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Decision of the OFC Disciplinary and Ethics Committee

passed on 11 May 2026

DECISION BY:

Michael Goodwin, (Papua New Guinea),

**Chairman of Adjudicatory Chamber, acting pursuant to Article 87
of the OFC Disciplinary Code**

ON THE CASE OF:

Setareki HUGHES

(Decision OFCDEC-011)

REGARDING:

Art. 53 of the OFC Disciplinary Code – *Serious foul*

I. SUMMARY OF FACTS

Competition:	OFC Professional League 2026
Match:	Bula FC – South Island United
Date:	6 May 2026
Venue:	Go Media Stadium, Auckland, New Zealand

1. The Match Report notes the following player from Bula FC received an expulsion with the corresponding reason:
 - 9 Setareki HUGHES (45 – Serious foul).
2. The Referee Incident Report of the above-named match states the following:
 - Brief explanation of the facts of the incident:
“In the 45th minute of the match player #9 of Bula FC tackled his opponent with excessive force using studs and made contact above ankle.”
 - Brief explanation of the context of the incident, i.e. any injury as a result, did the player return to the match, etc:
“No treatment to the player.”

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).

6. Member Goodwin may therefore act alone pursuant to Article 87 of the Code.

7. Article 95 of the Disciplinary Code states that members of the judicial bodies must decline to participate only where there are serious grounds for questioning their impartiality. Article 95(2) specifies three circumstances requiring recusal:

- a. where the member is directly involved in the outcome of the matter;

- b. where the member is associated with any of the parties; or
 - c. where the member has already dealt with the case under different circumstances.
8. None of these circumstances apply here. Member Goodwin has no personal, professional or financial association with either club, no involvement in the incident, and no prior engagement with this case.
9. The Disciplinary Code does not consider shared nationality to constitute a conflict of interest. Nationality alone does not create serious grounds for questioning impartiality, nor does it fall within any of the mandatory recusal categories under Article 95.
10. Accordingly, Member Goodwin is independent for the purposes of this decision and is permitted to act sole under Article 87.

c. OFC Disciplinary Code

11. 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.

Article 53 Serious infringements

A player is sent off if he commits one of the following infringements (cf. Law 12 of the Laws of the Game and Art. 19 above):

- a) serious foul play such as excessive or brute force;

- b) brutal action such as violent or aggressive conduct;
- c) spitting at an opponent or anyone else;
- d) denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goalscoring
- e) opportunity by deliberately handling the ball;
- f) denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving
- g) towards the opposing goal by committing an infringement punishable
- h) by a free kick or a penalty kick;
- i) making offensive, insulting or abusive remarks;
- j) second caution during the same match (cf. Art. 18 par. 2)

d. OFC Professional League Competition Regulations

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

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.

III. CONSIDERATIONS OF THE DISCIPLINARY AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

13. The Committee reviewed the Referee Incident Report, and in accordance with Article 106 of the Disciplinary Code it is presumed to be accurate.
14. The Committee also reviewed the video footage of the incident. From the video footage it is apparent that forceful contact was made with raised studs into the opponent's leg, above his ankle. Following a VAR review, the Referee issued a red card for the incident and the player was expelled from the match.
15. The opponent was injured in the incident, which was clearly dangerous and reckless in nature, but at the lower to middle end of culpability in a dynamic tackle situation. The opponent received treatment on the field of play but did not sustain serious injury and was able to continue participating in the match.
16. Players have a duty not to lead with their studs into a tackle with an opponent, and such action is recklessly dangerous and requires firm sanctioning as a deterrent to such future conduct. 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.
17. No evidence was provided about the players past disciplinary record, and this was not considered as an aggravating or mitigating factor.
18. The Committee found Mr Hughes to be in breach of Article 53(1) of the OFC Disciplinary Code, and notes that it also has the authority to extend sanctions under Article 19(4) of the Code and Article 30.3 of the Competition Regulations.

IV. SANCTION

19. 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 suspension pursuant to Articles 19(4), 49(1) and 49(3) of the OFC Disciplinary Code on Mr Hughes for **2 matches and a fine of NZD 500.00, to be paid on or by 30 May 2026.**

20. The sanction imposed does not include the automatic one match suspension pursuant to Article 19(4) (**resulting in a total suspension of three (3) matches**).
21. Article 49(3) imposes a minimum fine of NZD250.00; however, the deliberate and forceful nature of the conduct led the Committee to increase the fine to NZD500.00 as per its discretion. The Committee notes Mr Hughes and Bula FC are jointly liable for this fine pursuant to Article 16(4) of the Code.
22. In arriving at its decision on sanction, the Committee considered prior incidents of a similar nature and has ensured that the sanction is consistent with those prior decisions. In addition, the Committee considered the prevalence of improper and dangerous conduct, which is creeping into the competition, and into matches across OFC tournaments generally. A strict penalty is warranted in response to the increasing prevalence of foul play as a deterrent to future conduct.
23. The Committee was satisfied that such sanctions emphasise the importance of safety and professionalism in deterring such conduct in future matches, and acts as a reminder to Mr Hughes to ensure the safe and successful future of the OFC Professional League.

OCEANIA FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION INC.



Frederic Guillemont

Acting 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.