



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA



Did you know that you can be charged by the FA for offensive comments on Social Media?

These guidelines have been prepared for you by Hertfordshire FA to provide helpful guidance with regard to media comments and social networking postings. The guidelines in no way affect, supersede, alter or replace the FA Rules and Regulations.

General Charges

We all like to talk about football, whether it's on the pitch, on the sidelines, in the car on the way home or over a drink in the clubhouse. Social media is another way for people to have a conversation about football.

However, participants of the game need to also be aware of the pitfalls of using social media so they can ensure that The FA Rules and Regulations are not broken.

Both individuals and grassroots clubs were charged last season for bringing the game into disrepute when offensive comments were posted on social networks and/or their own websites.

Cases involving media comments or comments made on social networking sites are charged under FA Rule E3(1).

Rule E3(1) of the FA's Rules of the Association states that, "A participant shall at all times act in the best interests of the game and shall not act in any manner which is improper or brings the game into disrepute or use any one, or a combination of, violent conduct, serious foul play, threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting words or behaviour".

Should the comments include a reference to any one or more of a person or person's ethnic origin, colour, race, nationality, faith, gender, sexual orientation or disability, these are considered 'aggravating factors' and FA Rule E3(2) may apply. This allows for a Regulatory Commission to consider the imposition of a doubled sanction.

Types of comment

The following types of public media comment, including on social networking websites, may be considered to be in breach of FA Rule E3:

- Comments which are improper, which bring the game into disrepute, which are threatening, abusive, indecent or insulting.
- Comments about match officials which imply bias, attack the officials' integrity or which are personally offensive in nature
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Points to Note

Participants are deemed responsible for any postings on their account. The fact that a posting may have been made by a third party will not necessarily prevent disciplinary action being taken.

In addition, re-tweeting another person's posting may lead to disciplinary action if the original comment was improper.

Finally, deleting an inappropriate posting, whilst advisable, does not necessarily prevent disciplinary action being taken.

The Football Association Process

For cases involving social networking media comments and media comments which have only been published in a written media format and which are considered by The FA to potentially breach FA Rule E3, The FA will always seek written observations from the Participant alleged to have made the comment.

This provides an opportunity for a Participant to explain whether he did in fact make the comment, clarify the context in which the comment was made and what was meant by it. The FA will then consider the observations provided by the Participant and decide whether to either charge the Participant with a breach of FA Rule E3, issue a formal warning to the Participant or to take no further action in relation to the matter.

There are no set sanctions for media comments or social networking comments cases. However, financial penalties are the most common form of sanction for these kinds of cases.

For more information on social media comments in football, please contact Football Investigations Manager, Lauren Halsey on 01462 650203 or via lauren.halsey@hertfordshirefa.com