

DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE, FOOTBALL FEDERATION AUSTRALIA

DETERMINATION IN THE FOLLOWING

Player and Club	Steve Fitzsimmons, Gold Coast United FC
Alleged Offence	Red Card Offence, R1- Serious Foul Play
Date of Alleged Offence	8 January 2011
Occasion of Alleged Offence	Match between Gold Coast United FC and Sydney FC
Date of Notification of Sanction	11 January 2011
Basis the matter is before the Disciplinary Committee	Application for Determination pursuant to clause 10.2(b), A-League Disciplinary Regulations
Date and place of Hearing	Sydney, 12 January 2011
Date and place where Determination made	Sydney, 12 January 2011
Disciplinary Committee Members	Shaun McCarthy, Acting Chair, Peter Mulligan and Peter Raskopoulos

A. INTRODUCTION

In the 64th minute of the match between Sydney FC and Gold Coast United ("*Club*") at the Sydney Football Stadium on 8 January 2011, Hirofumi Moriyasu, a Sydney FC player received the ball from a teammate near the sideline in front of the Sydney FC technical area. Just after he received the ball he was tackled heavily by Steve Fitzsimmons ("*the player*"). The Match Review Panel ("*MRP*") issued a Disciplinary Notice on 11 January 2011. The MRP considered that the tackle constituted serious foul play. The player received a straight red card for the offence and as such the MRP required the player to serve a mandatory one match suspension. In addition, the MRP suspended the player for an additional one week.

The player elected to challenge the second week of the suspension.

B. THE HEARING

The hearing took place on 12 January 2011. Mr Jason Downing appeared in the interests of the FFA. No written submissions were received from the Club but oral submissions were made by the CEO of the Club, Clive Mensink, and oral evidence was also given by the player, both by telephone.

Essentially, it was the submission of the Club and player that the tackle was clumsy and mistimed but not malicious. The player indicated that it was his intention to win the ball from Moriyasu and he endeavoured to do so by leading with his left leg in order to affect a hook tackle to get the ball.

Several different angles of the incident were available to the Committee courtesy of FoxTel. The videos show the player running towards Moriyasu with significant pace. As he approaches Moriyasu he dives towards Moriyasu, going in for a tackle with both feet raised. It is noted in particular that the right boot of the player was raised towards Moriyasu's calf with the studs showing. The player said he made no contact with his right boot. The video was inconclusive on this point. We are prepared to give the player the benefit of the doubt and we determine that there was either no contact by the boot to Moriyasu or if there was, it was minimal and not causative of any injury.

However, the player's right leg followed through and collided with the rear of Moriyasu's leg which caused him to be projected into the air. Thankfully Moriyasu suffered no significant injury, but the force of the contact was significant. In our opinion, it was lucky that Moriyasu did not suffer a very serious injury. The tackle was from the back. We reject the player's explanation that he attempted to use his left leg to win the ball. The video makes it plain that the left leg had virtually nothing to do with the tackle. The player did not make contact with the ball. All the contact was with the back of Moriyasu's leg. The video makes it plain also that there was really no chance of the player winning the ball from the angle which he was approaching Moriyasu. This was because Moriyasu was between the player and the ball.

After giving due consideration to the submissions of Mr Mensink, the evidence of the player and the matters we are required to consider under clause 11.2 of the A-League Disciplinary Regulations, the Committee unanimously determines that the determination of the MRP was not excessive. In short, taking into account all relevant considerations, the sanction determined by the MRP was appropriate and no grounds were made out to cause us to intervene with the determination of the MRP.

C. RESULT

As a result, the Disciplinary Notice of the MRP dated 11 January 2011 will stand and the two match suspension imposed on the player is to be served.

Shaun McCarthy
Acting Chair, Disciplinary Committee
Wednesday, 19 January 2011