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Decision of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee

passed on 10 April 2026

DECISION BY:

Mark Anthony (Fiji)

Acting pursuant to Article 87 of the OFC Disciplinary Code

ON THE CASE OF:

Jerry SAM

(Decision OFCDEC-008)

REGARDING:

Art. 19 of the OFC Disciplinary Code – *Expulsion*

I. SUMMARY OF FACTS

- Competition:** OFC Professional League 2026
- Match:** PNG Hekari FC – Tahiti United
- Date:** 18 March 2026
- Venue:** National Stadium, East Honiara, Solomon Islands

1. The Referee Incident Report of the above-named match states the following:
 - Brief explanation of the facts and context of the incident(s):

“Approached the 4th official in an aggressive manner walking into the 4th officials outstretched hand. After being shown a red card and expelled from the technical area Mr Jerry Sam walked in an aggressive, threatening manner towards the 4th official, loudly stating that it was the 4th official's fault. The 4th official was required to protect himself by holding up an outstretch arm to which Mr Jerry Sam deliberately walked in. This action threatened the safety of the match officials.”

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. 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. Member Goodwin has been unable to participate in this matter, therefore it is accepted Member Anthony 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.

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.

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 IFAB Laws of the Game 2025/2026 are applicable to the facts set out above:

Law 12 Fouls and Misconduct

...

Sending-off offences

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 Report, and in accordance with Article 106 of the Disciplinary Code it is presumed to be accurate.
12. The Committee also reviewed the video footage of the incident. From the video footage it is apparent that Mr Sam behaved in the manner described by the Match Officials, specifically displaying aggressive and threatening behaviour and demonstrating a clear lack of respect and professionalism towards the Match Officials.
13. Under Law 12 of the Laws of the Game, deliberately leaving the technical area to remonstrate with a match official and aggressive behaviour towards a match official are both sending-off offences for team officials.
14. The Committee notes that Mr Sam's conduct constituted clear aggressive behaviour, physically walking into the hand of the 4th Match Official. There is also evidence of Mr Sam stating that the decision was the Match Official's fault.
15. The Committee takes this opportunity to remind all that Team Officials have a duty to act with respect and professionalism at all times during a match. Team Officials are appointed to lead and guide a team and as such carry a responsibility to act with integrity and respect, especially during a Match.

16. The Committee notes that Match Officials are an integral part of the game and accordingly respect for Match Officials is fundamental to the integrity, safety, and spirit of football. Referees and their assistants play an indispensable role in ensuring that the Laws of the Game are applied fairly and consistently, allowing matches to be contested in an environment that is safe, orderly, and competitive. Respecting officials means accepting decisions—even when they go against us—and trusting in the system that governs the sport.
17. The Committee notes that the behaviour of Team Officials, particularly coaches, sets the tone for everyone else but specifically for players who look to their technical team for guidance. On that basis, there is a larger degree of responsibility on Team Officials to act with respect for authority and sportsmanlike conduct demonstrate maturity and uphold the reputation of clubs, leagues, and the sport itself. Using appropriate channels to raise concerns in turn promotes a culture of professionalism and self-control. Accordingly, such conduct requires appropriate sanctioning to deter similar behaviour in future matches. This duty is heightened in a professional football environment, and the Committee emphasises that such actions are unacceptable, particularly at the commencement of the inaugural OFC Professional League where maintaining high standards of conduct and professionalism is essential.
18. Ultimately, respect for match officials benefits everyone: players enjoy a better-managed game, coaches can focus on performance, spectators witness football played in the right spirit, and officials feel valued and protected. By showing respect, we safeguard the future of football and ensure it remains a game built on integrity, enjoyment, and mutual respect.
19. The Committee is not aware of any previous disciplinary sanctions against Mr Sam. Given that the sending-off was not for serious foul play, violent conduct or spitting, Article 30.3 of the Competition Regulations cannot 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.

20. The Committee found Mr Sam to be in breach of Article 19 of the OFC Disciplinary Code, and notes that it also has the authority to extend sanctions under Articles 19(4) of the Code and Article 30.3 of the Competition Regulations.

IV. SANCTION

21. Accordingly, after considering the circumstances of the incident, the Committee imposes a two-match suspension which includes the mandatory one match pursuant to Article 30.2 of the Competition Regulations. The Committee has considered it appropriate to extend the sanction given the aggressive nature of Mr Sam's conduct as well as for consistency purposes across previous OFC decisions. This suspension will apply to the next two OFC Professional League matches played by PNG Hekari FC.

22. 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 players and officials the importance of official safety and professionalism to ensure a safe and successful future of the OFC Professional League.

OCEANIA FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION INC.



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.