

Andy Gray News Of The World conspiracy

Conspiracy theorists are having a field day trying to piece together the extraordinary chain of events in which Andy Gray became embroiled.

Many of those who regularly saw him on their TV screens will be unaware that the 55-year-old pundit for Sky Sports (owned by BSkyB) is currently embroiled in a legal battle with the News Of The World (owned by News International).

And this connection has been seized upon on Twitter and the blogosphere. One Tweet reads 'Andy Gray sues New (sic) of the World for phone tapping. Sexist tapes (mostly recorded by Sky) leaked. Coincidence?' while a blog has been written entitled 'Rupert Murdoch, phone-tapping and revenge against Gray'.

The current dilemma the presenter found himself in comes against a background of heavyweight political and financial interests.

For the News Of The World is a subsidiary of 79-year-old Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation which has a 39 per cent stake in BSkyB and is currently trying to buy the rest.

This is clearly a sensitive issue politically and in the week Mr Murdoch flew into London the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt is considering whether to refer the deal to the Competition Commission because it might threaten 'media plurality'.

But that is not Mr Gray's concern. His anger is because, he claims, his phone was hacked by the News Of The World and, along with the comedian and actor Steve Coogan, he is trying to find out who was involved.

Both he and Coogan want Glenn Mulcaire, the private detective at the centre of the case, to name those at the Sunday newspaper who allegedly accessed their mobile phone voicemail and to whom the information was passed.

Mulcaire, who was jailed for six months for hacking into the phones of members of the Royal household. A full hearing for the case is scheduled for November this year.

To some, it seems a tad suspicious that just as the phone hacking story reaches a crescendo - with the resignation of David Cameron's spokesman Andy Coulson - these TV recordings should mysteriously find their way into the public domain. What makes the leaks all the more surprising is that News Corp is known for its corporate discipline.

In the initial tapes, leaked to the Mail on Sunday, Gray and fellow presenter Richard Keys were recorded agreeing that a female football official would need the offside rule explaining to her because she was a woman.

Then came footage released by Sky showing Gray making disparaging remarks about a female match official. The fact it was put out by his own broadcaster begs the question of who, if anyone, high up gave the nod that this should happen.

But being targeted by his 'own side' should come as no surprise to the former Scotland player.

Four years ago The Sun (owned by News International) ran a piece about the 'drunken antics' of 'love rat Gray, 50 - who last year got engaged to a friend's wife' in La Manga, Spain. Just in case readers were in any doubt as to which Andy Gray this may be the piece helpfully added 'Gray, paid a whopping £20,000 a week by Sky Sports'.

They also brought up the former player's past and the fact that he 'bedded ex-model Rachel Lewis even though her hubby Michael, 57, had been his friend for more than 30 years. Gray then asked Rachel to marry him'.

Time will tell as to what further twists and turns lie ahead in this bewildering tale.

Daily Mail 25/01/11