

**BEFORE THE UK ATHLETICS DISCIPLINARY PANEL
BETWEEN:**

UK ATHLETICS LIMITED

Complainants

and

MR CHRISTOPHER HARRIS

Respondent

DECISION

UPON England Athletics delegating its authority to prosecute the Respondent to UK Athletics under paragraph 8.6.2 of the UK Athletics Disciplinary Rules and Procedures (the “**UKA Rules**”);

and

UPON the UK Athletics Disciplinary Panel (the “**Panel**”) being jointly appointed by UK Athletics and England Athletics under paragraph 8.6 of the UKA Rules;

and

UPON UK Athletics and the Respondent having in writing agreed to the terms of this Decision by mutual consent;

and

UPON the Panel having discretion under paragraph 16.5 of the UKA Rules to ratify or reject a Decision that is agreed by the parties and the Panel exercising its discretion to ratify the terms of this Decision.

IT IS DECIDED THAT:

DECISION

Background

1. UK Athletics brought a charge against the Respondent in regard to alleged Misconduct under Section 2 of the UKA Rules and Serious Misconduct under Section 4 of the England Athletics National Disciplinary Policy (the “**EA Policy**”).

2. The Respondent held a UK Athletics Coach Licence (no. 2692697) until November 2021. Under the UK Athletics Coach Licence Terms and Conditions, the Respondent was required to comply with the UK Athletics Code of Conduct for Coaches.
3. In addition, as a coach participating in athletics in England, the EA Policy applied to the Respondent.

Investigation

4. On 11 August 2022, UK Athletics wrote to the Respondent and confirmed that it had been made aware of complaints about the Respondent's conduct as a UK Athletics Licenced Coach. In the letter, UK Athletics confirmed that it would be investigating the allegations and that the Respondent's Coach Licence was suspended with immediate effect (however, it was confirmed that the Respondent had voluntarily given up his licence in November 2021)
5. Throughout the investigation into the Respondent's conduct, UK Athletics obtained, among other things:
 - a. Copies of over 100 inappropriate messages (some of which were highly inappropriate) dated throughout 2020 and up to November 2021, sent by the Respondent to two athletes that the Respondent coached at Bexley Athletics Club. At the time the messages were sent, both athletes were over the age of 18;
 - b. A draft witness statement from the first athlete to whom the Respondent sent messages ("Athlete One"); and
 - c. A witness statement from the second athlete to whom the Respondent sent messages ("Athlete Two").
6. In relation to Athlete One, in the messages the Respondent (among other things):
 - a. Repeatedly referred to the athlete as "baby";
 - b. Repeatedly made references to the athlete's physical appearance and body, including her "butt";
 - c. Repeatedly made references to the fact that the Respondent was in bed or in the shower; and
 - d. Made comments about the athlete visiting him in a "nurse uniform".
7. In relation to Athlete Two, in the messages the Respondent (among other things):
 - a. Repeatedly referred to the athlete as "baby" and a "pretty girl";
 - b. Referred to the athlete's outfits and figure, including reference to the athlete's "skimpy spring outfits" and "bikinis"; and
 - c. Repeatedly referred to the fact that the Respondent was in bed.

8. On 25 August 2022, UK Athletics wrote to the Respondent and confirmed that it had been provided with messages sent by the Respondent to Athlete One and Athlete Two, which UK Athletics considered to be highly inappropriate. UK Athletics enclosed a summary of these messages and asked the Respondent to provide any statement that he would like to make in response

Charge

9. Upon the conclusion of the investigation by UK Athletics, UK Athletics raised a charge against the Respondent in regard to alleged Misconduct under Section 2 of the UKA Rules and Serious Misconduct under Section 4 of the EA Policy.
10. UK Athletics notes that Athlete One and Athlete Two were both over the age of 18 at the time the messages were sent and, as a result, UK Athletics is not treating this as a safeguarding issue.
11. The Respondent admits that the conduct described in paragraphs 6 and 7 above amounted to Misconduct under Section 2 of the UKA Rules and Serious Misconduct under Section 4 of the EA Policy. Specifically, the Respondent admits that he:
 - a. breached the UK Athletics Coach License Scheme (in breach of paragraph 2.2.3 of the UKA Rules and paragraph 4.1.1.2 of the EA Policy);
 - b. breached the UK Athletics Code of Conduct for Coaches (in breach of paragraph 2.2.1 of the UKA Rules); and
 - c. behaved in a manner which EA considers is disgraceful or opposed to the general interests of EA or the sport of athletics or is likely to bring the sport into serious disrepute (in breach of paragraph 4.1.1.3 of the EA Policy).
12. In mitigation of the Respondent's conduct, UK Athletics notes that:
 - a. the Respondent unreservedly apologised for his conduct and has stated that he was not aware of the hurt it was causing. The Respondent has shown genuine remorse for his behaviour and the effect it had on the athletes involved;
 - b. in November 2021, after becoming aware of the complaints made against him the Respondent voluntarily gave up his UK Athletics Coach Licence and ended his membership at Bexley Athletics Club; and
 - c. the Respondent has volunteered and worked within athletics for over 40 years, making a substantial contribution to the sport, without, in the knowledge of UK Athletics, any previous complaints being raised against him.

Sanctions

13. As a result of the breaches set out in paragraphs 11 above, the parties have agreed to the following sanctions and the Panel has ratified them:
- a. the Respondent shall be declared permanently ineligible for a UK Athletics Coach Licence and the Respondent shall not be issued with another UK Athletics Coach Licence in the future;
 - b. the Respondent has ended his membership at Bexley Athletics Club and it is recommended that Bexley Athletics Club do not issue the Respondent with another membership in the future;
 - c. subject to paragraph 13(d) below, the Respondent agrees that he is no longer an EA member, and that he must not:
 - i. participate in any EA club related activity including attendance at any club or club related training sessions;
 - ii. participate in competitions and events (licensed via EA or UK Athletics); nor
 - iii. be involved in any EA programmes or services.
 - d. should the Respondent choose to request to join another EA affiliated club in the future, the Respondent must first contact welfare@englandathletics.org to discuss any additional membership conditions required to safeguard participant wellbeing and safety. In order to join another club in future, full information of this case would be disclosed to the new club to manage risks and agree any associated membership conditions with EA. Positions of trust and responsibility such as committee membership at any new club will not be permitted;
 - e. Neither party shall have the right to appeal the Decision.

Sally Clark



Amina Graham



Shamini Nainappan Grayson



UK Athletics Disciplinary Panel

14 February 2022