

Issued Decision

UK Anti-Doping and Ben Arthurs

Disciplinary Proceedings under the Anti-Doping Rules of the Irish Football Association

This is an Issued Decision made by UK Anti-Doping ('UKAD') pursuant to the Anti-Doping Rules (the 'ADR') of the Irish Football Association (the 'IFA'). It concerns an Anti-Doping Rule Violation ('ADRV') committed by Mr Ben Arthurs and records the applicable Consequences.

Capitalised terms used in this Decision shall have the meaning given to them in the ADR unless otherwise indicated.

Background and Facts

1. The IFA is the national governing body for the sport of football in Northern Ireland. UKAD is the National Anti-Doping Organisation ('NADO') in the United Kingdom. The IFA has adopted, as its own ADR, the UK Anti-Doping Rules¹, which are issued by UKAD and subject to updates made by UKAD, as necessary and in accordance with the World Anti-Doping Code.
2. Mr Arthurs is a 28-year-old football player for Bangor FC. At all material times, Mr Arthurs was subject to the jurisdiction of the IFA and bound to comply with the ADR. Pursuant to ADR Article 7.2, UKAD has Results Management responsibility for anti-doping matters in respect of all players that are subject to the jurisdiction of the IFA.
3. On 10 March 2026, a UKAD Doping Control Officer ('DCO') collected a urine Sample from Mr Arthurs, In-Competition, at the NIFL Premiership match between Bangor FC and Glentoran FC.
4. Assisted by the DCO, Mr Arthurs split the urine Sample into two separate bottles, which were given reference numbers A8212115 (the 'A Sample') and B8212115 (the 'B Sample').
5. Both Samples were transported to the World Anti-Doping Agency ('WADA') accredited laboratory in London, the Drug Control Centre, King's College London (the 'Laboratory'). The Laboratory analysed the A Sample in accordance with the

¹ Version 1.0, in effect as from 1 January 2021.

procedures set out in WADA's International Standard for Laboratories and Technical Document TD2022MRPL.

6. Analysis of the A Sample returned an Adverse Analytical Finding ('AAF') for benzoylecgonine, a Metabolite of cocaine, at an estimated concentration of 288 ng/mL.
7. Cocaine is listed at S6.A of the 2026 WADA Prohibited List as a Stimulant. It is a non-Specified Substance that is prohibited In-Competition only. Pursuant to Article 4.2.3 of the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code, cocaine is specifically identified as a Substance of Abuse in the 2026 WADA Prohibited List.
8. On 7 April 2026, UKAD sent Mr Arthurs a letter (the 'Notice Letter'), formally notifying him that he may have committed ADRVs pursuant to ADR Article 2.1 (Presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers in an Athlete's Sample), and/or ADR Article 2.2 (Use or Attempted Use by an Athlete of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method). The Notice Letter also confirmed the immediate imposition of a Provisional Suspension. UKAD invited Mr Arthurs to provide an explanation for the alleged ADRVs.
9. In response to the Notice Letter, Mr Arthurs admitted to ingesting cocaine for recreational purposes within a social setting, estimating that he ingested approximately 0.5g to 1g of cocaine starting in the evening of 7 March 2026 and ending in the early hours of 8 March 2026 (i.e., Out-of-Competition).
10. Following receipt of Mr Arthurs' response, UKAD sought the opinion of an independent scientific expert, Professor David Cowan OBE, as to whether the account provided by Mr Arthurs was consistent with the concentration of benzoylecgonine detected in the A Sample.
11. Although Professor Cowan determined that Mr Arthurs' explanation was not consistent with the AAF reported, he nevertheless concluded that it was more likely than not that Mr Arthurs' last ingestion of cocaine took place Out-of-Competition (i.e. before 11:59pm on 9 March 2026).
12. On 8 June 2026, UKAD proceeded to issue Mr Arthurs with a letter (the 'Charge Letter') in accordance with ADR Article 7.11.2. The Charge Letter asserted the commission of an ADRV pursuant to ADR Article 2.1 (Presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers in an Athlete's Sample) in respect of benzoylecgonine, a Metabolite of cocaine.²

² Mr Arthurs was not charged with an ADRV pursuant to ADR Article 2.2 (Use of a Prohibited Substance or a Prohibited Method) as cocaine is prohibited In-Competition only and, in light of his account and the opinion of Professor Cowan, there is insufficient evidence to suggest Mr Arthurs ingested the substance after 11:59 pm on 9 March 2026 (i.e., within the In-Competition period).

Admission and Consequences

13. ADR Article 2.1 provides that the following is an ADRV:

2.1 Presence of a Prohibited Substance or its Metabolites or Markers in an Athlete's Sample, unless the Athlete establishes that the presence is consistent with a TUE granted in accordance with Article 4.

14. ADR Article 10.2.4 provides:

10.2.4 Notwithstanding any other provision in Article 10.2, where the Anti-Doping Rule Violation involves a Substance of Abuse:

(a) If the Athlete can establish that any ingestion or Use occurred Out-of-Competition and was unrelated to sport performance, the period of Ineligibility shall be three (3) months; provided that it may be further reduced to one (1) month if the Athlete satisfactorily completes a Substance of Abuse treatment program approved by UKAD. The period of Ineligibility established in this Article 10.2.4(a) is not subject to any reduction pursuant to Article 10.6.

15. On 26 June 2026 and 17 June 2026, Mr Arthurs provided his responses to the Charge Letter. Mr Arthurs admitted the ADRV charged and accepted the asserted period of Ineligibility of three (3) months.

Commencement of period of Ineligibility

16. ADR Article 10.13 requires that the period of Ineligibility starts on the date Ineligibility is accepted or otherwise imposed where there is no hearing.

17. However, ADR Article 10.13.2(a) allows credit to be given against the total period of Ineligibility to be served, where an Athlete has been provisionally suspended and has respected the terms of that Provisional Suspension.

18. Mr Arthurs was subject to a Provisional Suspension from the date of the Notice Letter, 7 April 2026. As far as UKAD is aware, Mr Arthurs respected the terms of that Provisional Suspension.

19. Affording Mr Arthurs credit for the time he spent provisionally suspended, his period of Ineligibility expired at 11:59pm on 6 July 2026. Mr Arthurs is therefore eligible to participate in sport forthwith.

Summary

20. For the reasons given above, UKAD has issued this Decision in accordance with ADR Article 7.12.2, and records that:

a) Mr Arthurs has committed an ADRV pursuant to ADR Article 2.1;

b) A period of Ineligibility of three (3) months is imposed pursuant to ADR Article 10.2.4(a); and

- c) In accordance with ADR Article 10.13.2(a), affording Mr Arthurs credit for the time he spent provisionally suspended, his period of Ineligibility is deemed to have commenced on 7 April 2026, and expired at 11:59pm on 6 July 2026.
21. Mr Arthurs, the IFA, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association ('FIFA'), and WADA have a right to appeal against this Decision or any part of it in accordance with ADR Article 13.4.
22. This Decision will be publicly announced via UKAD's website in accordance with ADR Article 8.5.3 and ADR Article 10.15.

8 July 2026