



CCL24 tournament final review

Full report on the Disruption During the Final Match of the 2024 Calgary Champions League Tournament



1. Background

We extend our gratitude to everyone for their cooperation and support, which made the 2024 Calgary Champions League Tournament a great success. However, we are saddened by the disruption during the tournament final match on Saturday July 13, 2024, **involving the GCFC team representing Skyview Community and a Calgary Centaurs FC team official**. We thank our volunteers for their swift response in managing the situation, preventing potential irreparable losses. Unfortunately, this incident has brought disrepute to our organisation with one of our donors hinting at dissociating from us as they do not want to be associated with violence.

In line with our policy, we have conducted a review to understand the motivations of the parties involved and assess whether any relevant sections of our Tournament Rules were violated.

Specifically, we assessed the actions of the parties involved in line with Sections 12, 14, 15 and 17.

2. Findings

a. Incident Summary

- i. During the last three minutes of the match, a typical in-match argument ensued between a Centaurs FC player and GCFC player.
- ii. The ball went out of play for a GCFC throw-in. A Centaurs FC held onto the ball, preventing the GCFC player from taking the throw-in, which should result in a caution for the Centaurs FC player.
- iii. The GCFC player wrestled the ball from the Centaurs FC player, pinning his head to the ground in the process.
- iv. An official of the Centaurs FC team, interfered by shoving the GCFC player. This drew the ire of the GCFC team, including players and officials who rushed to the scene in defence of their teammate.
- v. The GCFC team in their submission claimed a Centaurs FC fan grabbed a chair to hit the GCFC player. While this allegation was confirmed by an eyewitness, it was denied by the Centaurs FC official who claimed he only shoved the GCFC player for putting his player in arms way. (his words to the GCFC player – do you want to kill him). The Centaurs FC official noted he acted out of concern as a responsible citizen.
- vi. We observed the GCFC goalie wielding a chair to hit the Centaurs FC official with. He insisted the Centaurs FC official must leave the play area. Our president appealed to the Centaurs FC official to leave the field to prevent a further escalation and the needless call for the police.

b. Forfeiting the Game

- i. Despite repeated appeals by our president and tournament officials for restraint and restart of the game, the GCFC team forfeited the game citing bias in officiating.

c. Dissent including the use of offensive language

- i. Foul incident
 - i. At some point in the second half of the game, a Centaurs FC player was fouled by the GCFC goalie.
 - ii. The Centre Referee (CR) halted play to determine if the foul occurred inside or outside the penalty area.
 - iii. The CR conferred with Asst Referee (AR)1 and subsequently checked the VAR for a more accurate decision.
 - iv. During the VAR check, a GCFC player approached the VOR area, who was asked by AR2 to step back.
 - v. The GCFC player responded with verbal abuse, using the F-word stating he can't be told what to do.



- vi. AR2 reported the dissent to the CR, requesting the player be sent off.
- vii. The CR only cautioned the GCFC player on the grounds that our official appealed not to send off the player so as not to upset the GCFC team.
- ii. Further Abuse and Threats
 - i. At the end of the match, the same GCFC player approached AR2 further remonstrating and continuing the verbal abuse calling him “stupid”, “bastard”, and using the F-word.
 - ii. Per the match officials report, the GCFC player threatened physical harm stating AR2 should be grateful they were in Canada, implying he would cause serious injury by removing his eyes.
 - iii. Our president observed the GCFC player’s aggressive behaviour and intervened to ward him off.
 - iv. AR2 also noted that, while standing with the CR and AR1 at the end of the match, the GCFC goalie approached, shook hands with the CF, and AR1, then turned to him, showed a middle finger, and called him names. This account was confirmed by both the CR and AR1.

3. Submissions of the GCFC and the Centaurs FC teams regarding their involvement in the tournament final disruption.

GCFC representing Skyview Community

- a. Concerns raised: Concerns regarding several issues related to the organisation of the tournament final were raised. Key among the concerns was officiating, an issue the team raised in 2023 but did so in a similarly chaotic manner as the events of Saturday, July 13. Specifically, the team noted that neutral referees should officiate games involving Ghana and Nigeria. In 2023, we issued an official statement calling out the disruptive action of the GCFC team and clarifying that the Calgary Champions League Tournament is not an African Nations Cup tournament and actions dividing participating teams across country lines will not be tolerated. We also made it mandatory for all teams to indicate in their registration which Calgary community they represent. The GCFC team indicated they represent the Skyview Community.
- b. The team acted based on emotions in defence of their player leading to the abandonment of the game. The team opined that if the game had continued, the outcome would not be positive.
- c. In summary, the team takes responsibility for the actions and conduct of their players. However, their concerns should not be disregarded.

Centaurs FC representing Beltline Community

- a. Calgary Centaurs do not condone any disruptive actions by fans.
- b. Centaurs FC players and coaches were not involved in the disruption.
- c. Teams should not be accountable for the actions of passionate fans.



4. Violation of the CSA Tournament Rules

GCFC representing Skyview Community

- a. Section 12 – Abandoned/Forfeited Games: We have reviewed the circumstances that led to GCFC abandoning the match and concluded that the team violated Section 12 and subject to dismissal from the tournament. Despite creating a chaotic environment posing a threat to the safety of spectators and tournament officials, the GCFC team claimed they forfeited the game due to disruption and lack of field supervision. We found this claim disappointing and unexpected of community leaders.
- b. Section 14 – Field Supervision: We found that GCFC took laws into their own hands forcefully assuming the roles assigned to match officials **and violating Section 14 of our Tournament Rules**. It is concerning that GCFC was involved in a similar incident in 2023, where players and officials halted a game and outrightly called for the change of the centre referee, citing bias in officiating. CSA incurred additional cost engaging a match official to replace the sacked centre referee.
- c. Section 15 – Instead of documenting their concerns in writing as stipulated in our Tournament Rules, GCFC expressed their issues in a chaotic and disruptive manner as they did in 2023, thereby violating Section 15 of our Tournament Rules.
- d. Section 17 – During the match, the match commissioner appealed to the centre referee to not send off a GCFC player for aggressive dissent towards one of the Assistant Referees. The centre referee heeded the appeal, issuing a yellow card instead of a red card to prevent further escalation. However, after this incident, the same player continued the aggressive behaviour during the 45-minute period the team remained to observe the rest of the closing ceremony. We found that the action of the GCFC player violates the FIFA Laws of the Game and Section 17 of our Tournament Rules.

Centaurs FC representing Calgary Beltline

- a. Section 14 – Field Supervision: Although the Centaurs FC players and coaching crew were not involved in the disruption, we found that the action of the Centaurs FC official triggered the disruptive event of Saturday July 13th. The Centaurs FC official took laws into his own hands by interfering in a situation reserved for the match officials leading to a violent response from the opponents. We found that by the action of their official, Centaurs FC violated Section 14 of our Tournament Rules. It is concerning that this team official was involved in a similar disruptive incident in 2023, which led to his expulsion from the field by the centre referee.
- b. Section 15 – Prior to the altercation with the GCFC team, we observed Centaurs FC official repeatedly remonstrating with match officials and entering the official's designated area. Instead of documenting his concerns in writing as stipulated in our Tournament Rules, he addressed his issues in a disruptive manner, **thereby violating Section 15 of our Tournament Rules**.



5. Decision

GCFC representing Skyview Community

- a. GCFC are hereby suspended from participating in the Calgary Champions League Tournament for **three (3) years**. Should the team decide to participate in the tournament within this period, the following rules will apply.
 - i. The team must deposit **\$2,000** with Community Soccer Association as a bond. The bond will be refunded at the end of each tournament on the condition that the team complies with stipulated tournament rules and CSA officials' guidance.
 - ii. The team must feature Calgarians from countries other than Ghana who identify with the team's chosen Calgary community.
- b. For disrupting the 2024 Calgary Champions League Tournament final match, **GCFC is fined \$1,000 in accordance with section 14 of our Tournament Rules**. The fine shall be deducted from the 2nd place team cash prize and the balance due shall be paid through an e-transfer to the team's chosen email address.
- c. GCFC player involved in aggressive dissent towards our match official and the goalie wielding a chair with which to assault the Centaurs FC official are suspended from the Calgary Champions League Tournament till further notice.

Centaurs FC representing Calgary Beltline

- a. The Centaurs FC official's action triggered the disruptive event of Saturday July 13. Although the players and coaching crew were not involved in the disruption, the team cannot be absolved of the action of a key team official. **The team is fined \$1,000 in accordance with section 14 of our Tournament Rules**. The fine shall be deducted from the winner's cash prize and the balance due shall be paid through an e-transfer to the team's chosen email address.
- b. The Centaurs FC official is suspended from attending any future Calgary Champions League Tournament games till further notice.

6. Conclusion

We are committed to upholding the integrity and reputation of our tournaments. Our Tournament Rules, which all participating teams agreed to follow, clearly outline our stance on acceptable conduct during games. We encourage all stakeholders to embrace this revolutionary grassroots development initiative that continues to unite communities across the city.

The Calgary Champions League Tournament provides a platform for soccer loving Calgarians to compete while fostering bonds of friendship and community. While we encourage and reward outstanding performance, we do not tolerate any disruptive or aggressive behaviours that endanger others. Since our inception, we have faced the challenge of engaging and retaining licensed match officials due to the restrictions of the Calgary United Soccer Association and their experiences with poorly organised community soccer competitions. We work diligently every year to ensure the safety and mental well-being of these crucial individuals. On this note, we will not tolerate any form of aggression towards our match officials. Teams are reminded to channel their grievances through the appropriate channels.

Overall, the key consideration in making our decision is to address and discourage bad behaviour, not to reward it under the guise of community building. We hope that our donors and partners recognise that disruptive behaviour does not represent the communities that have come together over this 6-week period but rather the actions of a few driven by unchecked emotions. Rest assured, we will continue to maintain a safe and respectful environment in our tournaments.