciplinarycommittee@oceaniafootball.com](mailto:Secretariat-ofcdisciplinarycommittee@oceaniafootball.com)

# Decision of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee

passed on 25 March 2026

**DECISION BY:**

**Michael Goodwin (Papua New Guinea), Mark Anthony (Fiji), Kevin Sullivan (New Zealand)**

**Acting pursuant to Article 86 of the OFC Disciplinary Code**

**ON THE CASE OF:**

**South Melbourne FC**

**(Decision OFCDEC-007)**

**REGARDING:**

**Art. 75 of the OFC Disciplinary Code – *Spectator Conduct***

## I. SUMMARY OF FACTS

**Competition:** OFC Professional League 2026

**Match:** South Melbourne FC – South Island United

**Date:** 27 February 2026

**Venue:** Home of the Matildas, Bundoora, Australia

1. The Match Director Report of the above-named match states the following:

- Explanation of the facts of the incident(s):

*“At approximately the 56th min of the match, the SIU team officials alerted the 4th/5th Official and myself that racial comments were being made from the SMB active supporter group in the grand stand directly behind the team bench. I alerted our Safety and Security Officer and some of our staff also went near the area to try and observe what was being said.*

...

*Post-match when I got up from the 4th Official bench, I visually saw and heard 2 individuals from the SMB Active Supporter Group calling out to SIU player Harris Seb [sic] by full name. They told him that his bus was not here and he should go over there and pointed outside the stadium, and said he should not be here. I then heard a muffled comment which sounded like 'monkey' being said. I immediately radioed Safety and Security and advised of further comments being made and the individuals who had said this, but the individuals saw me radio and watching them and then [sic] decided to leave the venue straight away.”*

- Explanation of any action taken:

*“I was advised post-match that Franck actually heard the comments being said and identified the individual and he was evicted from the venue (photo attached). The venue has advised that this individual will not be permitted entry into the venue again.”*

2. The Safety and Security Report of the above-named match states the following:

- Brief explanation of the facts of the incident:  
*"We received a report about a racial slur in the grandstand. After consulting with OFC staff members, we were able to identify the individual. 1x male early 50's, wearing a South Melbourne t-shirt & denim/jeans shorts. We asked him to come down to foyer to have a discussion. The individual didn't admit to any wrong doing or anything said, we advised him that unfortunately on the basis of what had occurred and the reports received that he will be asked to leave the venue tonight otherwise the police will be contacted for further investigation. The male complied & left the venue. No further action required."*

## II. APPLICABLE REGULATIONS

1. It is accepted that the applicable Regulations for this matter are:
  - a. The OFC Disciplinary Code 2019 (**Disciplinary Code**); and
  - b. The OFC Professional League Competition Regulations 2025 (**Competition Regulations**).

### **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. OFC Disciplinary Code**

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

### **Article 75 Liability for spectator conduct**

1. The host association is liable for improper conduct among spectators, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight, and depending on the situation, may be fined. Further sanctions may be imposed in the case of serious
2. The guest Member Association is liable for improper conduct among its own group of supporters, regardless of the question of culpable conduct or culpable oversight, and, depending on the situation, maybe fined. Supporters occupying the guest sector of a stadium are regarded as the guest association's supporters, unless proven to the contrary.
3. Improper conduct includes violence towards persons or objects, letting off incendiary devices, throwing missiles, displaying racist or insulting slogans in any form, or uttering racist or insulting sounds, or invading the pitch.
4. A Member Association's liability as described in par. 1 and 2 also includes matches played on neutral ground, especially at final competitions.

### **Article 77 Failure to comply**

...

2. In the case of serious infringement as set out in Art. 74 , the body may impose other sanctions, such as a stadium ban (cf. Art. 22) or ordering a team to play on neutral ground (cf. Art. 26).

### **Article 33 Combined sanctions**

1. Unless otherwise specified, the sanctions provided for in the general and special parts of this code may be combined.
2. In less serious cases, the body may only pronounce a reduced sanction or a caution or a reprimand.

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

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

#### **Article 3 Participating Clubs**

- 3.4 In addition, each Participating Club shall be responsible for:

3.4.1 the behaviour of their Players, Team Officials, members, supporters and any person carrying out duties on their behalf throughout the Competition, either at home or from their arrival in the host country until their departure;

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

7. Pursuant to Article 118, OFC has obtained the following material in support of the above-mentioned facts:
- 7.1. Match Director Incident Report [see Attachment 1];
  - 7.2. Safety and Security Report [see Attachment 2];
  - 7.3. Photo of Identified Individual [see Attachment 3].

The Committee reviewed the documentation set out at 7.1. and does not have a reason to doubt the reliability of the information provided.

Based on the above information collected to date, the Committee has not been made aware of any further incidents during or after the Match occurring other than what has been captured.

8. The Committee notes correspondence was sent from OFC to South Melbourne FC (**the Club**) on 19 March 2026, notifying the Club of the spectator behaviour along with attachments at 7.1 and possible corresponding sanctions. The Club were requested to provide a response no later than 12.00pm 23 March 2026 (NZT). The Committee notes no response was received from the Club, including whether the actions contained in the letter had been addressed by the Club.
9. The Committee notes correspondence was sent to the affected Club of this incident for comment on the matter. The Committee has decided to not

disclose the correspondence received however it refers to parts of the response which it finds constructive as follows:

**Acknowledgement from our player**

Following the incident, we have spoken directly with the player involved. He has confirmed that he was satisfied with the response taken by both ourselves, OFC, and South Melbourne FC.

In particular, he appreciated the effort made by South Melbourne, including multiple staff members and their CEO, taking the time to speak with him directly to address the situation and provide reassurance that the individual responsible has been identified and banned from attending future matches.

...

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the OFC staff and Frank [sic] in particular for their swift and firm response to the situation.

10. Participating Clubs have a responsibility for the behaviour of their Players, Team Officials, members and supporters, either at home or from their arrival in the host country. The Committee notes that the spectators were present in their home city during these incidents.
11. The Committee considers this responsibility to be heightened in a professional football environment, and the Committee emphasises that racist behaviour has no place in any sporting competition and especially not at OFC.
12. The Committee considers such actions as unacceptable, particularly at the commencement of the inaugural OFC Professional League where maintaining high standards of conduct and professionalism is essential. Whilst it is recognised that participating clubs are adapting to new regulations and operational practices given this is the first year of the OFC Professional League, such behaviour cannot be excused by naivety to new regulations for a new competition and requires appropriate sanctioning to deter similar behaviour in future matches.
13. The Committee are not aware of any previous incidents involving such behaviour from the Club. The Committee notes the Club indicated to the Match Director that it would be taking action to impose a spectator ban on

the identified individual. To this degree the Committee also acknowledges the efforts of the Club as set out by South Island United at paragraph 9 of this decision.

14. The Committee found South Melbourne FC to be in breach of Articles 3.4.1 of the OFC Professional League Competition Regulations and Article 75 of the OFC Disciplinary Code, and notes that it also has the authority to extend sanctions under Articles 75 and 77 of the Code.

#### IV. SANCTION

15. The Committee notes Article 33 of the OFC Disciplinary Code, which permits sanctions in the Code being combined. Accordingly, after considering the circumstances of the incident, the Committee imposes a monetary fine pursuant to Articles 75 and 77 of the OFC Disciplinary Code on South Melbourne FC of **NZD 3,500.00, to be paid on or by 21 April 2026**. The Committee notes that other sanctions were available to it but on this occasion, a monetary fine seemed most appropriate.

16. Furthermore, the Committee directs the Club to provide responses to paragraph 16 of their correspondence served earlier to the Club, in particular requiring the Club to take the following actions to remedy this breach:

- a. provide a written statement on steps taken to prevent recurrence; and
- b. confirm the actions taken to identify the Identified Individual and the other supporters, and to impose spectator bans.

The Committee requires this information to be provided to the Committee from the Club **no later than 3 April 2026**.

17. The Committee was satisfied that on this occasion, such sanctions emphasise the importance of deterring such conduct in future matches and acts as a reminder to all spectators to ensure a safe and successful future of the OFC Professional League. The Committee takes this opportunity to remind all Clubs

that such behaviour has no place in Oceania and football and future incidents will be sanctioned appropriately.

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.