

## RFU Disciplinary RE: Sportsmatch and Mal Malik, Rugby Lions

The board of Directors of the Rugby Lions Football Club would like to put on record their deep disappointment at the disciplinary action taken against Mal Malik, Rugby Lions Secretary, and total dismay at the Rugby Football Union over the handling of this case.

The facts are that the project did get off to a fractured start in early 2002, because of administrative delays by Sportsmatch and problems experienced by the main sponsor. The Rugby lions contacted designated players approved by the RFU, put them through coaching schemes and child protection courses in readiness for the scheme. In early part of 2002, various schools in Rugby were contacted and aspects of the programme delivered, up to the summer term. The season 2002/03, started poorly for the Lions with virtually a new squad, but poor results and financial constraints put severe pressure on the club's resources, resulting in the schools project not being delivered satisfactorily, by the contracted officers.

The Lions offered to re-launch and continue the original scheme at their own cost at the start of the rugby season, 2003/4. Indeed, in the autumn of 2003, schools coaching took place under the auspices of the then Director of Coaching, Paul Rendall. It is a great shame that this episode and the way it has been handled will deprive Rugby schoolchildren of continuing rugby coaching in England's World Cup winning season.

The Director's would like to point out that at the behest of the Rugby Football union and after certain assurances, Sportsmatch were repaid in full, the £35,000 they originally put into the project. We concede that the original scheme was not delivered to the high standards we would normally aspire to, but there were a number of mitigating circumstances.

Mal Malik, as Lions Chief executive at the time, and a co-signatory to the original application has been unfairly singled out, and made a scapegoat to appease Sportsmatch. It is to his great credit, that he has not apportioned any blame or pointed a finger to the many others who were paid to oversee, deliver and administer the project.