



PRESS RELEASE

The Football Supporters' Federation

For Immediate Release – 14.10.80

Football Supporters' Federation news: Disgust at fan court verdict [Immediate Release 14.10.08]

The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) offers its whole-hearted support to Chelsea fan Cliff Auger following today's West London Courthouse decision to find him guilty of causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal following Cliff's actions to protect his own son.

The court today fined Cliff £500 while the police left him with four broken ribs and a punctured lung following the incident in January. A public order charge relating to threatening words and behaviour was thrown out.

We believe this verdict sends out the ridiculous message that a father does not have the right to protect his own child. The FSF feel that this is a particularly malicious and vindictive prosecution.

Cliff is a lifelong Chelsea fan who attended the Chelsea v Queens Park Rangers FA Cup tie on Saturday, January 5, 2008, with his two sons aged 13 and 16.

Following the match one of his son's friends went into a pub to use the toilet, shortly afterwards the premises were 'locked down' by the police meaning no one could enter or leave.

Whilst asking police if his son's friend might be permitted to leave the pub, Cliff's eldest son James was bitten on the leg by a police dog. In an attempt to release his son from the dog's grip, Cliff kicked the dog and was immediately wrestled to the floor by police officers.

Cliff was taken to the police station where he was charged with causing unnecessary suffering to a protected animal and threatening words/behaviour.

After complaining that he had sustained numerous injuries, he was eventually taken to hospital where he was told he had four broken ribs and a punctured lung. Emergency surgery was required and Cliff remained in hospital for four days, and subsequently missed six weeks' work.

Cliff is now pursuing a complaint with the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

Steve Powell, Director of Policy & Campaigns at the Football Supporters' Federation said:

"The FSF are dismayed that Cliff has been found guilty of a charge we believe should never even have been brought.

"Cliff moved to protect his son in the same way any parent would. Should acting on instinct to protect your child really result in a criminal record? We don't believe so.

"He and his family and friends were nothing more than innocent bystanders - simply in the wrong place at the wrong time. They are not football hooligans.

"While this case is extreme, we frequently hear from supporters complaining of heavy handed treatment from Police. Our work with the police will continue, in a bid to ensure supporters are treated fairly and impartially."

- ENDS -

Notes to editors:

The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) is the national supporters' organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising over 142,000 individual fans and members of local supporters' organisations from every club in the professional structure and many from the pyramid. For more info <http://www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php>

Cliff Auger may be available for interview, for further information call Michael Brunskill.

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