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Liverpool match halted after Antoine Semenyo reports racist abuse

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A Premier League match between Liverpool and Bournemouth was temporarily stopped after Bournemouth winger Antoine Semenyo reported alleged racist abuse from a supporter at Anfield.

The incident occurred in the 29th minute of the opening game of the season when referee Anthony Taylor paused play after Semenyo alerted officials. An anti-discrimination message was broadcast to the stadium, and police officers entered the referee's room during half-time.

Merseyside Police confirmed that a 47-year-old man had been identified and removed from the ground. Chief Inspector Kev Chatterton, match commander for the fixture, said the force treated the incident with the utmost seriousness.

“Merseyside Police will not tolerate hate crime of any form,” he said. “In cases like this we will be proactively seeking football banning orders, with the club, against those responsible.”

He encouraged supporters to report such behaviour immediately, adding: “The force will take action when incidents occur.”

Liverpool Football Club issued a statement acknowledging the allegation. “We condemn racism and discrimination in all forms; it has no place in society or football,” a spokesperson said, noting that the matter was now subject to a police investigation.

Semenyo went on to score twice in the second half, helping Bournemouth recover from a two-goal deficit before Liverpool eventually secured a 4-2 victory. Bournemouth captain Adam Smith praised his teammate's response, stating that the abuse was "unacceptable" and noting Semenyo's performance after the incident.

"The Liverpool players offered support as well," Smith told Sky Sports News. "It was addressed through the match protocol, but incidents of this kind continue to be reported."

The Premier League confirmed its anti-discrimination protocol had been followed and stated its support for the player and both clubs. "Racism has no place in our game or anywhere in society," it said in a statement. "We will continue to work with stakeholders and authorities to ensure our stadiums are inclusive and welcoming for all."

The Football Association also expressed concern, promising that further steps would be taken once the investigation was complete.

The incident comes only two days after Tottenham Hotspur forward Mathys Tel was targeted with online racist abuse following a missed penalty in his side's UEFA Super Cup victory over Paris Saint-Germain.