

Widespread support for former Hibs' striker James Keatings



Thousands of football fans have taken to social media in support of former Hibs' Scottish Cup winning striker James Keatings after he was banned from the Tunnocks Caramel Wafer Challenge Cup final against Raith Rovers on Saturday, March 28.

Keatings was shown a second yellow for simulation during Inverness Caledonian Thistle's 2-1 semi-final win over Rangers Colts on Sunday.

Video evidence clearly showed that he had been caught by Ciaran Dickson, but a three-man Scottish FA panel of trained, independent judicial panel members chose to uphold referee Greg Aitken's decision.

Keatings, who had cancelled out Dapo Awokoya-Mebude's opener before being sent off for the first time in his career, will miss the final.

Hibs' Chief Executive Leeann Dempster was amongst many in the game who also criticised the decision.

The club who are managed by former Hearts' legend John Robertson issued the following statement yesterday.

"Following the decision by the 3 man Fast Track Tribunal Panel to dismiss the club appeal against the yellow card awarded to James Keatings by referee Greg Aitken during Sunday's Tunnock's Caramel Wafer Cup

Semi-Final, the club has no option but to speak out publicly on behalf of our player and on behalf of the growing number of Scottish football clubs who believe that the SFA disciplinary process is not fit for purpose.

“In relation to the inexplicable decision to dismiss our appeal this morning, one which will see James miss the Cup Final, we would like to communicate with our support and to the many people who have contacted James and the club since Sunday.

“Our appeal was submitted on Monday morning with our payment for the right to appeal and video evidence of 3 different angles of the incident, with the most enlightening angle shown at full speed and also in slow motion. The referee also submitted his reply to the appeal and within that, he states that from his angle, he believed there had been no contact made by the defender on James and this led him to believe that James had thrown himself to the ground in an attempt to deceive him, therefore he deemed it to be an act of simulation, hence the decision.

“We do not want to question anyone’s integrity in this statement and therefore if we set what we do or do not believe aside, it could certainly be argued that this position is plausible. The video evidence however removes all doubt from the situation and it was this evidence with which we confidently based our case on. As far as we were concerned, once the 3 man panel viewed the video

evidence, coupled with the fact that the referee himself was stating that he only made the decision based on his personal view, albeit that he was only a few yards away and not the vastly superior and different video angles, justice and sporting integrity would surely prevail.

“James Keatings has never been booked for simulation in his entire career and Sunday’s red card was also the first in his career. The player himself was devastated by the decision on Sunday and has been contacted by many players, ex-players, the PFA and multiple journalists and friends, all of whom believed that justice would be done by the panel. This scenario represented the exact situation that these protocols were set up to address.

“When the club was given the news this morning that the appeal had not only be dismissed but that James had in fact been adjudged to have committed simulation, we were both incredulous and furious in equal measure. We would once again re-iterate that we do not want to call into question anyone’s integrity with this statement but we must call into question the actual football knowledge of those sitting in judgement on all Scottish football players under this current system. If the individuals involved in this morning’s Tribunal can watch the footage we supplied, footage which the whole of Scottish football has now seen and call this simulation, then there can be

no other conclusion other than they do not understand football or the rules of the game. As harsh as this sounds, there can be no other conclusion. Fans and officials of all clubs are mystified by this decision.

“This decision has cost our player the chance to play in a national Cup Final, not something that comes along every week, to the detriment of the player, his team mates, the club and our fans. We believe it also damages the credibility of our governing body and brings the game into disrepute. The decision is plainly wrong and the dogs in the street know this. We have no right to appeal this final decision and it is painful to accept.

“As a club we have been contacted by Chairmen, Chief Executives, Directors and fans of other clubs today in a completely unique show of support and solidarity with James Keatings and ICTFC. As appreciated as this has been undoubtedly been, it does not change the fact that there is clearly something wrong with the system, if it is not addressed, we are all responsible for the continuing denigration of our standards, our supporters view of the national game and sporting integrity in Scottish football.”