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URGENT
ON THE RECORD
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Our Ref: RCM/JO/sc/H0204/001

22 May 2009

Dear Sir

Peter Hargitay

We act for Peter Hargitay.

Our client is the Chairman and CEO of Europe Consultancy Network (ECN), a consultancy firm specialising in Crisis Management and Communication. He is a well regarded and successful businessman throughout Europe and beyond, and has a substantial reputation, investments and family ties within this jurisdiction.

For a number of years you have embarked upon what can only be described as a wholly unjustified "crusade" of vilification against our client and others with whom he is personally and professionally associated.

Whilst we return below to these ongoing and unwarranted, unprofessional and personalised attacks, for the purpose of the Pre Action Protocol on Defamation this letter makes complaint in relation to two specific defamatory publications by you. Firstly, defamatory publications on your website www.transparencyinsport.co.uk ("the Website") and secondly the defamatory oral publication made by you at London's Café Diplo on 8 December 2008. The particulars of that unlawful conduct follow.

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The Website

You are the owner and author of the Website. You are responsible for the content of the Website and you are liable in law for any foreseeable republication of its content.

The Website is littered with inaccuracies and is grossly defamatory of our clients.

The home page of the Website features the headline

*"Blatter's dirty tricks Hargitay Erupts
Conman outed, turns nasty"*

Clicking on that headline¹ brings up a further page at which reference is made (in a reproduced Private Eye article) to our client as

*"the Swiss-Hungarian con artist"*².

As concerns the Private Eye article our client's rights are reserved against its publishers and/or the author(ess) of the article in question.

A further (boxed) link on the homepage headed

*"Reporters Toolbox
10 Reasons Why Sepp Can Never Sue
(and the list is growing)"*

brings up a photograph of our client captioned

*"Spot the conman"*³.

Those comments represent 3 occasions on which you have published material labelling our client a "conman".

¹ [http://www.transparencyinsport.org/Blatters dirty tricks Hargitay erupts/hargitay erupts.html](http://www.transparencyinsport.org/Blatters_dirty_tricks_Hargitay_erupts/hargitay_erupts.html)

² [http://www.transparencyinsport.org/Blatters dirty tricks Hargitay erupts/PDF-documents/curse_of_gnome.pdf](http://www.transparencyinsport.org/Blatters_dirty_tricks_Hargitay_erupts/PDF-documents/curse_of_gnome.pdf)

³ <http://transparencyinsport.org/10-reasons-page3.html>



There is no truth whatsoever to this allegation. For a man in our client's position it is a very serious slur upon his reputation and in the highest category of defamations.

The allegation is unsupported, unsubstantiated and false. Had you bothered to contact our client prior to publishing the allegation you would have been advised of the allegation's utter falsity. Only an adverse inference as to your motive for publication can be drawn from the fact that despite being a very experienced journalist you chose not put to the allegation to our client prior to publication, a breach of the principles of responsible journalism⁴

The Café Diplo Evening

On the evening of 8 December 2008 you were a speaker at a talk held at Café Diplo in London ("the Café Diplo Evening").

At that talk you repeated the same allegation using the words:

*"Hargitay is a conman, nothing but a conman.
They come up in sport every now and again.
He is just a conman. A conman"*

These words constitute a slander actionable *per se* upon our client. For the purposes of this letter, we shall deal with the effect of the libel and slander together, treating them together as the "Allegation". This treatment does not constitute any waiver of our client's rights.

Meaning

The Allegation carries the clear and unequivocal meaning that our client is guilty of being a conman; that is, someone who cheats others by way of confidence tricks and/or is engaged or has previously engaged in dishonesty to a level of criminality.

The Allegation is of the utmost gravity. Not only is it grossly defamatory of our client, it is false and indefensible.

⁴ As set out by the House of Lords (per Lord Nicholls) in *Reynolds v Times Newspapers* [2001] 2 AC 127

