

## Educating Ed and Coleen - Celebrities and Disclosure

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When celebrities attempt to resolve their disputes through the courts, the media understandably focuses on the scandalous subject matter. That does not mean, however, that there is nothing for lawyers, or other parties to disputes, to learn from these cases. Two recent decisions in the High Court demonstrate this perfectly. Looking behind the tabloid gossip, the court gave useful guidance on parties' disclosure obligations in each case.

### ***Vardy v Rooney***

The first of these, *Vardy v Rooney* [2022] EWHC 304, concerned a dispute between Mrs Rebekah Vardy and Mrs Coleen Rooney. They are the wives of former England football players Mr Jamie Vardy and Mr Wayne Rooney respectively, though they became celebrities in their own right through their large social media following.

The dispute arose because Mrs Rooney was concerned that someone was leaking stories from her private Instagram accounts to the *Sun* newspaper. This private Instagram account was meant only for close friends and family, as opposed to her public account which anyone could view.

In order to find out who was leaking the stories, Mrs Rooney set up what could be described as a sting operation. She posted various fake stories on her personal Instagram but secretly only allowed one of her close friends to view each of them. As it turned out, the stories that she had only allowed Mrs Vardy to see subsequently appeared in the *Sun* newspaper.

In October 2019, Mrs Rooney posted on social media alleging Mrs Vardy was behind not only these leaks, but also the earlier leaks to the press. Mrs Vardy denied these allegations and sued Mrs Rooney for libel, while Mrs Rooney issued a counterclaim for misuse of private information and breach of rights under the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR").

In early 2022, Mrs Rooney applied to have Ms Caroline Watt, Mrs Vardy's agent, added to her counterclaim, but for the distinct cause of action of misuse of confidential information. Mrs Justice Steyn, who heard the application, accepted that despite the causes of action being distinct, there was significant factual and legal overlap between the two claims.

[Read the full article here.](#)