

FIFA rains on soccer piggy-back riders' parade

Some of those hoping to make a quick buck out of next year's soccer World Cup have fallen foul of FIFA by using its trademarks.

Owen Dean, of the law firm representing FIFA in trademark litigation, said four or five cases had been brought to court and others had been settled out of court.

One case, Dean said, involved retail giant Metcash, which distributed lollipops labelled "Astor 2010 pops". Judgment is pending. The case was heard in the North Gauteng High Court, Pretoria, last year.

Metcash general legal manager Geoff Canter said: "If the judgment interdicts us, then obviously we would have to stop production."

Eastwoods Tavern, a Pretoria pub close to Loftus Versfeld stadium, was warned for displaying signs bearing the phrase "World Cup 2010".

"We sued Eastwoods Tavern because they had all sorts of signs up," said Dean. "They were riding on the back of the event without being a sponsor."

A manager of the pub, who refused to give her name, said the case was finalised two months ago. The owner, she said, was overseas and unavailable for comment.

In other cases, a website bought a domain name that was "very suggestive of the soccer World Cup", said Dean.

He could not provide further details, but said the matter was finalised last year.

Another company, which designed a keyring and a pendant bearing soccer World Cup logos, was taken to task.

FIFA's registered trademarks include the phrases "South Africa 2010", "World Cup", "World Cup 2010" and "FIFA World Cup".

Also on the protected list is the official Zakumi mascot and the shape of the tournament's trophy.

A 2010 sign with soccer balls instead of the numeral "0" is also not for general use.

Though it is acceptable to create a sign reading: "Have a meal and watch the soccer here", it is unlawful to write "Have a

meal and watch the soccer world cup here.”

FIFA believes that trademark infringement “undermines the integrity of the FIFA World Cup and its marketing programme, but also puts the interest of the worldwide football community at stake”.

Source: The Times

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