

### ***John Terry v The Sun***

Clauses noted: 9

John Terry complained to the Press Complaints Commission through Kingsley Napley solicitors of London that three articles headlined "John Terry's mum arrested for shoplifting", "Girls' flip flops, kiddies' sweets, men's and ladies' watches, tight black leggings, casual shirts, groceries, pet food...and a green tracksuit" and "JT mums' shop haul was £1,450" – published in The Sun on 27, 28 and 30 March 2009 respectively – identified him in breach of Clause 9 (Reporting of crime) of the editors' Code of Practice.

The complaint was not upheld.

The articles reported that England football captain John Terry's mother, Sue Terry, and his mother-in-law, Sue Poole, had received formal cautions for shoplifting. The complainant's solicitors argued that the coverage, the tone of which sought to mock the complainant, was almost entirely focused on him – referring to his past, professional position and reaction to the matter – when he was not genuinely relevant to the story. He had not been involved in the incidents and the fact of his relationship to those at the centre of the story was irrelevant. Neither Mrs Terry nor Mrs Poole had sought publicity for themselves or sought to exploit their connection to the complainant. No public interest was served by the naming of the complainant.

The newspaper said that the complainant's mother and mother-in-law had accepted cautions for shoplifting from Tesco, one of the England team's corporate sponsors, and Marks & Spencer, which supplied suits to the England football team. The crime was therefore genuinely relevant to the complainant's high-profile position as England captain, and in the public interest. Both Mrs Terry and Mrs Poole – who had featured heavily in the exclusive media coverage of the complainant's wedding for a national magazine – had benefited from his personal wealth, living in properties he had bought for them. They had apparently stolen property from stores which helped to contribute to the complainant's wealth.

The complainant's solicitors said that the link between the stores concerned and the England football team was tenuous, and did not make the naming of the complainant genuinely relevant to the story.

#### *Adjudication*

The Commission has previously made clear when dealing with complaints under this Clause that it will have regard for the extent to which the relationship between the parties has been established in the public domain. In this instance, it was not in dispute that the complainant's relationship to both his mother and Mrs Poole had been placed in the public domain, not least as part of the high profile coverage of the complainant's wedding. It was not the case that the newspaper had revealed a hitherto unknown connection between the parties.

The Commission was also convinced by the argument that the complainant was genuinely relevant to the coverage and could legitimately be made its focus. Mrs Terry and Mrs Poole had accepted cautions for stealing items from stores which directly sponsored the England football team. The complainant, as captain, could reasonably be said to be the public face of the team. He was also one of the highest-earning footballers in the world who, it was said, provided for his family financially. The fact that – despite such wealth – his mother and mother-in-law had been involved in claims of shoplifting was clearly relevant to the matter.

The complaint was not upheld.

Adjudication issued 30/04/2009