

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
LIMITED

Patron: HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
President: H.R.H. THE DUKE OF KENT
Chairman: F.A. MILLICHIP

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Our Ref: FAM/PFS/417

Your Ref:

3rd July 1985.

The Rt.Hon. Leon Brittan, Q.C., M.P.,
Home Office,
Queen Anne's Gate,
London, SW1H 9AT.

Dear Mr. Brittan,

Thank you for your letter of 10th June 1985, following the adoption by this Association at its Annual General Meeting, of the amendment put forward by Mr. Dunnett, relative to the discipline of Clubs.

Naturally, I regret that your interpretation of our new Rule 24 (old Rule 31) should suggest some form of weakness or even failure on the part of The Football Association or its Member Clubs to recognise their responsibilities in the sphere of hooliganism. In fact, The Football Association is only too well aware of its responsibilities, despite the conflicting views expressed by many who have little knowledge of the depth of our problems. The Football Association is also acutely conscious of the legal complexities. I maintain that the new Rule gives The Football Association greater power over events, in that the burden of proof in respect of the only defence available, is laid on the shoulders of the Clubs themselves. If a Club can responsibly demonstrate that the wording of the defence applies to any particular circumstances, I am totally at a loss to understand how it can be held responsible in any disciplinary context.

We, The Football Association, are satisfied that apart from the legal objections, which are obvious enough, to attempt to hold Clubs responsible in such circumstances would be blatantly unfair and counter-productive - there can be no concept of responsibility without blame.

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Prime Minutes ②
Few information. A
weak defence of
the FA's decision.
MFA 417

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Notwithstanding my views on the change of Rule, I assure you that the policy decision taken against certain Clubs following the Brussels tragedy, is one which it is intended to follow on the domestic scene - e.g. whether Clubs are to blame or not, to consider earlier 'kick-off' times, restricted attendances, all-ticket matches, and efforts to discourage travelling 'away' supporters. Whether there can be valid legal objections to this policy remains to be seen, but we have all derived some consolation in the Courts decision to uphold our ban on those Clubs who this year qualified to play in Europe.

It is the duty of this Association to promote the game in every respect - to maintain good order and discipline and to protect it from abuses and it is intended to display that authority at all times, whilst at the same time not putting the existence of the many innocent Clubs in jeopardy.

Yours sincerely -

F.B. Mitchell

c.c. The Rt.Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P. ✓