



FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS' FEDERATION NEWS:

Portsmouth FC threatens to silence its most famous fan John Portsmouth Football Club Westwood [IMMEDIATE RELEASE]

Portsmouth FC is attempting to silence its most famous fan John Portsmouth Football Club Westwood for persistent standing while playing musical instruments at games. Following instructions from the local Safety Advisory Group (SAG) Portsmouth FC has written to John warning him to remain seated during matches.

The SAG blames John for hundreds of other fans standing, appearing to believe that they only stand because John is on his feet with his bell and bugle. Last season John was moved to a 'bandstand' at the far end of the ground – the fans still stood. For the last two games John and friends have remained seated – as usual, hundreds behind him and in front of him have still stood.

Portsmouth Football Club Westwood said:

"We want to make as much noise as possible in support of our Club. Playing instruments sitting down is not an option and singing is far more natural standing up. After all you stand for hymns in church and for the National Anthem, even in football grounds."

Despite the Liberal Democrat's Autumn 2008 Conference pledging to re-introduce safe-standing areas at football stadiums, the Portsmouth SAG continues to take a hard-line approach at Fratton Park.

On September 14th 2008, Liberal Democrat Shadow Culture, Media and Sport Secretary, Don Foster said:

"This is a sensitive issue. But we cannot ignore the large numbers of fans who want to stand, and are doing so in seating areas, despite the existing regulations."

But, as if Portsmouth Football Club do not have enough troubles at the moment, the local SAG expect them to persecute their own supporters. It is common knowledge among supporters that action is only taken against groups of fans when the numbers are manageable. Away supporters at Fratton Park often stand for the whole 90 minutes.

Ken Malley, Portsmouth fan and National Council member of the Football Supporters' Federation said:

"Clearly there's a lack of perspective and proportion. Both the City Council and SAG appear to be against fun and passion. The idea that standing in seated areas is inherently dangerous is nonsense. Surely with a bit of goodwill all round, a commonsense solution can be found or are the Council and SAG just full of killjoys?"

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The Football Supporters' Federation (FSF) is the national supporters' organisation for all football fans from England and Wales comprising more than 150,000 individual fans and members of local supporters' organisations from every club in the professional structure and beyond. For more info <http://www.fsf.org.uk/about-the-fsf.php>

To set up interviews with John Portsmouth Football Club Westwood or for copies of the Portsmouth FC letter please contact Ken Malley (see below).

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