



Presentation to Tracey Crouch, Fan Led Review of FA, 28th June 2021

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Introduction

- FAEquality Now is highlighting examples of institutional failure by FA. John Stiles and Judith Gates represent families affected by the issue of sports related dementia in ex-players.
- John is the son of Nobby Stiles, who was renowned internationally. Judith is the wife of Bill Gates. Bill was a one club man for 13 years. Both players contributed to the centrality of football as an integral part of the social fabric of our country.
- John and Judith come with personal stories. Nobby died recently after years of illness, bedridden and incapacitated. He and his family suffered immeasurably during his decline. Judith is part way through a similar journey. Every day her husband loses another memory, another skill, another facet of himself. She lives with the pervading sadness of a protracted goodbye. John and Judith's personal stories fuel their commitment.
- But John and Judith come with more than personal stories. They come with facts as well as with emotion. Judith is co-founder and chair of the charity Head for Change, a recently formed charity committed to being part of the solution. John is an Ambassador. They come with carefully researched knowledge of sports related dementia. They know of international developments, we are aware of the actions, and inaction, of sporting governing bodies.

Institutional Failure of FA with regard to dementia.

- Start from the premise that FA have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the game.
- Also have a duty of care to players and, by extension, families and children
- These premises should also inform organisations connected with the FA, such as the players union, the PFA, and clubs.
- It is beyond question that the FA has breached these responsibilities.

What has the FA NOT done that they should have done?

- Ignored growing body of scientific research evidence as to the dangers of head injuries

- Did not take PROMPT action when presented with evidence in 2003 from the Astle family of a brain autopsy showing CTE and coroner's report labelling this an industrial disease. Specifically, for almost 20 years the FA
- Did not initiate substantial and ongoing research.
- Did not follow up with the Industrial Injuries Council to have sports related ND prescribed as an industrial disease.
- Did not monitor the health of players.
- Did not make the game safer. Continued with training practices known to be dangerous.
- Did not introduce effective concussion protocols.
- Did not educate on the dangers of heading.
- Did not provide care and support for affected players and their families.

How many players and their families have been affected because of this needless inaction over 20 years?

What is the FA doing now?

- Too little, too late! Engaging in satisficing activities. Doing the minimum. Their actions are designed to evade criticism, rather than to find a solution.

Conclusion

The 2019 FIELD research showed that footballers are 5 times more likely to develop dementia than the general population. Yet, because of the institutional failures of the FA

- past players and their families are virtually unsupported in their battle against dementia.
- the danger to present and future players continues virtually unabated.
- This is a global epidemic and a ticking time bomb.

We need fewer satisficing gestures and more structural change in order for the FA to fulfil their duty of care and make the game safer for present and future players. We need a FA governance structure that provides for this much needed change.