

This is a global player original podcast.

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It's much more convenient for us if you don't speak.

That is Rachel Riley, who we're going to be speaking to in today's show. She's, of course, a TV presenter, but she is also a huge Manchester United fan. And she has been very vocal, very outspoken about how the club has handled the Mason Greenwood affair, a football player who was accused of attempted rape, coercive control and assault, who, although the charges have been dropped, the team were determined to hold on to.

And in the statement issued by Manchester United yesterday, you would thought he may have just filed his taxes a day late. You know, there were mistakes made, but it's all fine now and there is nothing much to see here. And that's left a suspicion that the club, for whatever reason, is massively underplaying the gravity of the charges that Greenwood had faced, the tape that was available and is still available on social media and the yawning chasm between the two. Welcome to the News Agents.

The News Agents

It's John. It's Lewis. And we are at News Agents HQ and we're sort of picking up where we left off early last week with the whole story of Manchester United, Mason Greenwood, the allegations against him, the club saying they're now going to part company. And we're going to be speaking in a moment to Adam Crafton from The Athletic, who has played such a crucial role in bringing this story to public attention and to being ahead of the game on what Manchester United were thinking. Before we come to Adam, here's Gary Neville, former United player, talking about the way the club has handled this. Gary Neville speaking on the news.

Gary Neville speaking on Sky Sports. And Adam is with us now. And let's get straight to it. Last week, when you were with us, it all seemed that this was heading in one direction, that Mason Greenwood would be back in the first team. He'd be back out on the Hallowed turf at the Theatre of Dreams at Old Trafford.

Yeah, I think that was the, I suppose, the deduction that we'd all started to make because these news stories started to appear around, for example, Manchester United wanting to speak to their women's team before communicating a decision to the public. So the logical deduction that people were making out of that was, well, you probably don't need to speak to them if you're not bringing him back. What then happened, I think it was probably the day after I'd been in here, we were then, we then received concrete information.

So after you'd been on the news agents?

After I'd been on the news agents, we received concrete information to say that Richard Arnold, the Manchester United Chief Executive, had held a meeting with his executive leadership team at Manchester United's training ground on August the 1st. And he'd communicated a plan to bring Mason Greenwood back to the club, back into the first team. It even scheduled an announcement that was meant to be August the 4th. That was then pushed back because some of these female players were still out at the World Cup with the England squad doing fantastic things. And we got hold of details from what had been a hugely extensive plan, which, you know, I think there's a little bit of a movement at the moment from Manchester

United to say, you know, we're always weighing up lots of different options, even until the end. Well, I mean, this plan included details such as, for example, Manchester United had laid out in a document what kind of photographs they should take of Mason Greenwood during training sessions in order to then filter to the public and choreograph the PR around his return and how he would be received. The manager, Eric Ten Hag, would receive very, very clear PR guidance in terms of how to handle questions, not only in the short term, but also medium term and the long term. And then I suppose the most devastating detail was that United had even prepared kind of a list of external stakeholders, whether they were football pundits or politicians or journalists, but also crucially domestic abuse charities. And they'd categorized these different stakeholders into whether they would be supportive, open-minded

or hostile. And then when we reported on Friday that domestic abuse charities were assumed to be hostile, it felt at that point as though Manchester United were in a real public relations nightmare.

I suppose the point about that, right, is that what it reveals is just a cynicism, right?

It's not that they're sat there thinking, okay, what is the morally right thing to do here? What is the signal that we're sending about alleged or potential domestic abuse and all of these sorts of things and the relationship that women have with the club?

It's just how do we achieve our ends, which is keeping this guy on the team?

I think United would argue that, you know, they started this process on February the 2nd, I think it was after the charges were dropped. And they would say that they, well, they do say that they placed the welfare and the perspective of the complainant at the heart of what they were doing. They didn't actually manage to speak to the complainant.

They spoke to the complainant's mother, but also at the end of their process, they presented facts both to the complainant and the family of the complainant.

And just to remind people, the original, although the complaint has now been dropped or elements of it have been dropped, the original complaint was very serious.

I was hugely serious. I mean, you're talking about an audio clip and images that were posted on social media that became very, very widely distributed and also audio from the man in question, which is incredibly menacing and threatening. That led to the police to charge with attempted rape, coercive control, assault, occasioning actual bodily harm. And it reached a point where there was going to be a trial and then the charges were dropped and the CPS cited the withdrawal of witnesses, but also new materials coming to light as well.

So the Crown Prosecution Service never said what the CEO of the club said yesterday. The Crown Prosecution Service said a witness has withdrawn their evidence. They didn't say we don't think these offenses happened. We're satisfied that he's not guilty.

Yeah. And Mason Greenwood, even in his statement yesterday on the Manchester United website, said that he was cleared. I think people since then have been saying, well, charges were dropped and there's probably a distinction to be made between charges being dropped and being cleared.

So why is Manchester United trying to put out a statement? I mean, I understand the broad PR and the Lewis point about the cynicism of it seems to me absolutely kind of unarguable. But why do they want to paint a picture now like, oh, it was a nothing burger. Move on. There's nothing to see here. Mistakes were made like he was kind of caught speeding

doing 45 in a 30 mile an hour speed limit zone.

Yeah. I think they would say that this process has been incredibly rigorous. Right. I'm definitely not here to defend Manchester United, but just for balance, they would say they have had access to information and also materials that perhaps haven't been in the public domain.

However, the challenge that you then have, even with some of the information that has been subsequently provided by a United statement yesterday or via briefings, I think it is still a significant ask for the general public based on what many members of the general public have seen and heard to then say, to essentially boil it down to, we know more about you than this and you're probably going to have to take our word.

And I think that places the club that already the ownership of the club, there's a huge level of distrust between supporters and the Glazer family who own the club.

So if you're asking them to take, to really take their word, I think that is a really difficult thing for Manchester United to even have thought they could pull off.

The CEO in this statement said, among other things, based on the evidence available to us, we've concluded that the material posted online did not provide a full picture and that Mason did not commit the offences in respect of which he was originally charged.

That's an unusual thing to advert to, right? Because then they basically say, why is he going? Also, why did the CPS bring charges? Did the police not do an investigation?

Did the CPS not interrogate it? It's extraordinary.

Yeah. And also, you know, you have United in that statement saying, you know, not all the information or not all the materials were able to be accessed for reasons that they said they respected. I think possibly what's happened here is Manchester United have set such a high bar for this internal process that they've almost gone about it as though they are the police, the CPS, the judge and the jury, attempting to prove beyond reasonable doubt, as if that's the question that was being posed to them, that alleged crimes have been committed or not committed and then make a verdict on it, when really what this process had to do was just was make a judgment call on whether this person was appropriate to represent their company.

And I think they probably made it far more complicated in many people's eyes than they needed to. So I want to ask you a question about two people's futures. One is Richard Arnold, the CEO and the other is Mason Greenwood. Yeah. If we start with Richard Arnold, I think it's been incredibly damaging, I think for his reputation in terms of I think everyone now accepts despite Manchester United's statements yesterday that this was a U-turn that the club made in light of public pressure because, you know, on Thursday, they started to receive contacts from charities such as Women's Aid expressing concern. You had MPs lining up to criticise Manchester United's handling of it and also a lot of supporters, very, very unhappy. And also really importantly, staff within Manchester United were really unhappy about this.

So have you spoken to lots of people at the club?

Yeah, over the past week, it's been made very, very clear to us that staff members at Manchester United are very, very unhappy about the way that the club has handled this to the extent that some were considering going on strike, resignations were being considered. Even on Thursday and Friday, you had senior executives from Manchester United following our reporting on Wednesday, where we'd said that some employees feel a sense of guilt and shame. They'd started, you know, organising meetings to all of a sudden talk to employees and hear concerns, but more to the point, still at that point, try and justify why they were making this decision to try and bring

Greenwood back into the team. But to answer the question on Richard Arnold, I think the reality for him is he's probably come away damaged, potentially stained, but I don't see a situation at the moment where this specific case would cost him his job.

And Mason Greenwood?

And Mason Greenwood, well, he's still contracted to Manchester United. So they've not terminated his contract. And I think the reason for that is, well, they've realised that everyone knows that they decided to bring him back, right? And they hadn't found grounds to terminate his contract. So if you're his representatives, you can just turn around to the club and say, well, you can't sack me if that's what your investigation has objectively found. And then you've also put in your statement that really the reason that they want him to continue his career elsewhere is because of the harsh spotlight of life at Manchester United. It's not an ethical position that has been taken by Manchester United. So it leaves them in a position now where they either have to settle or sell him or loan him out.

Will anyone buy him?

You know, there's reports today, I think, in the daily mail that clubs in Italy, Turkey, there's been some links with the Saudi League as well. There's obviously spending a huge amount of money at the moment. I think it'll be really interesting to see if a club in England attempts this, because I think if they look at what's happened with Manchester United and the level of scrutiny that's been applied to Manchester United and see, well, even United can't pull this off when it looked like they wanted to, you know, would a club lower down the ladder? Think that they, you know, they want to take that on. But he is, you know, he was, at least, a supremely talented young footballer, arguably the best young forward in England. It's a hell of a juxtaposition, as now between all of the, all the talk that we can, the football story in town was the lionesses and all this talk repeatedly about kind of the way the women's game and women in football was being taken more seriously and more credibly. And it's a huge success story, which of course it is. And then you've got this story going on in parallel, which obviously is about different things. But in some respects, it's about the attitude of very big clubs and very big companies and the sport towards women. And you have a situation in which, frankly, clearly they have prized commercial imperatives, they've prized other things. It hasn't, as I say, from the, your reporting been shown that they've been particularly cognizant of caring about domestic abuse and so on. I think one of the things that would have been very useful at the start of this process, because what United did in February was set up a panel to, to investigate this. And they did that internally. And they got people from different fields internally. So you had the legal counsel, you had the head of communications and marketing, you had the COO, you had the CEO, and you also had the football director. So you've got a mix of, of interest that it should in theory balance out and challenge each other. But one of the things they didn't do is very early on in the process, for example, invite in one of those charities that specialise in violence against women, not to necessarily give advice, but even just to almost do a workshop and say, these are the things that you might want to consider. At least then you can say you've had some of those conversations. Another thing they could have done is hire an external barrister, for example, to lead that process so that externally nobody can look at it and say you might have had a vested interest in whichever outcome, because, right, because the commercial people might have thought, well, this could, this could really upset sponsors or the football

people could think we need a player back. So I think those aspects would have been helped a lot. And in terms of, you know, the considerations about women, I think it's been really interesting, the way that so much conversation has centred on what will the women's team think. And very little onus has been put on, what about the men? What about the men as these fellow players? These fellow players as allies, the head coach of the men's team, who we know was supportive and encouraging of Greenwood coming back. Why is it up to them? Why is it up to women

to kick up a fuss? Adam, congratulations on some amazing reporting that you've done over this. In a moment, we'll be back with Rachel Riley, TV presenter, Manchester United superfan, and someone struggling with the way the club that she loves has behaved.

This is the news agents.

Welcome back. Well, let's get a fan's eye view of the decision that Manchester United have reached and joined by TV presenter, superfan, Rachel Riley. Rachel, thank you so much for being with us. So kind of eventually, they got to the right decision.

Yeah. And it seems to be dragged kicking and screaming. And I think

Man United missed a massive opportunity. I mean, people wanted them to show zero tolerance to domestic abuse, violence against women and girls. And they had this opportunity. We've all seen the footage, whether there's a criminal case or not, you can't obfuscate. We've heard the words, we've seen the photos. And I think they made the right decision by not letting him return to play football. But at the same time, the statement that was put out proclaimed someone innocent from a position that they didn't have any authority to do. That was way beyond the remit of Manchester United to even look into the criminal guilt or innocence. Never mind the civil level of guilt or innocence. But I think it's gaslighting for people to have two statements saying, you know, Mason Greenwood himself saying he's been cleared of all charges, which is not the case. You know, the claims were dropped because the key witness dropped out and they claim new evidence. But I think we've missed the massive opportunity. And I think, you know, it puts wind in the sails of people who think they can get away with abuse everywhere. And I think for victims, it's a slap in the face. It says, you know, you're better to keep quiet.

It's much more convenient for us if you don't speak. I mean, the stats on reports of sexual violence and domestic abuse speak for themselves. I think it was something like 71,984 incidents of domestic abuse reported in 2021. Of those 15 were recorded as false allegations. So it's a claim to everybody that someone with absolutely no experience who didn't contact any domestic abuse charities, experts, get any external advice or external person to do the report when as a club, you have a vested interest in keeping this multimillion pound player playing for your club. I think it's a farce. And, you know, I think there's been some brilliant journalism that have forced this club into making the right decision.

Rachel, I read the statement as well from Manchester United, which I agree with you, was curious. What I couldn't see, if you're going to part company with him and say he's not going to play again for Manchester United, why do you think they said what they said that we're satisfied he didn't commit the offences as alleged? As I see it, my personal opinion is it's self preservation. I mean, the club announced to its internal staff a couple of weeks ago that they were planning on reintroducing Mason Greenwood. And it was only this vacuum of space. They realized it was bad to me. There's never a good time to bring it back. That kind of is indicative of the situation itself. But they realized they couldn't do it while the

lionesses were out there. So they left this time. And while they left this time internally, there was strife. Man United colleagues were getting questions from friends and family, why is this person coming back? Just internally, they obviously felt so bad about it that someone was a whistleblower, someone went to the press. And that's what's forced the hand. He's worth a lot of money. And I think the message is if you're worth a lot of money, if you're very good at what you do, you can get away with it. I mean, to claim that the alleged victim of domestic abuse dropping the allegations or not proceeding with a conviction is equivalent to proof of innocence. I mean, anyone who knows anything or nothing about domestic abuse can see that that's not an equivalent statement in the slightest. And it adds to the myth, this culture that we have in society where violence against women and girls is rife, domestic abuse against whoever it's against is seen as a lesser crime. And I'm someone who I've seen it firsthand through supporting my friend with domestic abuse. And four years ago, I wouldn't have known anything about this. I wouldn't have even been in a position to comment at all. But I've seen firsthand how little is known, even amongst professionals who are supposed to be dealing with this, include the police, include social services. And if they don't know the intricacies, I don't know how a CEO at Manchester United who has multimillion pounds at stake is in any position to make a judgment on what's happened, especially having not consulted domestic interviews charities. It's been absolutely mismanaged. I've been a Man United supporter since before I was born. My dad's been going since 1960. I've had my baby's Man United stuff ready when they were in the womb. And I've never been more ashamed of the club. I think it's just a disgrace. And they had another opportunity to make it right, make a good statement. And they have just green lighted the abuse that's been going on on social media. And I'm so disappointed. Rachel, what you're describing is really serious. You're talking about a pretty cynical set of attitudes from the management at Manchester United. You're talking about green lighting, abuse online. Do you think that the CEO of Manchester United, Richard Arnold, should consider his position over the way he's handled this affair?

Yes, yes, I do. And I say this was such a heavy heart. I mean, as a fan, I, you know, grew up, these players are heroes, Manchester United players. For little kids, they're your heroes. And for me, you know, I did Manchester United as my subject or mastermind, I've been lucky enough to go for work to the club, to do charity events, to meet the players, to meet the manager, to go to the director's spot for matches. It's like my ultimate dream. And I would love more than anything in the world to give that to my daughters. I can't not speak out. I mean, what I risk as a fan or, you know, as someone who gets all these privileges compared to what a domestic abuse victim survivor risks by coming forward, even though she may not, or he may not be believed, it wasn't a viable option at all. I mean, I was in Manchester all the last week, I work in Manchester, I've got family in Manchester, I've got loads of United Friends. So, you know, chatting with everyone, going to stopports, seeing Liverpool fans, you city fans, everyone that came up to me agreed, you can't come back. You know, we've seen it with our eyes, we've heard it with our ears. It's not right. And to try and, you know, make it disappear, brush it under the carpet, lesser it, that's why we're in this problem as a society. And Manchester United, it's the biggest club in the world. The best club in the world, in my opinion, it's not acceptable. This was poorly handled. It should have had contributions from experts, from domestic abuse charities, from outside sources. And we just can't trust the process and changes most definitely need to be made.

And will you be going back to Old Trafford anytime soon?

I mean, I still love my club. I still love my football team. I'm still going to be supporting my football team. But I sincerely hope that there is a change in management.

I think the club's been on decline internally for, you know, a number of years. I think we all had absolute blind, loyal faith when Sir Alex and David Gill were in charge of the club.

And, you know, I think there's been a lot of internal strife in many layers in recent times.

And, you know, it's a sad state of affairs where people are really, really hoping that Qataris will come in by the club and clear out. What can I say?

It's even been reported that Ten Heart, the manager, was happy for Mason Greenwood to come back.

I think if leadership was strong and leadership had said, look what's happened, there's no excuse for that. I'm sorry, you know, evidence that you've not seen, unless the evidence is that it wasn't him or this was an AI, a deep fake,

there's nothing that excuses that language. There's nothing that excuses that behaviour.

And domestic abuse is a patent crime and experts could have unpicked what's happened, could have dealt with any cross allegations or, you know, whatever may have been said or what may have been forward without those experts in a position to make a judgment.

And Rachel, just one other question. We spoke to Emma on the podcast last week when this was being discussed and she was concerned about the level of abuse that she might get for speaking out like this. Have you found that you've come under attack for it?

It's been interesting because in publicize, I've had a lot of abuse in the past,

dealing with antisemitism, but this has been very, very different. It's much more misogynistic.

It's much more getting the kitchen stick to having babies. You smell a really awful

misogynistic language. I've had, you know, people showing me their Hitler tattoos and saying how they'd like to see my body die. It's up a level. And actually, what I've noticed as well is some of the people that say they can't stand me. They hate me more than anyone else on the planet because

of my stance on Corbyn's Labour Party. They agree with me on this. So it's been quite illuminating and I've actually spoken to it. And yeah, I mean, the abuse that she's had that I've had that I'm more used to that the women's team have had because of this misdirection and consultation with the women. And because there was a vacuum, there was no one standing up and speaking out and saying, this is what we're doing. This is when we're doing it and deflecting it or, you know, calling the fans off. So, you know, it's, it's disappointing, but I've spoken out about domestic abuse many times over the years and you always get a backlash.

Rachel, that's fine. Since you mentioned it, I mean, you have been such a prominent voice on the Labour Party in its battles with anti-Semitism. Obviously, Corbyn has been gone for some time now. We're heading towards a general election. How do you feel about the Labour Party now and about the anti-Semitism question within Labour Party? Do you think Starmer has done enough to arrest that problem in your view? Well, personally, I know that some of the members of staff that Starmer put in place in really high positions as soon as you took office were some of the key people in fighting Labour's anti-Semitism from the inside. So I've got utter faith in some of the people that he's put in there and I know that they want to get rid of anti-Semitism and they want to do it not only because they're unelectable if they're this toxic, but also because it's the right thing to do. So I can take a step back. I can let people, you know, vote, you know,

they want to vote for based on policies because I don't think it's the top issue now. I think, you know, it's still got problems, but I know that they're trying to deal with it and I'm grateful to the people who, you know, who put themselves out there and noticed the problem and did something about it from within the party. Rachel, thank you so much for being with us. Really good to have you. Thank you. Thanks so much, Rachel. Thank you. Right, when we come back, we are going to be talking about the small boats saga and Rishi Sunak has apparently rather changed his tune. Stay with us. Welcome back and we're going to go on a trip down memory lane. Well, actually, not that far down the lane and not that far back in our memories because this has been the government's voice over the past few months. Confident, determined, nothing was going to stop them. They were going to solve a problem and solve it fast. We will pass new laws to stop small boats. This Conservative Prime Minister will act now to stop the boats. We've introduced tough new measures today to help us stop the boats. It is vital, literally vital, that we end the illegal crossings in the channel. We will be able to grip this problem. We are doing it all because when I said at the beginning of the year that we would stop the boats, I meant it. Are you going to be able to stop the small boats? Well, that's our objective. We couldn't have been clearer in putting it as one of the five central promises of this government to stop the boats, secure our borders and bring fairness back to our asylum system. One of my five priorities is to stop the boats because I think the current system is both unsustainable and is completely unfair. The British people deserve to know which party is serious about stopping the invasion on our southern coast. And then yesterday, there was, on Monday afternoon, there was this pool clip from the Prime Minister. When you could just feel the shuddering halt or the brakes suddenly being applied after being Prime Minister for nearly a year with this rhetoric coming through again and again and again, it was as if someone in number 10 had suddenly realised, you know what lads, it isn't going well. We might not be able to do this after all. Listen to this. Of course there's still more to do and people should know I am determined to grip this problem and that's why one of my five priorities is to stop the boats. Will it be done by the next election? So I want it to be done as soon as possible but I also want to be honest with people that it is a complex problem. There's not one simple solution and it can't be solved overnight and I wouldn't be being straight with people if I said that was possible. But what I can say, it can't be solved overnight. Oh it's a complex problem. It's a complex problem so which might defy the neat, simple, three-word analysis of stop the boats. And this of course comes in the context yesterday. We've obviously been having better weather over the last week or two and it comes in the context of yesterday, 661 arrivals, the third highest daily total of the year so far. That's after 756 on the 10th of August and 686 on the 7th of July. The seven highest daily totals of the year above 500 have all come since the Prime Minister visited Dover in early June and said that his plan to stop the boats was working. Well I know you like history Lewis so I'm going to go back to the 12th century. Oh just when you were starting out. Exactly that's when I was a cub reporter. Yeah you were covering the the anarchy with Stephen and Matilda. I mean exactly well it was also King Canute. He tried to stop the waves didn't do very well and Rishi Sunak today trying to stop the wave of boats coming over. When the factors encouraging people or that make people so



determined

that they want to get across are still there they haven't tackled the people smugglers and it is going to carry on and you've said repeatedly on the podcast you know he's setting up to fail and yet today of course or yesterday from Rishi Sunak as you described it was the sort of screeching halt black tire marks in the road the smell of burning rubber as the shuddering car came to a halt and thought oh my god we better start talking about nuance and this is being a complex problem. I've never understood it as you say we've talked about it many times. I've never understood Sunak who is someone whenever you think of him he's clearly capable of critical analysis he's not stupid he knows things are complicated he can deal in nuance and yet on this he has been almost Trumpian it was basically build a wall it's this stop the boats we will stop them there's a reason you don't hear Biden constantly say we're going to be able to stop the flow across the southern border in the US he knows that basically it's impossible. Again everything is so domestic and always defined within the narrow British domestic context let's just take the European context over the last year. Just in 2023 the UNHCR has estimated over 90,000 people have arrived into Europe irregularly between January and August 2023 that's nearly as many as the 105,000 for the whole of 2022. In March 2023 alone the UNHCR counted 13,267 entries into Italy since 2016 there have been 27,000 people losing their lives in the Mediterranean trying to cross into Europe and this year has been worse in terms of migrant deaths crossing the med than every year for the last four years. As we have said so many times before this is a European problem we are dealing with substantial migratory flows into Europe from North Africa and beyond in the Middle East mainly as a result of worsening geopolitical tension and volatility in those regions it is completely inevitable within that that the UK is going to absorb a fraction of that or at least if not absorb it where do all roads lead dealing on a European basis a European basis something that the Conservative Party in the government doesn't necessarily want to hear to try and arrest and deal with the flows so either you can have a grown-up conversation with the public about that and say this is the route we've got to go down or you level with people and say we're probably going to have to absorb a certain number or you just keep doing what the Prime Minister has done which is keep saying we're going to stop the boats we're going to stop the boats we're going to stop the boats and you set yourself up to fail and it's not just something Sunak has done Johnson did it Priti Patel did it Brotherton's predecessor as Home Secretary and they keep constantly saying oh if we just pass the nationality and borders bill that'll solve it didn't solve it we just need to pass the illegal migration bill that'll solve it it didn't solve it of course you could solve it if you all you want to do is stop the boats you could allow people to apply for asylum in France that wouldn't stop the flow but it would stop the boats but of course realistically that is not what the Prime Minister wants he just wants to stop the flow but that is unrealistic when you consider the wider geopolitical tensions volatility there is in the world look for all that we heard from Rishi Sunak yesterday and talking about complexities and there's no overnight solutions I don't think you're going to have that nuanced conversation well maybe not at all this side of a general election but certainly not this side of a Conservative Party conference where that is what the people who will be turning up at the conference want to hear they want to hear that we're being tough that we're taking every measure possible that we are stopping the boats the problem is they have not stopped the boats they're nowhere near stopping the boats but of course that raises the next political question internal conservative political question of where does this leave the relationship between Rishi

## [Transcript] The News Agents / Manchester United's Greenwood U-Turn: The inside story

Sunak a pragmatic man I believe who is driven by data points and spreadsheets and Suella Braverman

who kind of loves the right-wing rhetoric and stopping the boats and the invasion and a dream of getting people on planes to Rwanda where is that relationship right now because I bet it is under strain well I think that there is definitely tension between number 10 and the home office there is a widespread belief that the you know small boats week was clearly just a complete catastrophe

and there was I think in number 10 anger and disbelief about the baby stock home debacle and the legionnaires disease I mean it could not have gone worse a sentient island and a sentient island and Braverman was nowhere to be seen that week you know they sent out Robert Jenrick again

and again Jenrick of course is the immigration minister is a big ally of the prime minister it was widely assumed that he was put into that department party to keep an eye on things to be number 10's man in the department that itself causes tension and problems between the principals between home secretary and the prime minister I think though to some extent although there may be political tensions and soon out may question her competence there is definitely I think sometimes it is overwritten the extent to which there is that much political difference between Sunak and the Braverman I actually think Sunak again we kind of have to judge him by his words and his deeds I think he is is pretty much as hard-line as Braverman on these questions around immigration and the boats and legal migration as she is he's never really resiled from the language that she is used he's never attacked her for the language that she has used around stopping the invasion on the southern coast and everything like that he could have removed her he hasn't done so and by all accounts he is pretty authoritarian and draconian these sort of things more so than Boris Johnson it's another one of those examples again we've talked about before where Sunak who is often sometimes considered to be this kind of more liberal slightly more institutionalist guy and in some ways of course he is but actually he's to the right of Johnson all sorts of issues I think including immigration green issues as well he's to the right it's another example of the conservative right never being able to accept yes for an answer as it was once famously said about them actually they've got their guy they just kind of don't like his temperament they don't like the way he sounds and the way he talks but actually in all sorts of ways I think there isn't really a cigarette paper to put between him and Braverman on all sorts of matters why do you think it is that Braverman has not been seen I mean I know like Prince William she's been on holiday I heard you have very disloyal comments yesterday about he's only conceded issues do cease to maintain a pulse why do you

think she has been so off the stage for so long given that the centrality of stopped the boats to the agenda of the conservative party at the moment because we haven't heard from her for weeks and

I think there is a difference of opinion to some extent about how you go about this and again I think it goes back to the Robert Jenrick and Braverman thing I think there are some people within the home office and within government who have always believed that the way to deal with this

is around the people smugglers is around breaking up the criminal gangs is working more with Europe

to try and deal with that I think the Braverman camp are more of the belief that they are convinced

that they just need to provide a big enough deterrent to stop people coming and for them that is Rwanda now the home office has never been able to provide any data or evidence to show that Rwanda

would be a deterrent even if it did operationalize it would be small numbers so it wouldn't be happening

we had 600 arrived just yesterday you know Rwanda would have to take up be able to take a lot of people in order to truly be an effective deterrent but they are convinced about this sort of pull factor argument I think where the politics of this is going to go is around the ECHR the European Convention on Human Rights and I think that is now going to be the active debate within the Conservative Party leading up to the Conservative Party Conference particularly if the Supreme Court comes back when and if it comes back and judges that the Rwanda plan is not compliant with the European Convention of Human Rights and I think you are going to see an enormous ground

cell within the Conservative Party or elements of the Conservative Party the Brexiter element the Conservative Party to say we've got to pull out of this thing and Prime Minister look this is the perfect wedge issue okay no one knows what the ECHR is but you can just rerun Brexit problem with that again you've got the two competing elements of SUNAC pulling in different directions right on the one hand he will be able to see the politics of that like I say he is pretty on the right on all of these sorts of issues I think he probably would like to operationalize Rwanda but of course he also knows that the ECHR is written into the Good Friday agreements it's written into the trade agreement we have with the EU and it would be we would be the first democratic state to pull out of it something that Winston Churchill partly orphaned has been a bedrock

of European human rights policy since the Second World War and so he will then have a political judgment to make and it will split the Conservative Party because there are other parts of the Conservative Party that would be on the wet part of the Conservative Party who would never put up with this who would never put up with it and would find it a porrant so it is it's going to be a big fault line for Conservative politics leading up to the election

we couldn't go without paying homage to the Edinburgh Festival's fringe joke of the year and it goes to comedian Lorna Rose-Treen who said I started dating a zookeeper but it turned out he was a cheetah that was the funniest joke no wonder it's been a fellow year at Edinburgh no you're being kind I mean it's okay it's all right it's fine they're always puns that's the problem with those Edinburgh jokes yeah yeah got me thinking about what's your favourite political gag or anecdote got one see now they political gags do tend to actually be funny well House of Commons gags aren't that funny they're just funny in the chamber my two gags are quite cutting a really well targeted and one is about Ted Cruz the Texas senator who ran for the republican nomination last time around in 2016 and there's a similar joke about Peter Mandelson from when he was the eminence grease of new labour the Ted Cruz joke is why do people take an instant dislike to Ted Cruz answer it saves time and I thought that's a good gag I thought that's a good gag and the Mandelson joke that is similar is Mandelson says to Gordon Brown who you got 10 pence I want to make a phone call and Gordon Brown says here's 20 pence phone

everyone it's good you know but that's the thing is that nearly all political jokes are acid and cutting about someone else I mean that's actually why they're good and that's why they have

effective

and that's why they're here on a truth yeah because they're hitting our truth and actually there was so much worse in the past we're so much tamer now I mean Churchill had loads about Atley right so the famous one he's a sheep in sheep's clothing yeah he also had that gag where he said oh an empty taxi arrived at Tandang Street and when the door was open Atley got out all the like there is the stuff about which are more sort of anecdotes you remember the one about George Brown so George Brown

well George Brown famously who liked to drink he liked to drink so all the jokes about George Brown

who was the Labour deputy prime minister in the 60s and he could have been Labour leader but the sad truth is he was drunk I mean he just couldn't possibly there was a story about him going to the UN and seeing some artificial grapes and trying to eat them you know he was that drunk and there's that famous story about which probably wasn't even true yeah exactly there probably wasn't even true

but it was a joke basically created about him to discredit him which was there was this sort of grand reception at the Peruvian Embassy in London in the 60s and the then Labour foreign secretary

you know so drunk he tottered up to what he thought was this kind of very glamorous figure in a sort of purple frog and asked her for a dance then the person turned around and said first I can't possibly do that foreign secretary because you're drunk secondly this is not a waltz this is the Peruvian national anthem for which you should be standing to attention and first I'm not a woman I'm the archbishop of Lima and this was like absolutely devastating to him because it you know it just summed up it crystallized something about him the other good actually there was a good one a few years ago no I shouldn't have got him started no there's a good one about

George Osborne about John Whittingdale because he's gone to this party quite famously with two very young women and then they went to the Westminster correspondence dinner he said well this is just after brexit he said there's all this talk of different models we've got the Norwegian model we've got the Albanian model and that's just John Whittingdale's table which actually to be fair to Osborne wasn't bad can I can I get to I don't know whether I can do this go on one more good well this is from who needs the fringe well this is from George Osborne's

wedding and the speech from best man Danny Finkelstein Lord Finkelstein who was a guest on the podcast yesterday yes where George and Theo were trying to cut the wedding cake Lewis this is something you'd be familiar with having tried this out and it's struggling a bit because it was a kind of oddly shaped cake and Danny Finkelstein in his speech said first time in history that George Osborne hasn't known where to plunge the knife and I thought that was a good political joke as well right well we should probably leave it there I mean unless there's any other gags you want to get off your chest John I think we'll stop there fine well we'll see you tomorrow this has been a global player original podcast and a Persephoneka production