# Gary Lineker’s sudden exit from BBC ends 26 years amid antisemitism row



Gary Lineker's departure from the BBC marks the end of a significant chapter in British sports broadcasting. The former England footballer, who has been a prominent figure in the broadcaster's coverage for over 26 years, announced his exit after a tumultuous series of events that culminated in a social media controversy over a post deemed antisemitic.

Lineker's final appearance as the presenter of Match of the Day coincided with the conclusion of the Premier League season. Surrounded by fellow pundits Alan Shearer and Micah Richards, he opened the show with a reflective remark expressing surprise at his premature departure: “It wasn't meant to end this way." This statement, delivered just before the season’s final highlights, encapsulated the bittersweet nature of his exit, which was accelerated by recent uproar surrounding a pro-Palestinian social media post he had shared.

The post featured an image of a rat, historically linked to antisemitic propaganda. Following substantial backlash, Lineker acknowledged the negative implications of the imagery, stating he “would never knowingly share anything antisemitic.” He expressed regret for the upset caused and articulated that stepping back was the responsible choice. This controversy was not isolated; it followed a preceding incident where his comments comparing government policy on asylum seekers to the rhetoric of 1930s Germany had led to a temporary suspension in March 2023. Lineker's readiness to speak out on sensitive political issues has consistently put him at odds with the BBC’s commitment to impartiality.

The fallout from the recent incident saw a mixed reception. While the Campaign Against Antisemitism welcomed his departure, arguing it was a necessary response to a pattern of behaviour that they perceived as undermining the BBC's values, others saw it as a blow to freedom of expression within journalism. BBC Director-General Tim Davie reaffirmed the corporation's dedication to neutrality and its principles amidst the controversy, emphasising the importance of maintaining its reputation across diverse audiences.

Initially, Lineker had intended to step down at the season's end while also covering future events like the FA Cup and World Cup next summer. However, the rapid deterioration of his relationship with the BBC led to a full departure before these events could unfold. The broadcaster has acknowledged the significant role Lineker played in its sports journalism, during which he also reportedly earned £1.4 million per annum, making him its highest-paid presenter.

Looking forward, Match of the Day is set for a new era, with the likes of Kelly Cates, Mark Chapman, and Gabby Logan taking over hosting duties starting from the 2025-2026 season. As Lineker leaves the BBC, he has plans to continue his work with Goalhanger Podcasts, a venture he co-founded, ensuring he remains relevant in the media landscape despite his exit from the flagship programme.

Lineker's journey through controversy and acclaim highlights the complex relationship between sports figures, social commentary, and media impartiality. As he reflects on his tenure, he has termed his experience at the BBC a “pleasure and a great privilege,” suggesting that regardless of the challenges faced in recent months, his contributions to the world of sports broadcasting have been both influential and significant.

As the narrative surrounding Lineker continues to evolve, it raises larger questions about the boundaries of personal opinion in public life and the responsibilities of broadcasters in upholding impartiality in a deeply divided socio-political landscape.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/gary-lineker-match-of-the-day-bbc-motd-b2757553.html), [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/696065a23214d8fe1b5b22de5530ea02)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/gary-lineker-match-of-the-day-bbc-motd-b2757553.html), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/df07e66d-3813-42ad-a684-594f67c6f885)
* Paragraph 3 – [[5]](https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/ex-england-striker-gary-lineker-leave-bbc-presenting-role-2025-05-19/), [[7]](https://apnews.com/article/c8b36a075eeb5be35603d2548fcead3a)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://apnews.com/article/696065a23214d8fe1b5b22de5530ea02), [[6]](https://www.fourfourtwo.com/news/gary-lineker-bbc-tweet-i-wasnt-concerned-id-done-anything-wrong-i-stated-a-fact-it-was-taken-out-of-proportion-and-people-have-recognised-that-they-misread-the-situation-a-bit)
* Paragraph 5 – [[3]](https://elpais.com/television/2025-05-19/gary-lineker-abandona-la-bbc-sin-acabar-la-temporada-y-despues-de-su-ultima-polemica-una-publicacion-con-tintes-antisemitas.html), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/df07e66d-3813-42ad-a684-594f67c6f885)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/football/gary-lineker-match-of-the-day-bbc-motd-b2757553.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://apnews.com/article/696065a23214d8fe1b5b22de5530ea02> - Gary Lineker, former England footballer and prominent BBC presenter, will step down from the BBC after controversy over a social media post he shared. Lineker reposted an Instagram story by the Palestine Lobby that used a rat, historically used in antisemitic imagery, to criticize Zionism. Though he apologized, stating he was unaware of the offensive content and removed it upon realization, the BBC confirmed he will leave following the final 'Match of the Day' episode of the season. Lineker had planned to step down from the show but continue with other coverage; however, backlash led to a full departure. Known for his outspoken political views, Lineker previously clashed with the BBC over impartiality and had been briefly suspended in 2023 due to political commentary. As a respected broadcaster and England’s former top striker, Lineker contributed significantly to BBC sports journalism since 1999. The BBC acknowledged his influence and thanked him for his service. His departure was welcomed by the Campaign Against Antisemitism, who criticized his repeated breaches of impartiality. Starting the 2025-26 season, Kelly Cates, Mark Chapman, and Gabby Logan will host 'Match of the Day,' marking a shift in the program’s presentation style.
3. <https://elpais.com/television/2025-05-19/gary-lineker-abandona-la-bbc-sin-acabar-la-temporada-y-despues-de-su-ultima-polemica-una-publicacion-con-tintes-antisemitas.html> - Gary Lineker will leave his position as presenter at the BBC upon completing the 2024/25 season, according to the British public broadcaster. Lineker, who was the highest-paid presenter and one of the most recognized figures at the station, has recently been involved in controversy for sharing a social media message with an emoji of antisemitic connotations. The former FC Barcelona footballer deleted the post, apologized, and stated that he was unaware of the meaning of the emoji, describing the incident as a mistake and oversight on his part. Lineker began his collaboration with the BBC in 1995 after retiring from professional football. Over three decades, he has been a prominent face in the corporation's sports coverage. Due to his departure, he will not participate as a commentator in the 2026 World Cup in the United States. In his farewell, he described his time at the BBC as a 'pleasure and a great privilege.'
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/df07e66d-3813-42ad-a684-594f67c6f885> - Gary Lineker, former England football captain and BBC’s highest-paid presenter with a £1.4 million annual salary, is stepping down from the BBC by mutual consent, without a payout. His departure follows controversy over an Instagram post supporting Palestine that featured an image widely viewed as an antisemitic trope. Lineker acknowledged the offensive nature of the post, expressed regret, and took full responsibility. He stated that leaving now is the responsible action. In addition to the social media incident, an interview in the Telegraph critical of BBC management further strained relations. His exit ends a 26-year broadcasting relationship, during which he was scheduled to cover next year’s World Cup and FA Cup coverage, though he had earlier announced plans to step down from Match of the Day after this season. Lineker’s past tensions with BBC management include a 2023 suspension over political comments. BBC Director-General Tim Davie emphasized the importance of upholding the corporation’s values and policies. Lineker also runs a successful podcast business, Goalhanger Podcasts.
5. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/ex-england-striker-gary-lineker-leave-bbc-presenting-role-2025-05-19/> - Gary Lineker, former England soccer star and long-standing host of the BBC’s 'Match of the Day,' has announced his departure from the BBC following controversy over an Instagram repost that critics deemed antisemitic. The repost included commentary critical of Zionism and an image of a rat, a symbol historically used in antisemitic propaganda. Lineker, 64, issued an unreserved apology, stating it was a genuine mistake and affirming his anti-racist stance. The BBC, maintaining neutrality, had previously cautioned him over political commentary, and BBC Director General Tim Davie confirmed Lineker would step down after the season concludes. Although originally set to retire from MOTD, Lineker was expected to cover the 2026 World Cup and FA Cup matches. The Board of Deputies of British Jews supported his decision to step down. Despite stepping back from BBC presenting, Lineker will continue his involvement with Goalhanger, a podcast company he co-founded. Renowned for scoring 48 goals for England and never receiving a yellow card, Lineker transitioned to broadcasting after a successful playing career with clubs including Everton, Tottenham, and Barcelona. His outspoken political views had previously placed him at odds with BBC impartiality policies.
6. <https://www.fourfourtwo.com/news/gary-lineker-bbc-tweet-i-wasnt-concerned-id-done-anything-wrong-i-stated-a-fact-it-was-taken-out-of-proportion-and-people-have-recognised-that-they-misread-the-situation-a-bit> - Gary Lineker, a long-time presenter of BBC's Match of the Day, was briefly suspended in 2023 for a tweet criticizing the UK government's asylum seeker policy. Lineker called the policy 'immeasurably cruel' and compared the language used to that of 1930s Germany. Despite the backlash and calls for political impartiality from BBC, Lineker insisted he did nothing wrong, merely stating facts and advocating for kindness towards all people. His suspension led to a show of solidarity from colleagues Ian Wright, Alan Shearer, and Micah Richards, who refused to appear on the show, forcing BBC to air a stripped-down version. Reflecting on the incident, Lineker emphasized his pride in working for the BBC despite the challenges and scrutiny it faces.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/c8b36a075eeb5be35603d2548fcead3a> - Gary Lineker, renowned former England footballer and BBC sports presenter, has issued an unreserved apology for sharing a social media post criticized as antisemitic. The post, originally from the Palestine Lobby, included an image of a rat with the text 'Zionism explained in two minutes' — a depiction that drew backlash due to historical antisemitic imagery. Lineker, 64, stated he removed the post upon realizing its offensive content, emphasizing his opposition to antisemitism and his commitment to responsible discourse. This incident adds to Lineker’s history of social media controversies, including a temporary suspension in 2023 for criticizing UK asylum policies. Despite stepping down from 'Match of the Day' after 25 years, Lineker will continue with BBC coverage of the FA Cup and the 2026 World Cup. BBC director-general Tim Davie emphasized the importance of upholding the broadcaster’s values. Meanwhile, the Campaign Against Antisemitism has called for Lineker's dismissal, questioning his intentions given his influential media presence. Lineker defended his stance on humanitarian issues, especially the conflict in Gaza, but acknowledged the need for careful communication.