

Hearts Support Kyle Lafferty As He Admits Gambling Addiction



Hearts owner Ann Budge today pledged the club's full support to Kyle Lafferty following the striker's admission to an addiction to gambling. The 30-year-old Northern Ireland international said in an interview with BBC Scotland's Tom English, that the support of everyone at Hearts and, in particular, Assistant Head Coach Austin MacPhee, had been 'incredible'.

Lafferty said "With the mindset I had, a grand was like a tenner. I knew it was against the rules to bet on football, but when you've got an addiction you just want to win that money back. I knew it was wrong, but I did it anyway."

"I feel lucky to be at Hearts with so many supportive people around me. Austin, Craig, Ann – what they've done for me makes me feel stronger this time," he says.

Lafferty was fined £23,000 by the English FA in August 2016 for gambling on the outcome of football games, something professional footballers are not allowed to do.

Ann Budge released a statement on the official Hearts website which is as follows:

On behalf of everyone here at Heart of Midlothian Football Club, I would like to formally record our total support for Kyle Lafferty as he moves forward to deal with his acknowledged addiction to gambling, as reported today by Tom English on the BBC website. I would also like to thank Tom for the professional and sensitive manner in which he has handled this situation.

Kyle took the enormously brave step of coming to the club and asking for help. No one should underestimate how difficult that decision was for him and his family. However, as is well recognised, the first step to dealing with a problem of this nature is to acknowledge that the problem exists. He has earned our great respect for doing so.

Kyle has the total backing of the coaching staff and his teammates as he deals with this challenge. It is a testament to the great footballer and character he is, that he has in no way allowed his personal battle to affect his performance on the training ground or on the football field. For the avoidance of doubt, Kyle will continue to train and play as normal.

Heart of Midlothian has a tremendous fan base that follows the team in huge numbers both home and away. They have taken Kyle to their hearts since he joined the club in the summer and I have absolutely no doubt that they will continue to back him as we all strive to help him deal with this enormous personal problem.

Sources: www.heartsfc.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/football