

Manchester United backs drive to get football fans Back in the Game as new study shows incontinence causing men to miss live matches

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Manchester United signs up to be the Premier League's first Gold BOG STANDARD club, as new research released today (26 November 2024) reveals football fans across the UK are missing out on attending live matches because of incontinence.

The new study, *Back in the Game**, shows these mass match day absences come at a cost to fans' mental and social health, while clubs and communities lose out on valuable income.

Co-authored by **Prostate Cancer UK** and **phs Group**, lead partners of the *Dispose with Dignity* campaign, the statistics show that since becoming incontinent, one in seven (14%) male football fans who experience urinary incontinence (UI) have blown the full-time whistle on attending matches and half (50%) say they now attend fewer games.

The vast majority of fans (74%) say having urinary incontinence simply puts them off attending games. Three in five (62%) are anxious about leaking on match day, while a lack of sanitary bins to dispose of products used to manage their condition is a worry for one in five (20%). The effect of this absence will also be felt in the club and surrounding community, as each absent fan fails to spend their usual average of almost £80 each game, including their ticket, travel, merchandise, food and drink.

One in eight men will get prostate cancer. Men over 50, Black men, or men who have a father or brother

who have had prostate cancer are at an even higher risk. Urinary incontinence is a side effect of life-saving prostate cancer treatment for lots of men. As many as two thirds (65%) who receive treatment for prostate cancer will become incontinent, some for a few weeks, months or years, and others may live with the condition forever.

The challenges men face is highlighted in a new film about lifelong Manchester United fan, Mark Farrington. **Mark is a 56-year-old repairs planner, from Horwich in Greater Manchester. He was treated successfully for prostate cancer aged 54 but was left incontinent for a period of time. He said:**

“You worry constantly - will I leak, will I be able to find anywhere to change my pad? Going to a football game was out of the question. Having sanitary bins for me to have been able to dispose of my incontinence pads would have made such a difference to me. You’d know you have somewhere to put it - I would 100% have gone to some games if things had been different, and that would have really helped me to feel back to my old self.”

Luckily for fans like Mark, they can now get ‘*back in the game*’. Manchester United is the first Premier League club to achieve the gold BOG STANDARD, the minimum standards Prostate Cancer UK and phs Group are asking organisations to implement to support men with incontinence.

The gold BOG STANDARD means men can visit Old Trafford knowing toilets will have male incontinence bins and products, such as pads. The club has installed 71 bins across the ground, with each washroom clearly signposted, so men can quickly and easily identify where they can find a male incontinence bin. The club will also be promoting awareness about prostate cancer and incontinence.

Nick Ridgman, head of support services, Prostate Cancer UK says: “Men who need to dispose of their incontinence pads often have no access to a sanitary bin in male toilets and a lot of men are too anxious to leave home as a result.

“Manchester United’s commitment to supporting men with incontinence is a fantastic step forward and we hope their action will inspire change across the whole football community, from the top of the Premier League to local non-league games. By giving men access to the basic facilities they need, we hope more men will feel confident to get back in the game and back to watching live football matches unhampered by their incontinence.

“If you need confidential support or information about living with incontinence, you can get in touch with our Specialist Nurses on 0800 074 8383, or via email, webchat or WhatsApp at prostatecanceruk/nurses.”

Steve Rider, the broadcaster and sports presenter who himself has had prostate cancer, says:

“I’m a proud supporter of Prostate Cancer UK and a very grateful survivor of prostate cancer. But it can bring its own inconveniences, including incontinence, and getting through an eight-hour live TV broadcast is certainly a bit more of a challenge for me now.

“For other people, incontinence can become a real social barrier. Imagine going to watch your local football team, you’re halfway through the second half and suddenly you feel the need to get rid of something a bit more substantial than your season ticket. The ability to do that hygienically, with security and dignity, is so important. And that’s why I’m a strong supporter of the *Back in the Game* initiative to get clubs up to the BOG STANDARD, to enable men to live a better life.”

The *Back in the Game* report also shows that as a result of not feeling able to attend any games or live sporting events – or having to cut down on how often they go – many men have lost their confidence (62%), feel a part of their identity is missing (42%), and are increasingly lonely (28%).

But men also say they could be tempted back to live games, if the facilities are right, stating they are more likely to attend if there are:

- Male incontinence bins 62%
- Vending machines for products 53%

Matthew Brabin, chief executive officer at phs Group, and lead partner of the *Dispose with Dignity* campaign said: “We commissioned the *Back in the Game* research because we know football can be a catalyst to change the narrative in a powerful way.

“Football is a way of life for many men; it’s a staple in their social calendar; what binds them to their community, a part of their identity and who they are. Having to sit out match days due to a lack of facilities and anxiety about leaving the house will undoubtedly be influencing men’s mental health, at a time when they really need support.”

“As a business that puts people at the heart of its products and services, our aim has always been to raise awareness of prostate cancer and male incontinence, eliminate taboos and start a national conversation to get men the support and facilities they deserve. To have a club like Manchester United sign up and lead the way is an enormous honour, and we hope to see more clubs sign up to support men with prostate cancer.”

To read the *Back in the Game* report, or contact your club to raise awareness about incontinence and demand your club is BOG STANDARD this season, go to www.phs.co.uk/BackintheGame