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## Man jailed for illegally supplying and viewing Premier League content

A UK man who ran an operation offering illegal access to Premier League football has been jailed for 16 months.

Mr Paul Faulkner appeared in front of Liverpool Crown Court on Tuesday 6 July after pleading guilty to multiple copyright and fraud offences, including accessing pirate content for his own use.

Mr Faulkner was the operator of subscription-based IPTV service TV Solutions, a pirate streaming service that offered illegal access to sports and entertainment broadcast content, including live Premier League matches and Sky channels.

Mr Faulkner pleaded guilty to both the unlawful supply of content and his own use of the service to view content he should have been paying to watch. The judge recognised that Faulkner's use of the unauthorised service was a distinct crime in itself. This was reflected in him receiving a separate sentence of four months' imprisonment for using the service.

Despite the defendant selling access to his service on social media platforms as a secondary source of income, the judge made it clear this case was a sophisticated fraud carried out over a significant period of time, made more serious by the involvement of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs).

The Premier League worked with FACT to track down the offender and brought legal action against him in a private prosecution.

**Premier League Director of Legal Services Kevin Plumb said:** "This sentencing demonstrates yet again that the courts take piracy crimes seriously and there are significant consequences for criminals involved in all forms of piracy. Legal action will be taken against those supplying unauthorised access to Premier League football, regardless of the size or scale of the pirate operation.

"This defendant was also given a separate four-month prison sentence for simply watching the unauthorised service. If it were needed, this should dispel any misconception that watching pirate streaming services is a grey area or is not an offence in any way.

"The Premier League's significant financial support for the entire football pyramid and wider communities is made possible through being able to sell and protect our broadcast rights. We are pleased that, through judgments such as this, courts continue to recognise the importance of the protection of our copyright."

**FACT Chief Executive Officer Kieron Sharp said:** "We are very pleased to see the courts once again deal with the problem of illegal streaming by delivering sentencing appropriate to the harm caused by these crimes. Furthermore, a separate sentence for Faulkner using the service as a consumer is important to highlight that end users are committing offences when accessing illegal streaming services. It is a massive warning.

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“FACT will continue to work with our members to monitor platforms used to advertise, market, sell and distribute apps, devices and streams, and to take action against suppliers, operators and consumers.”

## Notes to Editors:

### The Premier League’s anti-piracy programme

The Premier League has one of the most comprehensive anti-piracy programmes in the world, working with broadcast partners and authorities to bring down illegal streams and investigate and prosecute suppliers of illegal streaming services. Actions include:

- Operating sophisticated, market-leading technology to ensure an extremely high degree of accuracy in blocking illegal streams, regardless of the form of piracy
- Working closely with social media companies to make sure that both live streams and clips do not feature on their platforms
- Achieved landmark legal action cases internationally

The Premier League has taken successful action against pirate operations resulting in custodial sentences, significant costs awards and injunctions against sellers. Action is taken against offenders regardless of size or scale of the operation.

The world’s largest infringing streaming app Mobdro ceased all operations in March of this year after a major investigation and criminal referral by the Premier League and the Alliance for Creativity and Entertainment (ACE) resulted in law enforcement action by Spanish police and Europol. Mobdro illegally made available a large catalogue of live TV and video content from around the world, including sports, for use on smart TVs, smartphones, tablets and illicit streaming devices.

In the UK recent investigations and prosecution of suppliers of IPTV boxes include:

- A criminal found guilty of supplying illegal streaming devices (ISDs) providing unauthorised access to Premier League content. In 2018, John Dodds was sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison and subsequently ordered to pay back more than £520,000 to the ‘public purse’. <https://www.premierleague.com/news/1627532>
- The operators of a pirate streaming organisation Dreambox were jailed in March 2019 for a total of 17 years for conspiracy to defraud; some of the longest sentences ever issued for piracy-related crimes. They provided illegal access to Premier League football to more than 1,000 pubs, clubs, and homes throughout England and Wales.
- In 2020, Adel Mostafa pleaded guilty to copyright and fraud offences and was sentenced to 36 weeks’ imprisonment, suspended for two years, plus 150 hours of unpaid work and to pay legal costs, for providing access to unauthorised Premier League footage.

### About the Premier League

The Premier League produces some of the most competitive and compelling football in the world. The League and its clubs use the power and popularity of the competition to inspire fans, communities and partners in the UK and across the world. The Premier League brings people together from all backgrounds. It is a competition for everyone, everywhere and is available to watch in 880 million homes in 188 countries.

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## **About FACT**

FACT is the UK's leading intellectual property protection organisation protecting brands and businesses from intellectual property crime.

With close to 40 years' experience, FACT is at the forefront of the fight against intellectual property crime in the UK and internationally, specialising in protecting both physical and digital content. FACT leads the way in tackling digital piracy on behalf of rights holders and content creators.