

**THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
PERSONAL HEARING
RELATING TO BETTING ACTIVITY 2014-15 SEASON
831 BREACHES OF RULE E8 (1)(a)(1) AND 1 BREACH OF E8(1)(b)
MR MARTIN PILKINGTON**

1. These are the written reasons in regard to a Personal Hearing decision, made on Wednesday 20th July 2016.
2. The Commission members were, Major (Retd) W T E Thomson (Chairman), Mr. A Hardy and Mr. M Kearns.
3. Counsel for The Football Association (FA) was Mr. Craig Harris. Also in attendance was Mr. Martin Pilkington, who was represented by the Chairman of Ashton United Mr. Terry Hollis. Mr. Steve Hobson Vice Chairman Ashton United and the Manager of Ashton United Mr. Paul Phillips were also in attendance as character witness.
4. Mr. P McCormack, of The Football Association Judicial Services Department, acted as Secretary to the Commission.
5. The details of the Charge of 831 breaches of FA Rule E8 (1)(a)(i) and one breach of E8(1)(b) were as follows:

It is alleged that between 9th August 2014 and 24th May 2015 (inclusive) you placed bets on the result, progress, conduct or any other aspect of, or occurrence in a, a football match or competition whilst being a Participant.

It is further alleged that in or around April 2015 you provided information to Mr Peter Allen, relating to football which you obtained by virtue of your position within the game and which was not publically available at the time and that information was used by Mr Allen for, or in relation to betting.

6. The Charge was based upon the Witness statements of Ian Ryder dated 17th February and 23rd February 2016.
7. Mr Pilkington had admitted to the charges and requested a personal hearing.

8. Prior to the hearing commencing, Ashton United submitted a written application on behalf of Mr Pilkington. Although this application was out of time, there were no objections from the Panel members and the Football Association, to the submission, less the penultimate paragraph beginning "At no time within the process".

9. The Football Association opened their case and stated that Mr Pilkington had cooperated fully with the investigation and at no time was there any suspicion of match fixing. The Football Association further stated that this was a very serious case and had placed the integrity of Mr. Pilkington in question.

9 The Football Association recognised, by Mr. Pilkington's own admission, he was a heavy gambler, bordering on addiction. He would bet daily and appeared to have a good knowledge and understanding of the betting market.

10 The Football Association stated that Mr Pilkington holds accounts with 7 betting operators, he had bet on 831 occasions in breach of FA rules, 48 of which involved matches featuring Ashton United, 16 of which involved bets on Ashton United to lose, which Mr Pilkington had played in 6 of those matches.

11. The Football Association accepted that Mr Pilkington had bet on Ashton United to win and lose, and in one particular game Mr Pilkington had bet on Ashton United to lose, but in fact, had scored the winning goal.

12. The Football Association stated that Mr Pilkington had confirmed that his Uncle was Mr Peter Allen, and worked with him on a daily basis. Mr Pilkington admitted that he had discussed the game between AUFC and ROFC and certain players were going to be rested. It had been noted by the investigation team, that an account in the name of Mr. Peter Allen, had placed two bets on the game AUFC versus ROFC, with an initial stake of £200 which returned £875 winnings.

13. The Club Chairman Mr. Terry Hollis opened the case on behalf of Mr Pilkington. The Chairman stated that the Club fully supported their player. They recognised he had an addiction problem and asked that members of the panel to take that into consideration. Mr Hollis then gave a breakdown of statistics concerning addiction in particular gambling addiction and it is a unique illness. Mr Hollis went on to state that the Club had a duty of care for their players, as also did the Football Association Mr Hollis went on to say that Mr Pilkington lived in a high depravation area, he lives in poverty and

is struggling with access to his daughter. Mr Hollis stated that Mr Pilkington is extremely remorseful, he cooperated fully with the investigation team and the playing of football should not be removed from his life. Mr Hollis explained that Mr Pilkington Uncle, Peter Allen, on a daily basis would discuss gambling and bets, and there was therefore no deliberate intention by Mr Pilkington, to supply information to Mr Allen regarding the AUFC game versus ROFC. Mr Hollis stated that Mr Pilkington integrity was never in question and asked the panel to consider leniency.

14. Mr Pilkington stated that he was a heavy gambler and had a number of betting accounts. He had played 3 years for Ashton and had a history of betting. He recalled on one occasion, betting against Ashton to win and in that game went on to score the winning goal. He admitted to being aware of the FA rules regarding gambling had signed the FA Form regarding betting, but had not fully read the document. He understood what he had done was wrong and is extremely remorseful; the money earned from playing football really helps. He stated that his Uncle and he talk about gambling every day and there was never any intention to pass on information that would have assisted Mr Allen in placing a bet, he said that he had been naïve.

15. The Club Vice Chairman Mr Steven Hobson spoke on behalf of Mr Pilkington. He stated that this was Mr Pilkington 3rd season with Ashton and was the leading scorer. He was an ideal player always on time. He never had any problems with match officials and had been open with the FA investigation team from the first minute. Mr Hobson went onto say he regarded Mr Pilkington highly and would consider him for employment. He also stated that Mr Pilkington had worked hard to cure his addiction with gambling.

16. The panel then heard from the Team Manager Mr. Paul Phillips. Mr. Phillips stated that Mr. Pilkington had taken some persuasion to join Ashton United from a step 7 club. He was great ambassador for the club and had been awarded the golden boot. During training he was an example to other players and was disciplined and outstanding. He had the support of the Club and has worked hard to cure his problem

SANCTION

Mr. Pilkington having admitted to the charge, we proceeded to consider the appropriate sanction for this offence. The following was taken into consideration.

- a. Overall perception of impacts on the games integrity.
- b. The player played in 6 matches of the 16 bets which involved bets on Ashton United to loose.
- c. Number of bets (831)
- d. Size of bets. (Small but regular)
- e. Circumstances surrounding pattern of betting
- f. Actual stake
- g. Personal circumstances. We noted the comments in regard to Mr Pilkington living in a high deprivation area and in poverty. He had admitted to a gambling problem, bordering on addiction, his family circumstances regarding access to his daughter. His reliance on a football income and his remorsefulness.
- h. Previous Record (clean)
- i. Experience of the participant.
- j. Assistance to the process of the charge (Fully collaborated)

17. Having taken into consideration all of the above, the relevant rules, regulations & guidelines, with credit having been given in particular because of Mr Pilkington's personal circumstances and for early admittance of the charge, along with having noted the seriousness of the offence, the Commission unanimously imposed the following sanction which was considered fair and proportionate:

Mr Pilkington is suspended from all football and football related activity, with immediate effect, for a period of four (4) years with the final twelve (12) months suspended for a period of two (2) seasons following any recommencement he may have as a Participant within football. For the avoidance of doubt, Mr Pilkington is eligible to recommence football related activity on or after 20th July 2019. In addition Mr Pilkington was fined the sum of £75 and warned as to his future conduct. There was no order as to costs of the Commission.

18. There is a right of appeal against the decision in accordance with FA Regulations.

W T E Thomson

Chairman

25th July 2016