

Decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee

passed on 23 August 2022

DECISION BY:

Jorge Ivan Palacio (Colombia), Chairperson

ON THE CASE OF:

Orji Okwonkwo
(Decision FDD-11900)

Regarding the decision passed by the Italian National Anti-Doping Tribunal on 20 June 2022

Art. 66 of the FIFA Disciplinary Code

I. FACTS OF THE CASE

1. The following summary of the facts does not purport to include every single contention put forth by the actors at these proceedings. However, the Chairperson of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee (**the Committee**) has thoroughly considered any and all evidence submitted, even if no specific or detailed reference is made to particular elements of the former.
2. On 20 June 2022, the Italian National Anti-Doping Tribunal (**Italian NADO**) rendered a decision by means of which it *inter alia* imposed a period of ineligibility of four (4) years on the player Orij Okwonkwo (**the Player**) on grounds of doping (**the Decision**).
3. On 8 and 19 August 2022, the Italian NADO informed FIFA about the Decision in order for the related sanction to be extended so as to have worldwide effect. Various supporting documents were submitted by the Italian NADO, including:
 - i. a copy of an email sent by the Italian NADO to the Player on 25 February 2022, informing him about the Adverse Analytical Findings and inviting him to state his case;
 - ii. a copy of an email sent by the Italian NADO to the Player's legal representative on 10 May 2022, *inter alia* inviting him to a hearing scheduled to take place on 13 June 2022;
 - iii. a copy of an email from the Player's legal representative dated 1 June 2022, providing the latter's written position in relation to the case at stake;
 - iv. a copy of the Decision sent to the Player on 8 August 2022;
 - v. a translation of the motivated Decision into English.

II. CONSIDERATIONS OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

4. First of all, the Committee recalled that, in accordance with art. 53 par. 2 of the FIFA Statutes, it may pronounce the sanctions described in these Statutes and the FIFA Disciplinary Code (**FDC**) on members associations, clubs, officials, players, intermediaries and licensed match agents.
5. In regard to serious infringements, in particular but not limited to discrimination, the manipulation of football matches and competitions, misconduct against match officials or forgery and falsification, the member associations, confederations and other organising sports bodies shall request FIFA to extend the sanction they have imposed so as to have worldwide effect (art. 66 (1) FDC).
6. In continuation and consistently with art. 66 (2) FDC, any doping-related legally binding sanction imposed by another national or international sports association, national anti-doping organisation or any other state body that complies with fundamental legal principles shall automatically be adopted by FIFA and, provided that the requirements described under art. 66 FDC and in (now) article 73 of the FIFA Anti-Doping Regulations (**FIFA ADR**) are met, shall be automatically recognised by all confederations and associations.

7. In conformity with art. 54 (1) (e) FDC, the Chairperson of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee is authorised, in his capacity as a single judge, to rule on the extension of a sanction pronounced by an association to have worldwide effect.
8. According to art. 66 (6) of the FDC, the Chairperson of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee takes his decision regarding the extension of a sanction to have worldwide effect, in principle, without deliberations or hearing any of the parties, and using only the file.
9. In this context, the Committee emphasised that, pursuant to art. 66 (5) FDC, the worldwide extension of a sanction will be approved if:
 - i. the person sanctioned has been cited properly (lit. a);
 - ii. the person has had the opportunity to state his case – with the exception of provisional measures – (lit. b);
 - iii. the decision has been communicated properly (lit. c);
 - iv. the decision complies with the regulations of FIFA (lit. d);
 - v. extending the sanction does not conflict with public order or with accepted standards of behaviour (lit. e).
10. With the above in mind, upon analysing the Decision, the Committee highlighted that it relates to an Anti-Doping rule violation and that it could therefore be extended to have worldwide effect.
11. After examining the entirety of the evidence at its disposal in relation to the present matter, the Committee noted that the conditions for worldwide extension as stipulated under art. 66 (5) FDC, have been met. In particular, the Committee emphasised that it appears to be clear from the documentation provided by the Italian NADO that:
 - i. the Player has been cited properly (cf. par. I.3.i, ii and iii *supra*);
 - ii. the Player had the opportunity to state his case, in so far that he had the opportunity to provide submit a written statement (cf. para. I.3.iii *supra*), but also to attend a hearing held on 20 June 2022¹;
 - iii. the Decision was communicated properly to the Player, as demonstrated by the evidence submitted by the Italian NADO (cf. par. I.3.iv *supra*);
 - iv. the Decision complies with the relevant FIFA regulations and does not conflict with public order or with accepted standards of behaviour.

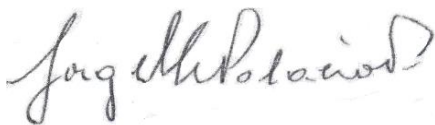
¹ According to the Decision, “At the hearing held remotely on 20 June 2022, the accused, the defense and the National Anti-Doping Prosecutor’s Office concluded as in the records”.

12. Consequently, the Committee decided to extend the sanction imposed on the Player by the Italian NADO on 20 June 2022. More specifically, the Player is sanctioned with a four (4) years suspension from all football-related activities in accordance with the Decision.
13. Finally, and pursuant to art. 66 (11) FDC, should the Decision not yet be final in a legal sense, the present decision shall follow the (final) outcome of the Decision.

III. DECISION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

1. **The request to extend the decision passed by the Italian National Tribunal on 20 June 2022 to have worldwide effect is granted.**
2. **The player Mr. Orji Okwonkwo is sanctioned worldwide with a four (04) years suspension from all football-related activities as from 25 February 2022 until 24 February 2026.**

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION



Jorge Ivan Palacio

Chairperson of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee

NOTE RELATING TO THE LEGAL ACTION:

This decision can be contested before the FIFA Appeal Committee (art. 57 FDC). Any party intending to appeal must announce its intention to do so in writing within three (3) days of notification of the grounds of the decision. Reasons for the appeal must then be given in writing within a further time limit of five (5) days, commencing upon expiry of the first time limit of three (3) days (art. 56 (4) FDC). The appeal fee of CHF 1,000 is payable on the submission of the appeal brief at the latest (art. 56 (6) FDC).