

Decision of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee

passed on 04 December 2025

DECISION BY:

Arnaud DUMONT (France), Single Judge

ON THE CASE OF:

Denis-Mihai Dragus
(Decision FDD-26053)

REGARDING:

Article 14 - Misconduct of players and officials (FDC_25)

Article 14.1.e - Serious foul play (FDC_25)

I. FACTS

1. The following summary of the facts does not purport to include every single contention put forth by the parties at these proceedings. However, the presiding member of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee (the **Committee**) has thoroughly considered any and all evidence and arguments submitted, even if no specific or detailed reference has been made to those arguments in the following outline and in the ensuing discussion on the merits.
2. The match between the representative teams of *Bosnia and Herzegovina vs Romania* was played on 15 November 2025 (the **Match**) in the scope of the FIFA World Cup 2026™ preliminary competition (the **Competition**).
3. In this context, after the Match, the Referee submitted his report (the **Referee Report**) in which it was reported that the player Denis-Mihai Dragus (the **Respondent**) was sent-off for serious foul play. The referee further added that:

“In minute 68, Romania number 7 was sent off for making a challenge against his opponent and making clear contact with his studs to his opponent’s head. He was shown a direct RC.”

4. The Match Commissioner of the Match cited the following incidents in his report (the **MC Report**):

“1 red card (direct).”
5. On 17 November 2025, in view of the foregoing, the Secretariat to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee (the **Secretariat**) opened disciplinary proceedings against the Respondent with respect to potential breaches of art. 14(1)(e) of the FIFA Disciplinary Code (**FDC**) and issued a proposal on the basis of art. 58 FDC as read in conjunction with Annex 1 FDC (the **Proposal**). The Respondent was provided with the aforementioned report(s) and was granted a five-day deadline to provide the Secretariat with its position
6. On 20 November 2025, the Respondent rejected the Proposal and submitted its position.
7. On 25 November 2025, the matter was submitted to the FIFA Disciplinary Committee for decision on 04 December 2025. The operative part of the decision was notified to the Respondent on 10 December 2025. The Respondent subsequently requested the grounds of the decision within the deadline set by art. 54 FDC.

II. RESPONDENT’S POSITION

8. The position of the Respondent is as follows:

“Dear Members of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee,

On behalf of the Romanian Football Federation (FRF), we hereby submit our formal position regarding the proposed disciplinary sanction of a two-match suspension against our national team player Denis Drăguș, following the Bosnia-Herzegovina vs Romania match played on 15.11.2025.

1. Objection to the Proposed Sanction

FRF formally rejects the proposed two-match suspension, which we deem disproportionate to the nature of the incident and unsupported by both the facts and relevant precedents. And by consequence, please find below our arguments in favor of the player.

2. Request to Apply a One-Match Suspension as a Proportionate and Appropriate Sanction

We respectfully request the Disciplinary Committee to reconsider and apply a one-match suspension, based on the following mitigating factors:

The incident did not result in any physical injury to the opponent. The player was able to continue the match without receiving specialized medical treatment (no bandages, stitches, etc.).

The action of Denis Drăguș in question can be more accurately characterized as negligent, not violent or excessively reckless.

The match was not significantly interrupted following the foul. This contrasts sharply with another incident from the same match, involving an elbow received by the Romanian player Marius Marin, which caused significant bleeding and required extended medical attention and bandaging after his ear cartilage was split.

There was no clear intent or excessive intensity in Drăguș's challenge – elements usually required for a two-match suspension.

The player's disciplinary record supports leniency. This was the first direct red card in Denis Drăguș's professional career. He has only once been sent off previously, for two yellow cards, back in the 2018–2019 season. He does not have a profile of an aggressive or violent player.

In light of these facts, we respectfully ask the Committee to consider these arguments and apply the proposed sanction accordingly, taking into account the principle of proportionality."

III. CONSIDERATIONS OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

9. In view of the circumstances of the present matter, the Committee decided to first address the procedural aspects, namely, its jurisdiction and the applicable law, before entering into the substance of the matter and assessing the possible breaches committed, as well as the potential sanctions, if applicable, resulting therefrom. In doing so, the Committee, reiterated that it has considered all the facts, allegations, legal arguments and evidence provided by the Respondent, and in the present decision had only referred to those observations and evidence regarded as necessary to explain its reasoning.

A. Jurisdiction of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee

10. First of all, the Committee noted that at no point during the present proceedings did the Respondent challenge its jurisdiction or the applicability of the FDC.

11. Notwithstanding the above and for the sake of good order, the Committee found it worthwhile to emphasize that, on the basis of art. 2.1 FDC read together with arts. 56 and 57 FDC, it was competent to decide on the present matter.
12. Moreover, in line with art. 57 FDC, the Committee found that a member of the Committee can rule on the matter alone as single judge.

B. Applicable law and standard of proof

13. In continuation, the Chairperson deemed that the substance of the matter should be analysed under the 2025 edition of the FDC, which was the edition in force at the time of the incident in question, namely the foul committed by the Respondent during the Match.
14. The Committee equally recalled that the burden of proof lies with FIFA, which is required to prove the infringement under art. 41.1 FDC.
15. Secondly, the Committee pointed out that, according to art. 39.3 FDC, the standard of proof to be applied in FIFA disciplinary proceedings is that of "comfortable satisfaction". In other words, the onus is on the sanctioning authority to establish the disciplinary violation to the comfortable satisfaction of the judging body, taking into account the seriousness of the allegation(s).
16. Finally, the Committee referred to art. 40 FDC, according to which the facts contained in the match officials' reports and in any additional reports or correspondence submitted by them are presumed to be accurate, bearing in mind that proof of their inaccuracy may be provided.
17. Having clarified the foregoing, the Committee proceeded to consider the merits of the case.

C. Merits of the dispute

I. Issue of review

18. With respect to the incident at hand, the Committee referred to art. 14 FDC which reads as follows in the relevant part.

Art. 14 of the FDC – Misconduct of players and officials

- "1. Players and officials shall be suspended for misconduct as specified below and may be fined accordingly:*
- a) one match for players who are sent off for denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goalscoring opportunity;*
 - b) at least one match or an appropriate period of time for unsporting behaviour towards an opponent or a person other than a match official;*
 - c) at least one match for officials who are sent off for dissent by word or action;*
 - d) at least one match for deliberately receiving a yellow or red card, including in order to be suspended for an upcoming match or to ultimately have a clean record;*
 - e) at least two matches for serious foul play;*
 - f) at least two matches for provoking spectators at a match by any means;*
 - g) at least two matches or a specific period for acting with obvious intent to cause a match official to make an incorrect decision or supporting their error of judgement and thereby causing them to make an incorrect decision;*
 - h) at least three matches for violent conduct;*

- i) *at least three matches or an appropriate period of time for assault, including elbowing, punching, kicking, biting, spitting at or hitting an opponent or a person other than a match official;*
- j) *at least four matches or an appropriate period of time for unsporting behaviour towards a match official;*
- k) *at least ten matches or an appropriate period of time for intimidating or threatening a match official;*
- l) *at least 15 matches or an appropriate period of time for assaulting a match official, including elbowing, punching, kicking, biting, spitting or hitting.*

2. *The misconduct described in paragraph 1 b), f), j) and k) is also subject to the respective sanctions in this Code, despite the fact that the offence has been committed off the field of play (including via social networks)*

[...].

19. The Committee underlined that art. 14.1 FDC provides for the (minimum) disciplinary sanction(s) to be imposed on players or officials in case of misconduct during a match. In line with art. 14.6 FDC, the competent FIFA judicial body may decide to impose additional disciplinary measures on the player or official concerned (on top of the minimum (sporting) sanction(s) to be imposed for a specific offence as per art. 14.1 FDC).
20. The Committee then proceeded to analyse the evidence at its disposal, specifically the Referee Report and the MC Report and videos of the foul at issue, to determine the potential violations of the FDC.
21. In this context, the Committee acknowledged from the Referee Report and the MC Report that the Respondent *"was sent off for making a challenge against his opponent and making clear contact with his studs to his opponents head"*.
22. The Committee recalled that said reports are presumed to be accurate pursuant to art. 40 FDC since they are Match officials' reports - this, whilst bearing in mind that proof of their inaccuracy may be provided.
23. The Committee acknowledged the Respondent maintains that the proposed two-match suspension is *disproportionate to the nature of the incident and unsupported by both facts and relevant precedents*, as the Respondent argues that: (i) the incident did not result in any physical injury to the opponent; (ii) the conduct was, at most, negligent and not violent or excessively reckless; (iii) the match was only minimally interrupted; and (iv) the player's disciplinary record supports leniency.
24. In this regard, the Committee recalled that a serious foul play is defined in the IFAB Laws of the Game (the **IFAB Rules**), as *"a tackle or challenge that endangers the safety of an opponent or uses excessive force or brutality"*, which matches with precision the description of the play in question.
25. After careful analysis of the video of the incident, the Committee saw no legitimate reason to depart from the assessment made by the referee and could not agree with the Respondent's submission that the incident should not be regarded as serious foul play.
26. First, the Committee determined that the Respondent challenged his opponent for a ball with his cleats up and made clear contact with his studs to the opponent's head. Such a challenge, by its very nature, endangers the safety of an opponent who is challenging for the ball and therefore falls within the definition of serious foul play under the IFAB Laws of the Game, irrespective of whether injury actually occurred. Second, the Committee stresses that the IFAB Rules do not require intentionality

for an offence to qualify as serious foul play. Third, the Committee considered the brief duration of the stoppage of play and the player's disciplinary record as irrelevant for the purposes of assessing the Respondent's misconduct and, in any case, it did not appear to cause or materially influence the Respondent's tackle.

27. Notwithstanding the above and for the sake of good order, the Committee wished to recall that, in accordance with art. 9.1 FDC, the decisions taken by the referee on the field of play are final and may not be reviewed by the FIFA Judicial Bodies.
28. Therefore, the Committee considered that, in any event and as a general rule, it was bound by the assessment made by the referee as transposed in his Referee Report.
29. Consequently, the Committee was comfortably satisfied to conclude that the incident at stake fell within the scope of art. 14(1)(e) FDC and should be sanctioned accordingly.

II. The determination of the sanction

30. In this context, the Committee observed in the first place that the Respondent was a natural person, and as such was subject to the sanctions described under arts. 6.1 and 6.2 FDC.
31. As established above, the Respondent was found responsible for having infringed 14(1)(e) FDC as a result of his misconduct. Said provision provides for a minimum suspension of two (2) matches.
32. This being established, the Committee recalled that in line with art. 14(6) FDC, additional disciplinary measures may be imposed on top of said sporting sanction.
33. Against such background, the Committee underlined that it is responsible to determine the type and extent of disciplinary measures to be imposed in accordance with the objective and subjective elements of the offence, taking into account both aggravating and mitigating circumstances (art. 25(1) FDC).
34. In this respect, the Committee acknowledged that the Respondent presented clean record with respect to the Competition.
35. In view of this, and after a careful analysis of the evidence at its disposal, the Committee considered that there was no reason to deviate from the minimum sanction under the applicable provision, namely a suspension of two (2) matches.
36. Finally, and for the sake of completeness, the Committee noted that according to art. 14.6 FDC, in all cases of misconduct by players, additional disciplinary measures may be imposed. On this basis, the Committee decided to impose a fine to the amount of CHF 5,000.
37. The Committee considered that this sanction would be appropriate and proportionate to the offence committed and would serve to have the necessary deterrent effect to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Decision

- 1. The Respondent, Denis-Mihai Dragus, is found responsible for violating Article 14.1.e - Serious foul play (FDC_25) in connection with the match *Bosnia and Herzegovina vs Romania* played on 15 November 2025 in the scope of the FIFA World Cup 2026™ preliminary competition.**
- 2. The Respondent is suspended for two (2) matches, including the automatic suspension already served during the match *Romania v. San Marino* played on 18 November 2025 in the scope of the FIFA World Cup 2026™ preliminary competition. The remaining match suspension which will be served in accordance with art. 69 FDC.**
- 3. The Respondent shall pay a fine to the amount of CHF 5,000.**

FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE
DE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arnaud Dumont', is written over a circular stamp. The stamp contains a stylized logo, possibly the FIFA logo, which is partially obscured by the signature.

Arnaud DUMONT (France)

Member of the FIFA Disciplinary Committee

NOTE RELATING TO LEGAL ACTION:

According to art. 61(1)(c) FDC, read together with arts. 47(2) and 50(3) of the FIFA Statutes, this decision is final and binding and may not be appealed to the FIFA Appeal Committee or the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

NOTE RELATING TO THE PAYMENT OF THE FINE:

Payment can be made either in Swiss francs (CHF) to account no. 0230-325519.70J, UBS AG, Bahnhofstrasse 45, 8098 Zurich, SWIFT: UBSWCHZH80A, IBAN: CH85 0023 0230 3255 1970 J or in US dollars (USD) to account no. 0230-325519.71U, UBS AG, Bahnhofstrasse 45, 8098 Zurich, SWIFT: UBSWCHZH80A, IBAN: CH95 0023 0230 3255 1971 U, with reference to the abovementioned case number.