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English football comes together to toughen measures addressing fan behaviour at matches

The FA, Premier League and EFL are together introducing new measures and stronger sanctions across the game to tackle the increased anti-social and criminal behaviours recently seen within football grounds and underline the importance of a safe matchday environment.

The new set of actions, which will be implemented across all English football leagues from the start of Season 2022/23 and backed by the Football Supporters' Association, will target activity such as entering the pitch without permission, carrying or using smoke bombs or pyrotechnics and throwing objects - as well as drug use and discriminatory behaviour.

These acts are dangerous, illegal and have severe consequences. They have no place in football, or anywhere.

From the start of Season 2022/23, all identified offenders will be reported by clubs to the police and prosecution could result in a permanent criminal record, which may affect their employment and education, and could result in a prison sentence. The FA will also be enforcing a tougher charging and sanctioning policy for clubs, which will reinforce these measures.

Furthermore, anyone who enters the pitch and those identified carrying or using pyrotechnics or smoke bombs will now receive an automatic club ban. These bans could also be extended to accompanying parents or guardians of children who take part in these activities.

The safety of everyone attending a matchday is the game's collective priority. We know the behaviours carried out by some fans last season do not represent the majority of supporters and they risk ruining the fantastic experience of a football match for everyone. Therefore, we are working with clubs to highlight the important role that fans, clubs, players and coaches all have to play in helping to create a safe environment.

Our strong and collective approach reflects how seriously we all view this issue and the severity of the risks. Nobody should be intimidated or assaulted in their workplace. The pitch must remain safe for players, managers and match officials, just as the stands should be for supporters.

To further support this action, The FA, Premier League and EFL are working with police forces, the UK Football Policing Unit (UKFPU), and the Crown Prosecution Service to establish a new principle for cases relating to pyrotechnics and smoke bombs, as well as entering the pitch without permission. This will mean cooperating to achieve a prosecution in these cases will become the default response of the football authorities and criminal justice system, sending a clear and unambiguous message to all who break the law.

Other measures to be implemented include working with clubs to enhance search regimes and increased use of sniffer dogs at grounds. We will also be working in partnership with our clubs, players and managers, the Government, broadcasters, the police and social media platforms in seeking to discourage the further growth or acceptance of these behaviours across English football. This includes working with social media platforms to establish new ways of quicker removal of fan-generated videos of illegal behaviour at football matches, including violent offences and pitch invasions. It also includes asking the Government to reform regulations to restrict the supply of pyrotechnics and smoke bombs.

FA Chief Executive Mark Bullingham said: "We all know about the fantastic and unique role that football can play in bringing communities together. However, the rise in anti-social behaviour that we saw in stadiums at the end of last season was entirely unacceptable and put people's safety at risk. Together, English football has introduced new measures and stronger sanctions, for the start of the coming season, to send out a clear message that we will not tolerate this type of illegal and dangerous behaviour. Football stadiums must be a safe, inclusive and enjoyable environment for all, and it is the responsibility of everyone in the game, including governing bodies, clubs, players, coaches, and fans, to ensure that we all play our part in protecting our game and each other."

Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters said: "Everyone should feel safe and able to enjoy a football match. Together, with clubs and partners across football, we are making clear the type of incidents we saw last season must stop. If we don't take collective and sustained action, it may only be a matter of time before someone is seriously injured, or worse."

"These new measures are a strong response to a significant increase in fan behaviour issues, but we know it is the minority who have behaved unacceptably and unlawfully. Premier League football should be a fantastic experience for everyone and we don't want matches to be marred by these sorts of events in the future."

EFL Chief Executive Trevor Birch said: "This season sees new measures introduced and sanctions implemented that will serve to remind everyone attending games - but particularly the minority of people behaving in an offensive manner - that there are real life consequences for the criminal, dangerous and irresponsible conduct at football. It is wholly appropriate that these unacceptable behaviours will now be dealt with through a combination of police action and automatic club bans. There is nothing like going to watch your team live and that is why the English professional game has taken strong collective action, to ensure the match day experience remains a safe and welcoming environment for all including fans, players, club staff and match officials."

Football Supporters' Association Chief Executive Kevin Miles said: "We are contacted by supporters on a fairly regular basis who have been caught jumping on the pitch, or with pyro in the stands, and without exception they regret doing it."

"Whether they had positive intentions or not is irrelevant in the eyes of the law - pyro and pitch incursions are illegal, you will be prosecuted and you will be banned by your club."

To support this new package of policies and actions, today marks the launch of an all-football campaign. '*Love football. Protect the game*' will make clear the consequences of, and sanctions for, illegal and dangerous behaviour as we seek to urge fans to help us protect the game and keep everyone safe.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Since the end of last season, the Home Office is in the process of adding drug offences to the list of offences that can lead to a Football Banning Orders (FBOs). FBOs have also been extended to the Women's Game and the Government has offered to work with the football authorities to see what more can be done to tackle poor behaviour.
- The FA, Premier League and EFL have also today written to Policing Minister Tom Pursglove requesting a review of the regulations governing the sale of pyrotechnic devices and smoke bombs, seeking to restrict their supply to professional venues and commercial/public firework displays only. The letter outlines the easy availability of dangerous pyrotechnics and flares online, with ring-pull smoke grenades available for as little as £3 on mainstream UK e-commerce platforms.
- The letter also asks Home Office Ministers and the UK Football Policing Unit to support a new approach to tackling fan-generated videos of illegal activity at football matches. Premier League

analysis of a sample of content on TikTok and Twitter shows that 388,000 people have viewed fan-generated videos of the Everton vs Crystal Palace pitch invasion in May 2022. A further 4.7 million have watched a fan appear to assault a Crystal Palace player during the same match.

- Football governing bodies are already engaging with the broadcasters to ask for their support in ensuring that pitch invasions and pyrotechnics do not become normalised in English football. Leagues are also asking players to ensure that they do not engage with fans who enter the pitch, or pick up smoke bombs or pyrotechnics.
- The Sports Grounds Safety Authority (SGSA) is the UK Government's advisor on safety at sports grounds. The SGSA has worked in partnership with football authorities to develop a pyrotechnics education campaign toolkit to raise awareness of the risks associated with the use of pyrotechnics. The document also complements and reaffirms advice from the 'Pyrotechnics in Stadia' report published by UEFA in 2016. The 'Pyrotechnics Education - Campaign Toolkit' and its accompanying film are useful resources for all venues, including those used for other sports.