

SFA release statement on Judicial Panel Protocol



The Scottish FA have released a statement regarding the Judicial Panel Protocol, which has generated numerous enquiries in recent days.

Thousands of fans have taken to social media to complain about an apparent lack of consistency regarding refereeing decisions and subsequent reviews into unseen incidents as well as after match comments from managers.

Both Aberdeen and Kilmarnock have issued strongly worded statements on the matter and during Saturday's game at Easter Road, the Killie fans made their feelings toward the SFA known.

Kilmarnock's Gary Dicker who was sent off following a challenge on Calum Morrison had his appeal dismissed when virtually every commentator believed that Willie Collum's decision was wrong.

Manager Steve Clarke has subsequently been charged by the SFA for his comments on the matter, yet Rangers' manager Steven Gerrard's comments about the standard of refereeing in Scotland seems to have gone unnoticed.

Aberdeen were equally aggrieved at the decision not to rescind Nicky Devlin's red card which also received considerable

criticism from those watching the game.

Those decisions came on the back of the a successful appeal by Rangers Alfredo Morelos who was sent off in the opening game of the season against Aberdeen for kicking Scott McKenna. His red card was later reduced to a yellow by a fast track SFA tribunal.

Other decisions not to charge Rangers' keeper Allan McGregor for kicking out at Celtic's Kristoffer Ajer or Hearts' Steven Naismith for kicking Celtic Jonny Hayes at Tynecastle caused raised eyebrows, as did Scott Brown's elbow on Naismith in the same game which also went unpunished.

A Scottish FA spokesperson said: "There has been much discussion and debate around the changes made for this season to the Judicial Panel Protocol.

"One key change that was made was in respect of unseen offences of serious foul play and violent conduct. As of this season, the match referee is no longer asked to provide a statement of opinion. This removes any perceived conflict where the match official is placed in the position of reassessing their original decision.

"Instead the Compliance Officer asks a three-person panel to review whether a sending off offence occurred. Only where all three individuals agree that a sending off offence occurred will a Notice of Complaint be raised.

"The panel are drawn from a pool of former Category One referees who remain active in the game and are therefore up to date with the any modifications to the Laws of the Game and current coaching guidance.

"This panel is only used to assess unseen offences of serious foul play, violent conduct and spitting. It is completely separate and distinct to the Judicial Panel itself who are tasked with reviewing Notices of Complaint and Fast Track

Claims. The Judicial Panel is made up of people from across the game.

“The overall changes introduced this summer were the subject of discussion and input from two separate working groups comprising representatives from across Scottish football, including clubs, managers and players who met on numerous occasions to discuss and agree to these changes to the Protocol.

“The SPFL Competitions Working Group, which includes representation from all four leagues, were also consulted during the process. Systems used across other national associations, including the FA, were considered as part of the process, and influenced the recommended approach. These recommendations were approved by the Scottish FA board and all member clubs received details of all the changes in writing at the start of the season.

“We are always open to making the system more transparent with written reasons for Fast Track proceedings now published on the Scottish FA website alongside details of all Notices of Complaint and Claims lodged and dealt with under the Judicial Panel Protocol.

“The clubs, players and managers are represented in the ongoing review of the Judicial Panel Protocol and we will welcome any input this season through our usual processes.

“In addition, our Referee Operations Department will continue to offer the opportunity to clubs to be refreshed on the current coaching guidance given to referees and any modifications to the Laws of the Game in the future.”