

Walcountian Blues v Hitchin 22nd March, 2014

The head referee, Rob Collinge, has made a complaint regarding the behaviour of Hitchin 1st team, both on and off the field. As a result of his report, a charge of bringing the game into disrepute has been made.

In their defence, all three statements by; Steve McDermott (SM) Hitchin's captain, Jon Mills (JM) a Hitchin player and Hazel Wisbey (HW) Hitchin's Chairman also a spectator, have strongly criticised the two referees', Rob Collinge and Steve Fox, for their handling of the game. However, the issue is the behaviour of the Hitchin players and not the competence of the referees.

In SM's opening paragraph of his statement he says "Whilst we do not necessarily agree that the actions of our players brought the game of lacrosse into disrepute, we acknowledge that this does not encourage referees to continue in the game and have attempted to address this throughout the season and will continue to do so ". This in itself is an admission that his team behaved badly. Further, in the same statement when addressing the issue of their LDO's behaviour, he concedes that he did use the words attributed to him by RC (see 2nd page para 5). Steve maintains this was not a threat but a stupid thing to say. If it was not a threat then it was, at the very least, an intention to foul. SM went further on to say " I was trying my hardest to tell him to shut up at this point as I could see the issue was arising". Finally, on the last page of the report he describes "As I tried to get our team to huddle up and calm down after the final whistle, once again tell them to shut up, let go and shake hands as Blues deserved the win, Mr. Collinge took me to one side. "Also further down the same page " Now, I cannot speak for the words coming out of any of my other players' mouths at this point because I was trying to get them to shut up and do the right thing, that was to show respect to our opponents and officials, even though we felt hard done by."

All this conveys the impression that he, as captain, was trying to get his team to behave properly. A fact borne out by HW's statement fifth and sixth paragraphs. However, the inference is that if he was trying to get the team to behave properly, then they must have been behaving improperly.

Credit must be given to SM for his efforts in trying to keep his team under control.

JM in his statement, admits to swearing at the referee.

On the issue of the injury to JM and the events following it. RC satisfactorily explained the laws on this matter and had acted within those laws.

Taking the above evidence into consideration, the panel were satisfied that Hitchin had acted inappropriately towards the referees. This happened not only during the game, but continued it after the final whistle. Hitchin may have felt hard done by, over some of the refereeing decisions and possibly their competence, but that does not excuse their behaviour.

SEMLA has worked hard in recent years to overcome the problem of insufficient referees and currently feels it is succeeding. A contributory factor to this problem was, and still is, the amount of abuse referees suffer from the players in the games they are officiating. In his opening paragraph of his statement, SM admits that the action of his team makes it difficult for referees. Furthermore, that it is an ongoing problem for Hitchin. Consequently, if left unpunished, all the progress made so far regarding insufficient referees will be undone.

The panel believes, therefore, that Hitchin's behaviour has brought the game into disrepute and uphold the charge.

A penalty of a two point deduction for the first team in season 2014-15 is to be made, suspended on condition of the team's good behaviour throughout the whole of that season. Should there be any further complaint or other disciplinary issue during the forthcoming season, then the above penalty will be invoked, together with any other penalty incurred.

John Maynard,

Chairman Complaints Committee.