London retailer convicted of fraud and copyright offences

Friday 4 October, 2019

A retailer in London has been convicted at the City of London Magistrates' Court for selling illegal streaming devices (ISDs) which gave access to unauthorised Premier League broadcasts and other content.

Mr. Ammar Al-Silawi, age 39, was found guilty on two charges of copyright and two charges of fraud, having been found to sell ISDs which provided unlawful access to a number of channels, including those of the pirate service beoutQ, from a shop on Edgware Road, London, W2.

The trial took place on Thursday 12 September, with sentencing heard at Westminster Magistrates' Court yesterday. Mr. Al-Silawi received the maximum 300 hours of unpaid community service and was ordered to pay legal costs to the Premier League. The defendant was also warned that failure to comply with the community order in any way would result in an immediate custodial sentence.

The Premier League prosecuted the case following an investigation conducted in conjunction with the Federation Against Copyright Theft (FACT), with the assistance of the Metropolitan Police.

This is the first case of its kind, with the Premier League successfully arguing that in selling the set top boxes, Mr. Al-Silawi was guilty of the offence of communicating infringing copies of copyright works to the public.

The pirate service beoutQ whose channels were made available on the ISDs sold by Mr Al-Silawi has been illegally providing access to Premier League and other sports content since its launch in 2017. In addition to working collectively with other footballing bodies to combat the beoutQ service, the Premier League is committed to taking action against resellers of the pirate service such as Mr Al-Silawi.

This case forms part of the Premier League's broader strategy to tackle pirate suppliers of all levels. As recently as July, for example, FACT investigators worked with the Premier League and UK law enforcement agencies to visit sixteen premises across the UK to serve notices to individuals suspected of supplying illegal sports streaming content.

Premier League Director of Legal Services Kevin Plumb said:

"The law is very clear that the sale of ISDs is illegal and it is an issue taken very seriously by both the police and the courts.

"We will continue to investigate and pursue all suppliers of illegal streaming services, regardless of the size or scale of their operation, to protect the intellectual property that enables the Premier League to be so competitive and compelling.

"Addressing the issues created by the unprecedented beoutQ situation remains a key priority of the Premier League and we will work tirelessly to support beIN Sports, as well as all other broadcasters and fans who acquire our content legitimately."

Kieron Sharp, FACT Chief Executive added:

"We are working with our members, including the Premier League, to remove sellers of illegal devices from the market and bring them to justice and we have had considerable success.

"The message is now unequivocal; if you sell a device that provides access to content that is not licensed or owned by you, you will face a criminal conviction.

"Illicit retailers should be aware of the Court's view that ignoring a cease and desist notice was a clear aggravating factor in this case."

Notes to Editors

In July 2019, FACT investigators and UK law enforcement agencies attended sixteen premises across the UK serving Cease and Desist notices to individuals suspected of supplying illegal sports streaming content. Link.

Related Sectors:

Computing & Telecoms :: Consumer Technology :: Leisure & Hobbies ::

Related Keywords:

Illicit Streaming :: London :: Piracy :: Conviction :: Fraud :: Copyright ::

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In the same month, a joint statement was released by FIFA, the AFC, UEFA, the Bundesliga, LaLiga, the Premier League and Serie A regarding the activities of beoutQ in Saudi Arabia, which can be found here.

In March 2019, three sellers of illegal streaming devices were jailed for a total of 17 years for conspiracy to defraud; some of the longest sentences ever issued for piracy-related crimes. Link.

In July 2018, John Haggerty was jailed for five years and three months after pleading guilty to conspiracy to defraud and dishonestly obtaining services for another, contrary to the Fraud Act. Link.

In the same month, Justice Arnold granted an Order that requires the UK's major internet service providers (ISPs) – including Sky, BT, Virgin Media, TalkTalk, plusnet and EE – to block and disrupt servers that host illegal streams of the Premier League's matches. Link.

In December 2016, Terry O'Reilly was sentenced to four years' imprisonment following the first legal case involving a supplier of illegal IPTV boxes enabling viewers to watch unauthorised content. Link.

The Premier League has recently seen further success in this area, ensuring its content has been removed from illegal streaming website Ronaldo7.net after investigating the identity of and threatening legal action against the operator.

In January 2018, the Premier League was also granted an injunction in the Netherlands forcing internet service provider Ecatel to stop providing services to operations that enable viewing of illegal streams of its matches.

The Premier League's efforts in tackling piracy worldwide has seen its first international office open in Singapore, deploying the League's hugely successful enforcement programme across multiple markets. Link.

Advice for fans on how to report illegal broadcasting of Premier League matches in commercial premises can be found here.

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 1 billion homes in 188 countries.

About FACT

FACT has been protecting businesses and fighting crime since 1983 and is acknowledged as a world leader in intellectual property protection.

We protect the content and product of members in the film and television broadcasting industries by remaining at the forefront of technological advances, changing methodologies and a rapidly expanding market.

Our ethos is to protect, prevent, detect, deter, disrupt and dismantle, whilst maintaining the ultimate sanctions of criminal prosecution and civil litigation.

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