

To the President of FIFA  
Joseph S. Blatter

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3 pages

CC by email:  
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Dear President Blatter

We take the liberty of writing you on the occasion of the recent dispute between FIFA and the British reporter Andrew Jennings about his newly published book "Foul".

As an open platform for debate on how to strengthen democracy, transparency and freedom of expression in sports – values that have been explicitly shared by FIFA on numerous occasions - Play the Game is concerned with ensuring not only that criticism about important sports political matters can be raised publicly, but also that both parties are heard on an equal and fair basis. In that spirit, we have invited FIFA to present its viewpoints at every conference we have organised over the years.

It may not come as a surprise that FIFA has rejected most of the allegations put forward by Andrew Jennings over the past years, but it is a surprise and a matter of great concern that FIFA feels that its viewpoints have been omitted or distorted by Jennings. As it is stated e.g. by Andreas Herren in the Swiss newspaper Tages-Anzeiger on May 3, 2006:

“Jahrelang haben wir uns mit dem Autor auseinander gesetzt und oft die immer gleichen Fragen beantwortet. Leider mussten wir feststellen, dass er unsere Antworten in seinen bisherigen Medienberichten gar nicht gebracht oder falsch dargestellt hat [...]“

If that should be the case, FIFA would not have received the fair treatment it is entitled to. Therefore we hope that you will accept our invitation to let FIFA's answers be published uncensored and in full extent on our website.

To that end, we have selected some fundamental questions raised by the new book and by the ongoing debate between you and Andrew Jennings. Should FIFA want to add other questions and answers in relation to the matter than the ones selected by Play the Game, we will be happy to publish such amendments, too.

Our questions are:

1) As part of the ISL liquidation process, it was agreed between the liquidator Thomas Bauer and the lawyer Peter Nobel, representing former ISL Director Jean-Marie Weber, that part of the money once handed out to soccer officials from the ISL as illegal payments and bribes, should be returned to the insolvent estate. In total, 2.5 million Swiss Francs has been paid back.

FIFA must have an interest in sanctioning the soccer officials that took the bribes.

What has FIFA done to identify and sanction the corrupt leaders? Will FIFA make their names public?

2) In the first chapter of "Foul!", Andrew Jennings describes how a secret payment of 1 million Swiss Franc from the ISL to a high ranking FIFA official in the winter of 1998 was mistakenly sent directly to FIFA's bank account, from where it had to be redirected to its proper recipient. According to the book, the matter was discussed between you, Mr. Blatter, as the then General Secretary of FIFA, and the then Director of Finance, Erwin Schmid.

Who was the soccer official that took the 1 million Swiss Franc?

3) Depending on the source, there seems to be different assessments about how much money FIFA lost on the ISL bankruptcy. In 2001, you mentioned a figure of 75 million Euro.

Can FIFA update the public with information about how much money FIFA lost in the bankruptcy of ISL/ISSM?

4) In his book, Andrew Jennings claims that FIFA avoids responding to his questions about the FIFA President's "salary, bonuses from various sources, allowances, car allowances, pension contributions, the terms of his contract and what his payoff would be if he were dismissed?"

If the answers from FIFA are as quoted in the book, they have indeed very limited information value for FIFA's democratic constituency worldwide.

Will FIFA in the name of transparency and democracy give a detailed and exact answer to Play the Game: How much is the President of FIFA paid in total?

5) Andreas Herren's statement: "Leider mussten wir feststellen, dass er [Andrew Jennings] unsere Antworten in seinen bisherigen Medienberichten gar nicht gebracht oder falsch dargestellt hat [...]" is not only a serious attack on the journalistic ethics of Andrew Jennings. It will, if documented, shed new light on the debate on the state of FIFA affairs.

Will FIFA please provide us with the list of examples where Andrew Jennings has omitted or distorted relevant information from FIFA?

6) On its website FIFA writes about "Foul!" that:

"Although the book does contain various defamatory passages and many inaccurate statements and aspersions, this toned-down version of the book makes it unnecessary for FIFA to continue pursuing legal action." As FIFA has analysed and assessed the contents of the book, it will serve the public understanding well to know your main findings.

Will FIFA present its list of "inaccurate statements and aspersions" in "Foul!"?

Will FIFA also inform the public about how and when it has been able to study earlier versions of this newly published book?

7) The decision of FIFA to declare Andrew Jennings *persona non grata* from its press conferences raises a fundamental question of the extent to which a journalist can be critical of FIFA's leadership and yet uphold his or her full working possibilities in world soccer. To ban any individual journalist from press conferences constitutes a serious limitation of press freedom and contradicts FIFA's declared wish to perform as a transparent and democratic organisation.

Having the International Federation of Journalists as an important part of our constituency, the ban against Andrew Jennings is a matter of concern for Play the Game, and we would be grateful to know the following:

On which objective criteria has FIFA based its decision to exclude Andrew Jennings from its arrangements?

If this is not a lifetime ban, what will it take for the banned journalist to regain his professional rights?

To what extent do other journalists who pursue the same type of questions as Andrew Jennings, put themselves at risk of being banned?

President Blatter, on behalf of our network of leading journalists, researchers and sport leaders around the world who want to improve the ethical values in sport, we thank you in advance for answering to these seven concerns and thus further qualify the public interest in world soccer.

Yours sincerely,



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