

FANTASY COURT

SYLLABUS

KRISTEN v. VINCE

Petition by the Commissioner for guidance and for an order compelling specific performance of a league punishment

No. 26-1531-2. Heard and decided September 30, 2026

The Ringer Fantasy Football Show, “Bears Break Eagles, Power Ranking Fantasy Buy-Low (and Sell-Low) Targets, and the End of ’80s Month,” at 1:10:13–1:13:42

Petitioner Kristen is the Commissioner of a ten-year-old fantasy football league composed of friends who met in a kickball league, with the same membership for the last five seasons. Two years ago, Respondent Vince finished last, and his punishment was to pose for a twelve-month calendar photo shoot. League members fully committed to the project: each member selected a month and devised a theme, and the league purchased outfits, props, and all other necessities and transported them to the kickball field for the shoot. Two years later, no calendar exists, Respondent having offered a rotating series of excuses including the birth of a child and a full home renovation. The missing calendar has become a running joke in the friend group, and the delinquency has undermined league discipline generally: last season’s loser, sentenced to wear a puka shell necklace for a full year, now refuses to wear it at all. Before this season, Respondent himself acknowledged he did not feel right playing without completing the punishment; Petitioner conditioned his participation on completion, Respondent agreed, and the league admitted him. Respondent then attended the in-person draft at Petitioner’s home, and as of September 23 the season has begun with still no calendar. The league has since adopted a prospective rule that any member who fails to complete a punishment by August 1 is expelled. Petitioner asks what should be done with Respondent and, most importantly, how she may obtain her calendar.

Held: A loser punishment two years overdue is enforced by specific performance and weekly point deductions, not by another extension. A

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member readmitted on his own promise to complete it may be expelled if he does not.

Applying *League v. Scott* and *In re Trophy Construction Delinquency*, we held that a punishment system survives only if enforced, and that this league's puka shell holdout is what non-enforcement looks like in practice: one member's default becomes the next member's defense. We treated the birth of a child as force majeure that excuses delay but not performance, and a home renovation as no excuse at all. Because expulsion is the one remedy that guarantees the Commissioner never receives her calendar, we ordered specific performance of the photo shoot on a fixed schedule, backed by forty-point weekly deductions and, on continued default, revocation of Respondent's conditional readmission.

JUSTICE KELLY delivered the opinion of the Court, in which CHIEF JUSTICE HEIFETZ and JUSTICE HORLBECK joined. JUSTICE HORLBECK filed a concurring opinion.

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Two years ago, Respondent Vince finished last in a ten-year-old league of friends who met, as one does, playing kickball. His punishment was a twelve-month calendar photo shoot. The league did not treat this as a suggestion. Each member claimed a month and devised a theme. The league bought the outfits, bought the props, bought, in Petitioner’s words, “literally everything,” and hauled all of it to the kickball field. Two years later there is no calendar. Vince has since had a child, which we credit, and renovated his entire house, which we do not. The calendar has become the friend group’s running joke: a member who recently had a baby of his own captioned the announcement that he was not sure how old the child was, because he had no calendar.

The joke has costs. Last season’s loser was sentenced to a year in a puka shell necklace and now declines to wear it at all, and nobody can quite tell him why he should. Before this season, Vince told Petitioner Kristen, the Commissioner, that he did not feel right playing again without completing the punishment. She agreed: do the punishment and you are in. He said he would. The league admitted him. He attended the in-person draft at her home. As of September 23 the season is three weeks old, and the calendar is exactly as finished as it was on the kickball field. The league has since adopted a prospective rule expelling any member

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who has not completed a punishment by August 1. Kristen asks what to do with Vince and, “most importantly,” how she gets her calendar.

We hold that Vince is owed no further extension, that the league may deduct points from his weekly score until the shoot is done, that his conditional readmission may be revoked if it is not, and that the shoot itself will be ordered as specific performance. The props are bought. The field is there. What is missing is Vince, standing on it.

I

The governing rule is one this Court announced in *League v. Scott*, 23-1009-1 (2023), and has repeated since: “leagues must enforce their punishments or the entire punishment system collapses.” Scott had one offseason to film a combine video and did not. Vince has had two offseasons and two seasons to stand in front of a camera in clothes someone else purchased for him. The delinquent in *In re Trophy Construction Delinquency*, 25-1431-1 (2025), at least had to visit a craft store. Vince’s league did his shopping for him. If Scott’s combine rated “a two and a half out of ten on the punishment scale,” the labor remaining here rounds to zero.

Kristen’s letter shows what collapse looks like. It is not a league without punishments. It is a league whose punishments have quietly become optional, one excuse at a time, until the punishment system “degrades from mandatory obligation to aspirational suggestion.” *Scott*, 23-1009-1. The puka shell holdout is the proof. He has not argued that his necklace is disproportionate, though a year in puka shells approaches the cruel and unusual. He has simply noticed that Vince did nothing and that nothing happened to Vince. Unpaid punishments “compound, as all debts do when left unpaid,” *Trophy Construction*, 25-1431-1, and the compounding here is not confined to Vince. It has spread to the necklace.

II

Vince’s excuses require brief treatment. The birth of a child is the paradigm force majeure event in our law. *In re Fantasy Paternity Leave*,

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21-1238-1 (2021). But force majeure excuses delay, not performance. A newborn justifies missing a shoot date. It does not justify missing every date for two years, it does not cover the months before the child existed, and it does not reach the home renovation Vince then undertook by choice. A renovation is not an act of God. It is an act of Vince.

We have observed that the threat to a punishment system “is rarely open defiance.” *In re Negative Points Penalty Rule*, 24-0826-3 (2024). Vince has never refused. He has said yes, and then had a kid, and then had a contractor, and then said yes again in August as the price of his seat. Consent without performance is more corrosive than refusal, because a league can act on a refusal. Nobody expels a man who keeps agreeing, which is why the agreeing has gone on for two years.

III

That brings us to remedy, and to the dilemma in the caption. Kristen’s most powerful tool is expulsion. Fantasy leagues are “fundamentally voluntary associations,” *Commissioner v. Ex-Brother-in-Law*, 22-1175-1 (2022), and their members may be shown the door. The league’s new August 1 rule does not itself reach Vince; it is prospective, and this Court does not let a league apply a new rule to old conduct. But Vince does not need the rule. His readmission this season was conditioned on a promise he proposed himself. A member admitted on a condition he has not met holds his seat at the league’s sufferance. If he is asked to leave, he will have been told nothing he did not first tell Kristen. To any protest, we give our standing answer to members who test whether the league needs them more than they need it: “The league will survive without them.” *In re Rishawn Holmes Accidental Drop Controversy*, 21-1246-1 (2021).

The trouble is that expulsion is the one remedy that guarantees Kristen never gets her calendar. A man who cannot be moved to a kickball field by his friends’ entreaties will not be moved there by their absence. Expulsion vindicates the league’s dignity. It does nothing for its walls. Kristen told us which she wanted more.

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So we order specific performance, and we structure the sanctions so that performance is the cheapest thing Vince can do. Specific performance is reserved for cases in which money cannot substitute for the thing promised, and this is that case. There is no market in Vince calendars. No sum of money persuades a puka shell holdout to put the necklace back on; only the sight of Vince in twelve themed outfits does that. And the obligation is unusually easy to perform, because the league has already performed everything but the posing. Vince shall complete the photo shoot within fourteen days of this order. Beginning in Week 5, and for every week the shoot remains undone, the league shall deduct forty points from his weekly score, as in *Trophy Construction*. If the shoot is not completed by November 1, the league may revoke his conditional readmission, and should. A printed calendar shall be delivered to every member by Thanksgiving. It should be a 2027 calendar. The months have not changed since 2024. Only the excuses have.

IV

A final word for last season's loser. Vince's default is not his defense. Obligations under a punishment system run to the league, not to the last member who happened to honor one. "A punishment system that can be evaded through procrastination and eventual success is no system at all," *Trophy Construction*, 25-1431-1, and one that can be evaded by pointing at Vince is worse. The necklace goes on today. The year runs from today, not from whenever he took it off.

* * *

As in *Scott*, we close with instruction. Vince, go to the field. Bring the outfits; your friends already bought them. Twelve photographs take one afternoon. You have been given roughly seven hundred of them. Use the next one.

Petition granted. Specific performance ordered.

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JUSTICE HORLBECK, concurring.

I join the Court’s opinion in full. I write separately about the necklace, because I have some standing on the subject. As an eleven-year-old summering in Hawaii I wore a puka shell necklace by choice, daily, and I can report that it is worse than the Court lets on. It catches. It fades. It announces to everyone you meet a set of values you did not know you held. A year of it is a real sentence, and if last season’s loser had raised proportionality in the offseason, when the league set the punishment and he could still have argued for a lesser one, I would have listened.

He did not. He waited until Vince’s calendar failed to appear and then treated Vince’s default as his own discharge. That is the move I would name today so that future leagues recognize it: derivative delinquency, the claim that because another member has not paid, I need not either. It has no more force in a fantasy league than it does anywhere else. Two seasons ago I wrote that a league which halves a manager’s consequences has offered “a fifty-percent discount on the consequences,” *In re Intoxicated Roster Transactions*, 24-0854-2 (2024) (Horlbeck, J., dissenting), and I have not changed my view that this Court should not run a discount counter. Vince’s delinquency was a hundred-percent discount, self-issued, and the necklace holdout simply asked for the same rate. The Court is right to refuse him. Proportionality is argued before the sentence. Once it is imposed, the only remaining question is whether it is worn.