

Freedom of speech: BBC axes Lineker after controversial tweet

Sports Desk

Veteran English footballer and Match of the Day presenter Gary Lineker was stood down from anchoring the Premier League highlights show Match of the Day (MOTD) after refusing to back down from a tweet strongly condemning the government's language concerning refugees. Lineker reportedly "wept" after learning that his fellow pundits at Premier League highlights show were prepared to boycott Saturday's show over the presenter's row with the BBC.

He likened language used by government ministers to Nazi Germany. The 62-year-old initially hoped to host Match of the Day as normal but was stood down on Friday evening. The BBC announced that Lineker had been removed from Saturday's show until a position on his social media use had been agreed. It is understood that the former England striker is unwilling to back down on his view.

Saturday's Match of the Day went ahead without a presenter, pundits and several regular commentators.

The row was sparked by Lineker's response on Twitter to a Home Office video in which Home Secretary Suella Braverman unveiled the government's plans to stop migrants crossing the Channel on

small boats.

Lineker wrote: "There is no huge influx. We take far fewer refugees than other major European countries. 'This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the '30s.'"

Lineker's effective axing from Saturday's show prompted an exodus of pundits and commentators. Ian Wright was first to reveal that he would boycott, with fellow regular Alan Shearer adding that he would take the same stance.

According to the Sun, Lineker "wept" and was "overwhelmed" by the reaction. A source told the newspaper that he was unaware that his studio guests were prepared to back him with such a strong show of support.

They are quoted as saying, "This has been a tumultuous 24 hours. Gary is in shock and had no idea this was coming. He wanted to go on air, make no bones about it, this was not his decision. Privately, everyone at the Beeb is in meltdown too. They genuinely don't know how they will get a show out because no one wants to touch it."

Former England footballer Ian Wright said on his podcast that he is "out" and "gone" if the BBC "get rid" of Gary Lineker.

In an episode of Wright's House, aired on Friday be-



● BBC

fore Lineker was told to step back from presenting MOTD, Wright called the tweet row "the perfect distraction" for the government.

In the Friday episode of Wright's House, the podcast's host said, "I'll tell you something. If they do - the BBC get rid of Gary Lineker - I'm out, I'm gone. I'm not staying there. On his own platform he should be able to say what he wants to say."

Explaining the row, Wright said, "He wrote a tweet criticizing the government about everything that's happening, the human rights issues and everything here and it's the perfect distraction for this Government, man."

"Gary's tweet was the headline news, bro." He went on, "They need Gary Lineker to distract everybody because for me it is a human issue, it's not

political.

"Gary Lineker, he retweeted from a German professor about - because the Hitler thing is what they all jumped on and everything like that. He retweeted saying that it all starts with language, it starts with words, they don't just start throwing people into concentration camps, it starts with words and language." Wright said the "culture war" is the "distraction".

AFC U20 Asian Cup: Boring Iran loses to Iraq



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Saeed Azimi
Staff writer

EXCLUSIVE

Iran's Under-20 national football team which had raised hopes with a 3-1 victory against Vietnam lost the semifinals to Iraq in a boring game.

Iran's youngsters led by Samad Marfavi suffered a bitter blow to Emad Mohammad Reza's side on Saturday. This was a bitter and annoying defeat for Iranian U20 football team.

In a match that Iran needed a victory to secure a place in the FIFA U-20 World Cup this year, Iran played an extremely cautious game, without a tactical plan. Iraq, which had obtained great chances throughout the game scored a late goal and disappointed Marfavi and his boys.

Iran's share from this competition was nothing but failure and regret.

In the 91st minute of the game, Iraq's Ali Jassim took the ball from behind the penalty area and entered the box without any disruption from Iran's disjointed defense and sent the ball to the corner of Iran's goal.

Congratulating the Iraqi side during his post-match press conference, Marfavi said, "It was a critical game for both teams, but our lads did not do what we wanted from them and the Iraqi side won one-on-one duels and tried to win the ball. Our boys did not demonstrate the required technical and tactical instructions and lost one-on-one duels." Iran's talented young players were denied an opportunity from participating in the FIFA U-20 World Cup because of the wrong mentality imposed by Marfavi. The qualified and talented youth of Iran once again experienced the bitter taste of a failure because in Iran, everything stays the same and nobody is willing to shake things up and change the formula to be successful.

The main question is this: Why should a team that has performed bravely in three group stage matches suddenly play so cautiously? What great feature did Iraq have that made him seem gigantic and invincible? Iranian youngsters need to learn characteristics such as bravery and the right mentality to play in the knock-out stages in football academies and through reading or proper footballing and psychological education, so that they can be mentally strong players. Marfavi has to answer to the public!

Mercedes publishes open letter amidst Hamilton to Ferrari rumors



↑ Lewis Hamilton in Bahrain Grand Prix
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Mercedes Formula 1 team has published an open letter to their fans after their disappointing performance at the Bahrain Grand Prix where Lewis Hamilton finished P5 and George Russell could only claim P7. The Silver Arrows were outshone by their customer team Aston Martin, who may have built a car worthy of taking a title fight to Red

Bull and Max Verstappen, F1 Nerds reported. The seven-time World Champion wasn't impressed, revealing that Mercedes didn't listen to him when he told them what the car needed. "Last year, I told them the issues that are with the car," he said on the BBC's Chequered Flag podcast. "I've driven so many cars

in my life, so I know what a car needs, I know what a car doesn't need.

"I think it's really about accountability, it's about owning up and saying 'yeah, you know what, we didn't listen to you, it's not where it needs to be and we've got to work'."

The open letter, from the eight-time World Champions acknowledges the

team's pain after pouring so much hard work into a car that hasn't met their expectations.

"Bahrain hurt. It hurt each one of us, who head into every season determined to fight for world championships," the letter reads.

"And we know it hurt you, our fans, too. Your passion and support are so important in driving us forward

- and we know that we feel the same pain."

The letter goes on to address the situation the team currently finds themselves in, emphasizing that they will not panic or make knee-jerk reactions. Instead, they will work urgently and calmly to build their recovery plan, focusing on what needs to happen in the short, medium, and long term to win.

"In a spotlight as fierce as F1, people are quick to point fingers, or look for scapegoats. But you know us better than that," the letter continues.

"Inside the team, we talk about having the courage to fail, the character to be accountable and the strength to see failure as an opportunity. We have been open and searingly honest about where we find ourselves. And we are working urgently and calmly to build our recovery plan, focusing on what needs to happen short term, medium term, and long term to win.

"We already have developments in the pipeline for the next races - and there will be more to come. But this won't be the work of a moment," the letter highlighted.