

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Newcastle United Football Company Limited v. zhuoji dong
Case No. D2026-1096

1. The Parties

The Complainant is Newcastle United Football Company Limited, United Kingdom, represented by gunnercooke LLP, United Kingdom.

The Respondent is zhuoji dong, China.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <nufcworldcup.com> is registered with Name SRS AB (the “Registrar”).

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the “Center”) on March 13, 2026. On March 13, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On March 16, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Registrant Information: Unknown) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on March 17, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on March 17, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Policy” or “UDRP”), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Rules”), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the “Supplemental Rules”).

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on March 25, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was April 14, 2026. The Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified the Respondent’s default on April 17, 2026.

The Center appointed Luca Barbero as the sole panelist in this matter on April 22, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is a professional association football club based in Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom. It competes in the Premier League, the top tier of English football, and its trading names include “Newcastle United”, “Newcastle United Football Club” and “NUFC”, the last being an acronym of “Newcastle United Football Club”.

Over the years, the Complainant has obtained numerous prizes and accolades for events such as Premier League, FA Cups, EFL Cup, FA Charity Shields and Inter-Cities Fairs Cups.

The Complainant’s stadium, St James’ Park, is one of 22 proposed stadiums included in the United Kingdom’s bid for the FIFA Women’s World Cup 2035.

The Complainant is the owner of the following trademark registrations for NUFC:

- United Kingdom trademark registration No. UK00001528422 for NUFC (word mark), filed on March 3, 1993, and registered on March 24, 1995, in class 25;
- United Kingdom trademark registration No. UK00002149609 for NUFC (word mark), filed on October 30, 1997, and registered on July 31, 1998, in classes 14, 21, 26, 28, 32 and 42.

The Complainant is also the owner of the domain name <nufc.co.uk>, which was registered on August 25, 1997, and is redirected to the Complainant’s website “www.newcastleunited.com”. The domain name is also used for the Complainant’s email addresses such as the email address for its online retail store.

The disputed domain name <nufcworldcup.com> was registered on October 18, 2025, and currently resolves to an error page.

5. Parties’ Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name.

Notably, the Complainant contends that the disputed domain name <nufcworldcup.com> is confusingly similar to the trademark NUFC in which the Complainant has rights as it reproduces the trademark in its entirety with the mere addition of the descriptive terms “world” and “cup” and the generic Top-Level Domain (“gTLD”) “.com”.

The Complainant contends that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name since: i) before any notice to the Respondent of the dispute, there is no evidence of the Respondent’s use of, or demonstrable preparations to use, the disputed domain name or a name corresponding to the domain name in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services; ii) the Respondent is not commonly known by the disputed domain name; and iii) the Respondent is not making a legitimate non-commercial or fair use of the disputed domain name, without intent for commercial gain to misleadingly divert consumers or to tarnish the Complainant’s trademark.

The Complainant submits that the Respondent registered and used the disputed domain name in bad faith. The Complainant points out that, when it registered the disputed domain name, the Respondent was aware of the fact that: i) the Complainant is known by the acronym NUFC; ii) the Complainant is using the domain name <nufc.co.uk> for email addresses such as the email address for its retail store; and iii) if the United Kingdom bid is successful, the Complainant's stadium will host matches for the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035.

The Complainant submits that the composition of the disputed domain name is apt to suggest that the disputed domain name originates from the Complainant or that a website using the disputed domain name is offering for sale legitimate goods such as tickets to see the FIFA Women's World Cup 2035 matches to be played at the Complainant's stadium.

The Complainant contends that the circumstances of the case indicate that the disputed domain name was registered by the Respondent for the purpose of: i) selling, renting, or otherwise transferring the disputed domain name to the Complainant for valuable consideration in excess of the Respondent's out-of-pocket costs directly related to the disputed domain name; or ii) disrupting the business of the Complainant; and/or iii) attempting to attract for commercial gain Internet users to its website, by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's trademark as to the source, sponsorship, affiliation, or endorsement of the Respondent's website or of a product or service on the Respondent's website; and/or iv) impersonating the Complainant in an attempt to commit fraud.

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

According to paragraph 15(a) of the Rules: "A Panel shall decide a complaint on the basis of the statements and documents submitted and in accordance with the Policy, these Rules and any rules and principles of law that it deems applicable." Paragraph 4(a) of the Policy directs that the Complainant must prove each of the following:

- (i) that the disputed domain name registered by the Respondent is identical or confusingly similar to a trademark or service mark in which the Complainant has rights;
- (ii) that the Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in respect of the disputed domain name; and
- (iii) that the disputed domain name has been registered and is being used in bad faith.

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("[WIPO Overview 3.1](#)"), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1. Indeed, the Complainant has provided evidence of ownership of valid trademark registrations for NUFC.

The entirety of the mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

Although the addition of the terms “world” and “cup” may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such terms does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.8.

In addition, the gTLD “.com” can be disregarded under the first element test, being a standard registration requirement. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.11.1.

Therefore, the Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of “proving a negative”, requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant’s prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

The Panel notes that there is no relation, disclosed to the Panel or otherwise apparent from the record, between the Respondent and the Complainant. The Respondent is not a licensee of the Complainant, nor has the Respondent otherwise obtained an authorization to use the Complainant’s trademark.

Moreover, there is no element from which the Panel could infer the Respondent’s rights over the disputed domain name, or that the Respondent might be commonly known by the disputed domain name.

Furthermore, is no evidence to suggest that the disputed domain name, which currently redirects to an error page, has been used by the Respondent in connection with a bona fide offering of goods or services or a legitimate noncommercial or fair use without intent for commercial gain to misleadingly divert consumers or to tarnish the Complainant’s trademark.

The nature of the disputed domain name, incorporating the widely known trademark of the Complainant’s football club with the terms “world” and “cup”, suggests an intention to create an impression of an association with the Complainant rather than a legitimate independent use.

Therefore, the Panel finds the second element of the Policy has also been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Complainant is a well-known Premier League football club with a history dating back to 1892 and that the Complainant's trademark NUFC is widely known and recognized in the football sector as an acronym for the Complainant's name not only in the United Kingdom but also in other countries, in light of the Complainant's participation in major international football tournaments. In view of the above, the Panel finds that the Respondent knew or should have known of the Complainant's trademark rights at the time of registration of the disputed domain name. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.2.2.

Moreover, in view of the composition of the disputed domain name, reproducing the Complainant's trademark in combination with the terms "world" and "cup" which could refer to the world cup tournaments, the Panel finds that the Respondent's registration of the disputed domain name cannot amount to a mere coincidence. Indeed, considering the Complainant's stadium is one of the stadiums included in the United Kingdom's bid for FIFA Women's World Cup 2035, the Panel finds that, on balance of probabilities, the Respondent was actually aware of, and intended to target, the Complainant and its trademark at the time of registration.

The disputed domain name currently does not resolve to an active website. Panels have found that the non-use of a domain name would not by itself prevent a finding of bad faith under the doctrine of passive holding. To the contrary, in looking at the totality of circumstances in each case, panels have found that the registration and non-use of a domain name can still constitute bad faith for purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.3. Having reviewed the available record, the Panel notes the distinctiveness and reputation of the Complainant's trademark and the composition of the disputed domain name, and considering the Respondent's failure to submit a response, finds that in the circumstances of this case the passive holding of the disputed domain name does not prevent a finding of bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel cannot conceive of any legitimate purpose for which the Respondent might use the disputed domain name, given its composition and targeting of the Complainant's trademark.

Therefore, the Panel finds that the Complainant has established the third element of the Policy as well.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <nufcworldcup.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Luca Barbero/

Luca Barbero

Sole Panelist

Date: May 06, 2026