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# An English struggle (1980's)

By: A.J. Bauckman

11-4-2013

*Through and true, the tides of war splash on the coastline of the new.*

*Fans fight and people do: die, fly away from guilty scenes, and sometimes; “go*

*‘expletive’ mental”<sup>1</sup> until their dreams.*

*Throwing things can be an issue but is it possible for normal people to miss excitement, feeling abysmal.*

Excuse my feverish explosion of poetry, I am very excited to have the opportunity to research a topic like spectator violence. As well I saw a Liverpool playwright do something of the same effect and thought I would give it a go. Ronald Reagan seemed to think, “Sport is the human activity closest to war that isn’t lethal.” I would have to agree with the former U.S. president on this specified topic. Violence in sport has been an issue since the beginning of leisure activities; my main goals in this project will be to: document English hooliganism from 1985 up to the end of their World Cup run in 90’ Italy, offer readers insight into the hooligan/fan life, and explain the immergence of hooliganism being seen as a societal problem in England in the late 80’s. I knew I wanted to examine a topic like this when I first saw the movie *Green Street Hooligans*, starring Elijah Wood and directed by Lexi Alexander. It is based on Matt Buckner, a Harvard journalist student, who visits England after being wrongfully accused and kicked out of his school. He finds himself swiftly in one of the most infamous hooligan ‘firms’ in all of England: The Green Street Elite (GSE). Cheering on their beloved West Ham Hammers (London based football team) they will go to any end to humiliate or oust other firms; mainly through

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<sup>1</sup> Directed by Lexi Alexander. *Green Street Hooligans*. Odd Lot Entertainment & Warner Bros. Pictures, Burbank, California; 2006.

fighting. Matt becomes very attached after a few weeks but relations get stressed and people end up losing their lives. One of his friends/members sees him 'rolling around' with "journos"; as he was walking into *The Times*. His father is a big-time journalist or "journo". This movie, though rarely quoted, is relevant because you get to see one of the main themes of this paper: the hate-filled relationship between the media/politicians and the fans who participated in sport related violence in England that was exceptionally rampant, in the mid to late 80's. I came to find as well the main antagonist of this fictitious movie, Millwall fans, were rivals in real life. Especially in 1976 when Ian Pratt, a Millwall supporter, was pushed in front of a train by West Ham hooligans. The Millwall hooligans pledged to get revenge on West Ham's Inter City Firm (ICF), which lead to the most complex and high-tech policing of a club football match in England. Nearly 500 police officers were hired for this one event; so this fictional picture I came to find, had more elements of truth than I originally thought. As I said earlier, violence in sport and the spectating of sport is no new sociological phenomena. In *Sports Violence* edited by Jeffrey H. Goldstein, Allen Guttmann speaks on violence in the Roman Empire's sporting competitions:

" The Greeks of Homer's *Iliad* were content that the funeral games in honor of the fallen Patroklos terminated not in literal but merely in symbolic death, that is, in athletic defeat, but the Romans...celebrated funeral games in which the dead were honored by additional deaths...One can assume that the number of spectators was fairly small. In the centuries that followed...other Roman historians recorded an apparently irreversible tendency towards the

spectacular in that the number of gladiators continually increased and the facilities available to the spectators grew ever grander. By 183 B.C., there were 60 duels; in 65 B.C., Julius Caesar celebrated his election to the aedileship with combats among 320 pairs, staged in a wooden amphitheater constructed especially for the event.”<sup>2</sup>

Not only do we see this being an integral part of society but also death and combat being vital. The earliest recorded football-like game in Great Britain happened around the tenth or eleventh centuries where participants kicked a ball between goals that stretched the distance of the rivaling towns. A team looking to score in this case could have travelled miles to score and in some cases goals were the towns themselves. This game however was called ‘Dane’s Head’ and used a mans’ skull as their proverbial ball! According to Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning King Edward II and King Edward III both issued proclamations in the fourteenth century advising there able bodied men to keep the peace in football matches. Edward III even requested his citizens, when in leisure, to ‘use bows and arrows or pellets and bolts’; trying to persuade the people to concentrate their time in using military weapons instead of delighting in unruly games. Unfortunately for the monarchy; the crowds enjoyed these ball-games even when they became wild or caused riots. Other more recent historically tragic matches in other areas of the world include: 1964 Peru v. Argentina (close to 300 deaths and 5000 wounded), 1968 River Plate v. Boca Juniors (74 deaths and 150wounded), and Kayseri v. Sivas (Turkey) where 44 people died

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<sup>2</sup> Liezman, Jon. *Let’s Kill ‘Em: Understanding and Controlling Violence in Sports*. Maryland:University Press of America, 1999.

and 600 were hospitalized.<sup>3</sup> Though there are many other incidents with similar totals; these replicate my earlier point that this is not an “English disease”.

Though this briefing on English hooliganism is not supposed to be sociological in nature, I would like to shortly explain some common thoughts in academia as to why citizens would consider these types of serious life choices. There are many sociological explanations trying to explain hooliganism in football and each offers more insight into the issue. Some research offered by Patrick Murphy and Eric Dunning has given us five popular causes of violence in football. They include: excessive alcohol consumption, violent incidents on the field of play or biased and incompetent refereeing, unemployment, affluence, and permissiveness. All of these are supposed to add to a more complex evaluation of the problem, although none of the reasons listed stand alone as rock-solid arguments. Excessive alcohol consumption could be a reason but it is well known that not all fans that drink heavily fight after. As well the ones that do engage in warfare at times don't drink; to better organize plans of action and avoid getting caught by the cops. Though violence on the field or poor officiating by referees could be a logical explanation, many fan fights occur completely separated from the stadium and the run of play; sometimes in a pub or the city-center. Unemployment, affluence, and 'permissiveness' could be logical as well so let us discuss them further. Though hooliganism in England can be traced back more than a few centuries; after the 1960's; government and the media became increasingly distressed about spectator

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<sup>3</sup> Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Ivan Waddington, Antoinos E. Astranakos. *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon*. University College Dublin Press, Dublin, Ireland; 2002.

violence. Interviews from 'Frank' and 'Howie' gives us a decent look at the mentality of these loony fans and can definitely support affluence; from Dunning and Murphy's possible motives. Frank was interviewed after a Cardiff City vs. Manchester United game by Paul Harrison, "I go to a match for one reason only: the aggro. It's an obsession. I cant give it up. I get so much pleasure when I'm having aggro that I nearly wet my pants... I go all over the country looking for it...every night during the week we go around town looking for trouble. Before a match we go round looking respectable...then if we see someone who looks like the enemy we ask him the time; if he answers in a foreign accent, we do him over; and if he's got any money on him we'll roll him as well."<sup>4</sup> You can tell from Frank here that he has no intention of killing or injuring his "enemies" but embarrassing or forcing the opponent to submit is key. "Howie", from Liecester, offers another perspective; "If you can baffle the coppers you'll win. You've just got to think how they're gonna think. And you know, half the time you know what they're gonna do, 'cos they're gonna take the same route every week, week in, week out. If you can figure out a way to beat 'em, you're fuckin' laughin', you'll have a good fuckin' raut [Leicester slang for a fight]."<sup>5</sup>You see an innate instinct here from the Leicester youth to assume his enemies are the police, too, and not just other fans. Both of these men fit the bill of Dunning and Murphy's 'affluence' and 'permissiveness'. These actions release them from boredom into a rush/fix of violence that is usually severe but not life threatening. The interviews open the door on affluence as both fans enjoy

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<sup>4</sup> Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988. Pg. 144

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 175

getting away from capitalist hegemony and partaking in fights and/or evading the 'coppers', as sociologists would expound. As politicians became more enthralled by their country mens' actions they put up more restrictions and loopholes to try and block these small battles from occurring. We will see this later with Mrs. Margaret Thatcher after the Heysel Stadium incident. The reforms, at times, egged on the passionate fans more; "Hooligans throughout the 1970's and 1980's seemed to respond to controls and punishments, not by abandoning their commitment, but by devising strategies that enabled them to circumvent official controls and to fight with a minimum risk of being apprehended."<sup>6</sup> A good example of some of the legislative action taken was posted in a 1974 edition of *The Observer*, " The Stretford End...is a kind of academy of violence, where the promising young fans can study the arts of intimidation. This season the club installed a metal barrier between the fans and the ground. It resembles the sort of cage, formidable, and expensive, that is put up by a zoo to contain the animals t needs but slightly fears. Its effect has been to make the Stretford terraces even more exclusive and to turn the occupants into elite."<sup>7</sup> In actuality most steps taken by administrative authority made matters worse. The fences encaged fans in sections where hooligans were fighting, leaving usually a few dead from being trampled. Although there seems to be a blunt approach by politicians to stop violence in sport, many sources around this time, especially ones from the mass media, show a permissive attitude towards fighting

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<sup>6</sup> Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Ivan Waddington, Antoinos E. Astranakis. *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon*. University College Dublin Press, Dublin, Ireland; 2002.



and/or violence at football matches. The *Daily Mirror* in 1974 produced articles, 'League of Violence' and 'Thugs League' that were, I guess, meant to embarrass unruly fans but it played the opposite role and created a hierarchy for hooligans clubs and a spotlight for their trouble. When one of the gangs made the media reports they considered that they were being 'celebrated'. *News of the World* in 1963 commented on hooligan behavior the past weekend, "What? No darts? No invasions? No sending off? No fights on the field? No protests? No menacing mobs awaiting the exits of referees? What is British football coming to?"<sup>8</sup> It's quite odd because at times you see a need or want for violence that is inter connected with spectating and media. Eric Dunning, John Williams, and Patrick Murphy seem to think the watershed moment when hooliganism was shot into its current stage was after the 1966 World Cup finals when England won. They claim, "From that point on it became a self-perpetuating social problem with the actions of the youths and (mainly) young men who were centrally involved and the media and official reactions to what they did feeding each other in a vicious spiral."<sup>9</sup> As for unemployment, I'd rather not discuss it. Though these were the five popular explanations in Britain given by Murphy and Dunning there is a few more worth discussing. The immergence of second-wave feminism is argued by Varda Burstyn in *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culutre of the Sport* to be a casual factor in the growing seriousness of hooliganism in soccer. She states that males, in a gender crisis, respond to females growing expression in society by retreating into

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<sup>8</sup> Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Ivan Waddington, Antoinos E. Astranakis. *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon*. University College Dublin Press, Dublin, Ireland; 2002.

cross-cultural competitions of strength and masculinity (i.e. hooliganism). Another theory that is heavily tied to the affluence argument is John Kerrs' Reversal Theory (1994). This notion originated in 1982 by psychologist Michael Apter and it tries to understand the feelings of boredom in everyday capitalistic life and the enjoyable stimulation of combating boredom. Though I tend to lean towards John Kerrs' evaluation of the situation; none of these explanations have been accepted by an overwhelming majority. Now that I have laid down some sociological explanations of this phenomenon we shall deliberate through the various actions of said hooligan groups. Most of the research has been compiled from Gary Armstrong's *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*, which presents a rivalry between Blades and Owls. These two groups are following their teams in the same town, Sheffield, and the author does a good job of illustrating a precise group of hooligans in daily life/action. Of course, fighting and defacing the enemy are the main goals these males. The way many of these violent episodes begin is by one set of fans going out on the prowl looking for their counterparts. Sometimes this is pre-determined by a match, whereas away fans take a train to the other teams home ground or city center and walk around. "One scenario would involve an individual Blade, in a company of up to 200 similar Blades, journeying to another city, where their equivalents would await their arrival. Upon recognition the two groups would be prepared to fight, despite having never met and being unlikely to see each other again."<sup>10</sup> Like the game they watch, they could judge their team's 'performance' as

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<sup>10</sup> Armstrong, Gary. *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*. Oxford International Publishers Ltd.; Oxford, UK, 1998.

to whether they won, drew, or lost. Their very presence in the other teams territory should be seen as trespassing, an insult, or maybe a challenge; a confrontation is a real possibility in situations like this. This is why police usually try to thwart the hooligans' actions by escorting them from the train station to the stadium, leaving little room for shenanigans. This, in turn, caused the groups to adapt, getting off at an earlier stop and driving via friend or taxi. If police get involved in local town areas (pubs, discos, outside of the stadium) they may use policemen mounted on horse, undercover police, tear gas, riot shields and helmets, batons, or dog vans. This relationship between police and radical groups is ever-present in Gary Armstrong's book *Football Hooligans: Knowing the Score*. He goes farther and presents the typical Blade v. Owl confrontation as: once the two groups had come to a long awaited impasse, "[...] verbal threats and insults were exchanged by some, whilst others stood...bouncing about on the balls of the feet, arms flailing and wearing intense facial expression,"<sup>11</sup> It only takes one member to break the calm, in which case a brawl begins. If one group makes the other retreat this is seen as a victory, in which more verbal abuse will be thrown, maybe for weeks in the future! In said altercations many different situations can arise: stones or objects nearby can be thrown, bottles or bats used to knockout the other firm, and in only extreme cases petrol bombs! If Blades were congregated in a pub and Owls came to 'settle a score' anything from chairs and tables to ashtrays could be used. An interesting thing to notice about these hooligan groups, especially among same nationality rivals, is there tends to be a code of conduct or how a member should

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pg 29

act. In one incidence in a Blade v. Owl skirmish Blades were apprehended afterward by police, “However, despite knowing many of the Owls’ identities. Blades did not reveal their names to the police,”<sup>12</sup> Though one Blade had a broken nose and required stitches there was still no reason to ‘squeal to the pigs’, ever. In this next scenario you see a head Blade send orders to ambush Owls at a nearby pub, “ He immediately departed, though his words were not a command, and anyone could have refused the suggested course of action. Every Blade followed, without threats, cajoling or urging,”<sup>13</sup> Following leadership and never leaving ‘mates’ behind in a confrontation is definitely a virtue among these fighting fans. There also seemed to be a rule in place that fighting with females present or in very outnumbered circumstances is seen as wrong or unfair. At times hooligans could approach individuals and if the individual asked to be left alone, they would contemptuously leave in search of a confrontation more to their liking. In this next situation an Owl Blade fight broke out in a pub, where two Blades were heavily outnumbered. The Owls recognized the two boys and requested a one-on-one outside, which the Blade (Bone) agreed to. “However, as both walked towards the door the Owl turned and began the fight in the pub. In the brief ensuing scuffle Bone was on top, but was hit from behind by a glass. On seeing the blood the challenger refused to fight on, the assailant who had wielded the glass wrapped ice-cubes in a beer towel as a compress, and apologised by saying his action was totally ‘out of order,” (Armstrong 49). The two groups had agreed on a one-on-one, so one of the Owl members stepping in and smashing a glass on the fighting Blade was uncalled for; but when

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pg 30

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pg 31

the cops came the Blade told them he would 'sort it out himself'. So from the outside these crazed fans seem wild, reckless, and lawless; and at times this is the closest thing to the truth. But looking from within their circle you see characteristics of loyalty, brotherhood, and honor. Fairness and good manners were not looked at in high esteem but rules of engagement are always present in battles. As you see from Green Street Hooligans a main rule in there fights is, "You never do someone on the ground." As this is how a Millwall fan died years ago, according to the movie.

Through this introduction I have tried to make aware to the reader the hooligan in his natural environment, in this particular instance it would be England. Touching on subjects like early documentation of sporting violence, sociological explanations of hooliganism, and what actions a 'hooligan' is known for. I decided to follow England in this historiographical pursuit for two reasons: 1) they seem to be a fore-runner in this problem around Europe and the World and 2) they are as well the fore-runners in documentation of this only modernly written about subject. In 1810 a German aristocrat who was familiar with England stated, 'Sport is as untranslatable as gentleman'; a German commentator in 1936 claimed, "As is well known, England was the cradle and the loving 'mother' of sport...It appears that English technical terms referring to this field might become the common possession of all nations in the same way as Italian technical terms in the field of music."<sup>14</sup> I do not think the commentator foresaw the USA's non conformative style not only in sport but in other areas of life. As they USA still call football the rugby like game and "soccer"; the game the rest of the world calls 'futebol', 'football', or 'fussball'. So

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<sup>14</sup> Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning. *Quest for Excitement*. Basil Blackwell Ltd; Oxford, England, 1986.

without any further ado, I would like to give a history of football hooliganism in England when it was raging out of control (1985-1990).

Only months before the European Final, hosted in Brussels, Leeds fans at Birmingham and Millwall fans at Luton forced prime ministerial involvement in combating violence in sport. Fifty five people died at Luton when a wooden stand was accidentally burned and this came on the same afternoon that Leeds fans rioted viciously in Birmingham. Not only did this spur direct attention to the games' financial disposition but as well as the decaying grounds in which many football grounds were still played at. Though this year would begin a good fight in administration to settle down the violent and rampant English football followers, it was the Heysel Tragedy in late 1985 that became "the nadir of a history of football hooliganism that had preoccupied a generation of sports' administrators, journalists, sociologists and politicians."<sup>15</sup> The 1985 European Final was held in Brussels, Belgium at the Heyselstadion. The final would be between Liverpool FC, one of the strongest sides in Europe at the moment, and Juventus FC, a rapidly expanding team based out of Turin. Liverpools' Ian Rush would claim "A logical final, it will be a clash between two of the best European clubs," however the game was not represented as such. Before the game there had been fights including stone and bottle missiles being thrown. Twenty English supporters robbed a jewelry store and a Liverpool supporter was stabbed by a Juventus fan but apparently, in the 1980's this was seen as the norm and not very disruptive! The stadium gates were

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<sup>15</sup> Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy, Ivan Waddington, Antoinos E. Astranakos. *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon*. University College Dublin Press, Dublin, Ireland; 2002.

opened at 5 p.m. but by this time a crowd had gathered and it became a chaotic struggle to get into the grounds, many fans sneaking in to the game without tickets. The stadium seating was set up by terraces on the right and left side of the pitch, as well each set of stands behind the goals was respectively given to each team. The right side (like the left) had three sections; M, N, O. N and O were given to Juventus followers and M was supposed to be for neutral Belgian spectators. The terraces on the left were sectioned off by X, Y, Z; where X and Y were for Liverpool supporters and Z acting as a buffer zone for neutral fans. What the event organizers didn't realize was there were many Italian immigrants in Belgium at this time and many bought tickets in these 'buffer zones'. Along with the ever-present claustrophobic feeling coming from the English fans, security was very poor and allowed big bottles and whole packs of beer into the stadium! These would be the very first projectiles thrown. The sale of alcohol was usually ban at sporting events of this magnitude, around this time, but for some reason this year it was not. Around 7:15 p.m. missiles were being thrown by the crowded English supporters and a return volley was sent by Italian fans. There were eight policemen watching the 5 foot high fence blocking the sections and as Liverpool supporter climbed the barrier the policemen easily fled the scene. "Liverpool fans were free to embark on a series of consecutive charges, armed with bottle-necks, sticks, stones, belts and bent cans as knuckledusters. Every charge was followed by a brief retreat and then another assault to occupy a further position of the Juventus end,"<sup>16</sup> What took the most

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<sup>16</sup> Chisari, Fabio. *The Cursed Cup: Italian Responses to the 1985 Heysel Disaster*. Taylor and Francis Ltd. Leicester, UK, 2004.

lives between this military type confrontation was the ensuing chaos; fans were trapped in there sections by bigger gates and either trampled by frightful humans or trampled by crumbling fences. Forty-five minutes before kick-off a wall at the end of the Z block collapsed causing life-threatening injury. One fan described how he survived this horrific event, “We survived because we resisted the charges. Then we got away stepping over the mass of Italians that had been knocked down.

Everybody was panicking, everybody was shoving. Some people died to save other people.”<sup>17</sup> This fan explains the chaos that was brought about by unruly fans, poor security/regulations, and poor management of ticket sales. As well the fence between the stands and the field fell, allowing scared spectators to run on to the pitch for safety. The police acted very cowardly in trying to apprehend control of the situation in general, “Somehow, the Belgian police managed to avoid a physical clash between the more excited and violent factions of the two opposing sides.”<sup>18</sup> When people got onto the field, safe from apparent danger, police batons greeted them. After all this, UEFA authorities along with English, Italian, and Belgian confidants discussed how to handle the situation. Eventually they came to the conclusion to play as they saw it hard to announce a cancellation of the game without another set of bloody incidents arising. The match was won by Juventus 1-0 in a rather lethargic way, although this is besides the point. Of course, a chunk of the blame was put on Liverpool and England. Heysel will be the first time direct Prime Ministerial involvement came into the sport and in turn, Parliament created the Football Spectator Bill. This is where Ms. Thatcher and her board became famous to

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pg 205

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



many sociologists writing about this period; the bill required computerized entry into all domestic matches, which helped the government keep tabs on who was attending. The Football Spectators Bill also banned drinking inside the stadiums which forced fans in England to hang out in pubs till the last minute and cause more issues getting into the stadium. UEFA acted accordingly putting a five-year ban on English clubs barring them from European competition. Though the England clubs would try to gain entry back with the dawn of every New Year. This ban did not apply to the national side but it fueled the ongoing violence that would continue to occur through the late 1980's. Though the punishment was dealt out to the English based sides the Belgian authorities were considered to have played a thoughtless role in organizing the final and protecting spectators. Brussels had hosted a UEFA cup final the year before between Anderlecht (Belgium) and Tottenham Hotspur (England) where one person died and two hundred English were arrested. Unfortunately, the proper precautions were not taken, even though the Dutch Football Association tried to give helpful advice. The Belgian Football Association (FA) and UEFA took heavy criticism for choosing such an old and worn down venue for a game that had been assessed by many as 'high risk'. The stadium, the Heyselstadion, was built in the 1930's. The terraces were worn and falling apart, this was actually what supplied the 'ultras' (Italian hooligans) with plaster and stone missiles to throw. The Juventus president Giampiero Boniperti was quoted saying the day of the disaster, "At noon we made the inspection of the ground and we all tore our hair: it was old, decrepit and it looked like a scrap yard. There were wooden boards all over the place." The emergency exits were locked shut by

padlocks, to which no one seemed to have the key and these 'emergency exits' soon became death traps, especially in block Z. To add on to this madness, there was not a single First Aid kit and looking back, as many died of suffocation, it is easy to see where these simple precautions would have gone a long way in repelling a lot of the tragedy. But however all that is, in the name of prudence someone had to act and someone had to be blamed. In the aftermath of Heysel you see an immediate interventionist attitude from political bodies, which did not stop or even tone down spectators. On August 19, 1985 the European agreement on violence and excesses of spectators encouraged cooperation between football confidants and the police. The Football Spectators Bill underlined the importance of building new facilities with easily accessible entries and exits as well as sturdy terraces, bans on alcohol sales, and the separation of opposing fans. In Italy before this event, English hooliganism was known to most spectators but not seen as a legitimate threat. In the aftermath, attitudes toward English fans in Turin; especially became misconstrued and debauched. As for the groups of supporters who followed their teams; they became more anarchic and harder to control by club boards and police authorities. The organized groups after Heysel in a nutshell captivated only the, "[...] superficial and aggressive aspects, attracted by the negative publicity given to the *ultrà* movements by the media."<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately the effort of politicians and police did not help much either, "For their part, the police and the authorities are equally committed to eradicating football hooliganism and, so great is their attachment to policies of punishment and control, that they respond to each innovation by the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pg 216

hooligans by producing harsher punishments and new, tighter and more comprehensive controls. And so the process goes on, in an ever-upwards spiral. It was probably that we have called the 'superhooligan' groups came into existence."<sup>20</sup> In the coming years after the Heysel Stadium Incident: politicians would ramp their efforts up to stop the actions of elite fans, media reports would search and sometimes pay for any disturbances (real or false), and English international fans would be continuously discriminated against for only a minute population of their followers. After Heysel even more so, the English media took the center stage to try and combat this 'English disease', by printing story upon story about hooliganism (domestic and abroad). In *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* the authors claim; "In particular, press coverage appears to have played a part in both de-escalating the problem of football hooliganism in the inter-war years and in escalating it from the 1960's onwards. In short, whilst it cannot be said that newspapers and the other mass media 'create' problems of this kind, neither are they neutral agents which simply report events,"<sup>21</sup> In Pete Davies book *One Night in Turin* the author tries to talk to some English fans in a bar on Sardinia in 1990; the fans perceive him as a journalist of some sort and proceed to tell him, "You listen pal- England fans have been libeled and maligned *en bloc* for so long, by so many lying scumbags who wouldn't know the truth if it bit them on the leg, that if you think some bullshit about a book's going to make us say *one word* to you, then either you're not living in the real world, or your just *right out of order.*' Notice the tense relationship this fan

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<sup>20</sup> Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, and John Williams. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988. Pg. 179

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

and probably many others at this time felt towards anyone writing for a news column. There was a story that in Monterrey, there was a man from the *Sun* going round with a brick tied up in a note that said the brick was from England. And he'd go into bars offering fans a couple of hundred quids' worth of pesos to put it through a shop window,"<sup>22</sup> The story the author tells explains the World Cup in 1986 held in Mexico; the author claims to have heard this story or variants of it so many times there must be some truth in it. Davies talked with other English fans, "Talking with two of them, they voiced the universal resentment of the regular fan, fans who, because of the nutters and the Nazis, had been told once again they couldn't go to watch their team...And they told me stories from Germany 88'-with echoes from Mexico 86', stories far too common to be discounted- of reporters and photographers approaching fans, and offering money to get fights started, so news and pictures could be born. They told how one photographer in Stuttgart offered a fan cash to get things going, so the fan took the cash, then punched the photographer,"<sup>23</sup> Though the last part of this story is somewhat comical it illustrates some of the dark methods used in the late 80's by the mass media. At this time, holding the nationality of "English" became synonymous with 'hooligan'. Bobby Robson, coach of the England international team during the 80's and early 90's, commented on this situation by saying; "There are people who are completely destructive and irresponsible. The more abusive and scandalous and sensational they can be, the more it sells- so they're not prepared to write good stuff."<sup>24</sup> Robson

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<sup>22</sup> Davies, Pete; *One Night in Turin*; Yellow Jersey Press; London, England; 1990. Pg. 200

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 29

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 86

decided before the 1990 World Cup to sign a contract with PSV Eindhoven, a Dutch football club. Although this might have been a lot of work managing a club side and international outfit it was nowhere near impossible. However groundless though, the tabloids started and headlines preached blasphemy: I Quit! Robson Blasts Smears, I'm Off Before I Get Sacked, Robson Sells out for a Pot of Gold.<sup>25</sup> All this created tension between: the players, coaches, and fans of the game and the journalists who covered it. This type of relationship is constantly visible in the qualification stages of the 1990 World Cup and in Italy where it was being held. Officials were so prepared for the threat of English hooliganism that no matter what England fans did they were already 'all played out', as Davies put it. But before the story becomes too entrenched in England's 1990 World Cup experience there is one more club side incident to gloss over. In 1989, at the English FA cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest, chaos on the terraces broke out once again and 96 people were crushed to death in Hillsborough. Many of these were Liverpool supporters who were trapped in between the fighting and fleeing fans. This tragedy brought an epiphany upon the government and officials about previous regulations and ways they had seen the hooligan problem. Firstly, the wire cages that were supposed to contain and control the fans, in effect, made the terraces danger zones where once violence had started; it was nearly impossible to get away from. Next, the alcohol ban forced fans to stay in local bars till the last minute, causing a panic right before game-time to gain entry in to the stadium. And finally; what police interpreted as a pitch invasion, was really fans trying to escape the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pg 167

animal like behavior in the caged stands. If the Hillsborough tragedy of 1989 was a cause, then in 1990 Lord Justice Taylor concluding that computerized entry into the games and cages were increasing crowd fatalities, was the effect. Lord Justice Taylor took back many of the laws that the Football Spectators Bill had set up after Heysel in 1985. In this same year (1990) UEFA removed its ban on English clubs to compete in European football. But in a way, this is looking at the end of the journey before it has truly begun.

The issue, violence, and outrage that would be felt by the national side from 1989-1990 would be vast! The World Cup is hosted by FIFA, International Federation of Football Associations, which was founded in Paris in 1904 by seven countries (Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). A century or so later FIFA represents more member countries than the United Nations. England, for all of its efforts, has only been crowned champion once in 1966. England was due for a good run and the 1990 World Cup was coming up in Italy; the "Three Lions" were doing well in qualifying, with a few games left. The first hooligan issue in Englands' qualification came in Stockholm, Sweden. The trouble began on the Tor *Britania* which was a ferry headed to Gothenburg. This ferry consisted of fans from Bradford and Middlesborough , about thirty from each, and though there was a incident where one man was clocked in the nose there was relatively no problems. However, the next morning the fans woke up and realized the captain of the ship was headed back. Apparently a twenty four year old tripping on LSD had fallen over board and drowned and the captain no longer wanted the passengers on his ship. The *Daily Loan Ad* took this and ran with it; claiming,

“Soccer Mob in Ferry Death Riot.” While the qualification game between Sweden and England was being played, reports of English being arrested surfaced. Before the papers could verify these stories of looting and drunkenness they printed their stories, “More than a thousand drunken England soccer fans terrorized the centre of Stockholm last night,” *The Sun*. According to Swedish Law though, there had been no arrests, there were 102 English detained and 104 Swedes. This was a preventive measure used by the Swedish officials. There were as well: about twenty English who ate in a restaurant and refused to pay, a glass window in a kiosk broken, and some beer cans thrown at police vehicles. When a Channel 4 program went to investigate the looting of stores and city centers that the media spoke of, there was little to be found. Sven-Ake Hjalmroth, the police commissioner of Stockholm stated: “In the light of the trouble after last week’s England-Sweden soccer match in Stockholm, I would like to say that coverage in the British media has been rather exaggerated. The game itself was played without any disturbances at all.” Though, like most international games, I am sure there were stir-ups; the commissioners’ words are quite telling. No one was hurt badly or died in Stockholm but the exacerbated stories made England’s Minister of Sport cancel a December fixture against the Netherlands, which would have more potential for problems. “One man’s minor ruck, after all, is another man’s terrifying riot- like football, it all depends on where you’re sitting,”<sup>26</sup> The next qualifier was against Poland, a much needed chance for England to secure their qualification if they could get out of the away match with out losing. The English, in fact, did make it out of this brutal game

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pg. 23

with a 0-0 tie but after the game the press was out and searching. One man from the *Express* asked the police why there had been twenty-five people arrested outside a hotel, hoping eagerly for bad news. The police were calm and collected though and claimed that, “[...] they were drunk- or as an interpreter put it, ‘absolutely stoned’. They were released when they were sober;”.<sup>27</sup> It had seemed as though there would be little issue, especially when the police stated that the English had behaved and were welcome back anytime; but as the press conference was ending an English fan stumbled into the press room blood oozing from a nasty gash on his scalp. The man with the bloody head and other fans had been ambushed by stones and bricks being thrown from Polish fans as they were leaving the stadium. Wherever England seemed to go, their seemed to be a following aurora of chaos and violence.

So it is no surprise then when England was seeded in their World Cup group that they were conveniently placed off the mainland of Italy, on the island of Sardinia. As far away from the action (and Turin) as they could be put without being placed on a completely different country. Sardinia’s main city and port was Cagliari, which was home to a quarter of a million people and the seventh biggest port in Italy at the time. This choice of venue was strategic, Italians were very aware of the strange and violent nature of the Sardinian people. Sards held annual head-butting contests where they ran at full speed into metal doors; in the first World War when Germans and Austrians defeated Italians at Caporetto 5,000 Sardinian men earned undying fame by not allowing thousands to pass in a Spartan like manor. When Peter Davies was talking to a Sardinian, the Sard claimed, “Generally

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pg. 79



in Italy, he said, the great majority of kidnap victims survive. But when Sardis are involved, that's not necessarily so. The victims disappear. "They feed them to their pigs,"<sup>28</sup> This wasn't a problem though as the Italians allotted 7,000 police to inhabit Sardinia while English fans were there. Though many of these stories warded off hooliganism and fighting there were still instances of English being discriminated against; mainly for being English. Three English fans following their national side were arrested for 'stealing and ravaging' their hotel room. The night before they wanted to sleep on the beach and had no malicious intentions with the hotels fine sheets that they 'stole'. Even the local Sardinian media was following suit with their British counterparts; the three boys who had been charged for sleeping on the beach had been claimed to have 'devastated' their room before leaving, according to the *L'Unione Sarda*. Though, however threatening three beer filled boys singing "God Save the Queen" may have been, they nevertheless; paid their bill! In between the boys sentencing, the *L'Unione Sarda* published a story entitled, "Hooligan? We're Full". The story had said 'hotels shut their doors' and misquoted the owner of La Perla saying she was worried about 'turbulent persons'. When looked into further the owner claimed that everyone in her hotel was English and showed the many passports. She went on to say that she still had rooms and welcomed the visiting fans. English people actually went to the local Sardinian opera and saw Aida. They gave blood while staying on Sardinia because the island was rampant with thalassaemia, a red blood cell disease. The owner of La Perla even gave the visiting fans ashtrays, jars, mugs she hand crafted herself with her pottery wheel. The name

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pg. 15

of her hotel painted on the sides to remind them to return. This previous section and the next quote shows the attitudes of the people who came in contact with English fans at this time. "Barmen and waiters in the different places they were drinking all confirmed, they were quiet, they behaved, and they paid. And the barmen and the waiters also said, all these press people are persistent and irritating, and they make the fans unhappy,"<sup>29</sup> Although what would a World Cup be with out controversy, after the Netherlands v England game; Dutch and English fans meet outside the stadium in the city center (estimated at about one thousand each). The Italian police, suffering overstaffing and hooligan psychosis, reacted violently and swiftly. They threw tear gas and beat innocent fans trying to get back to their lodgings. There had said to have been about 100 ultrà's on each side and the other fans were just caught in a trapped city center. The *News of the World* printed a story the next day claiming: "World War! Rampaging English soccer thugs turned the streets of Sardinia into a bloodbath last night...More than 500 Brits arrested...It happened after 1,000 angry fans hurled rocks...The arrested yobs-many of them drug-crazed."<sup>30</sup> Les Walker, the England FA's security man, said the number of hardcore trouble makers was around sixty. One eye-witness account explained the scene when police were trying to maintain order, "I've never seen a crowd so terrified in my life. I was sitting on someone who was sitting on someone else, it was that crushed. People were still being hit; people were dragged out and beaten right in front of them. People were impotent, they were crawling on their

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pg. 180

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pg. 290

knees.”<sup>31</sup>An official for English fans in Sardinia by the name of Tummin was quoted saying, “counter-productive, and might well prove a prelude or catalyst to more violence later. Behavior like this was only storing up trouble for the mainland; if anyone called policing like that a success, they needed their head looking at.” He characterized one of the later police attacks as ‘a revenge attack’.<sup>32</sup> Tummin was one of the people who was in this horrible scene and it took the authorities a while to recognize him and get the situation under control. The national team while on Sardinia, however; would scratch and crawl out of there group with one win, over the Egyptians, and two ties, the Dutch and Irish. This inevitably put the followers on the mainland of Italy and this would soon prove to be a problem; the semi-final was to be held in Turin, home of Juventus FC. The English international side would push past the Belgians and the boys from Cameroon, both games being decided in extra-time. The major difficulty in this tournament though came not from the players’ effort on the field but from the fans trying to watch their historic team. Getting on the mainland and seeing a game was described by Peter Davies as, “you pay 33 pounds each for 9 pound seats; you get tear-gassed and batoned *en route* to the ground, and miss the first twenty minutes of the game.”<sup>33</sup> In Rimini against the Belgians; 246 English had been quickly deported back to their country. The story goes that Italians had been celebrating their win over Uruguay and had taunted some thirty English in a bar. The small group of English took this as their cue to start their serious faced, arm flailing, bottles flying routine. Unfortunately, in turn

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pg. 299

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pg. 311

police took this as their cue to detain any English person in sight. Again, tear gas flew and many English were sent back home who had done nothing wrong. Officials from England sought compensation for seventy-one of the deportees for wrongful detention and deportation. Italy cancelled their banning orders on the fans from fear of what court reports might bring up. The number 246 is not any coincidence either, the Italian authorities did this to set an example, as there are approximately 246 seats on an airplane in these parts. So the authorities basically filled up an airplane of English fans to show the others that there was no problem in sending them back where they came. Many journalists, before having time to review the evidence and check the facts, sided with the Italian authorities and claimed that there side 'polluted the tournament' and couldn't wait for England to be 'out'. Though there was a minor scuffle on the terraces at the England vs. Belgium game there was literally no real threat. The Cameroon vs. England game was played in quite the same manner. But for the English fan arriving on the mainland, he/she was forced to pretty much give up their rights. Especially in Turin, English were held in 'campsites' where the fans were treated like second-class citizens. This might have been for their own good as, "the prospect of a semi-final against the Germans in Turin, Juventus town, the city of the Heysel victims...there were awful possibilities of deep violence."<sup>34</sup> Davies explains coming into Juventus town, "I got into Turin station at about eight on the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>- and the police were out in force. All the English coming in were separated from other travellers, sat down on the platform, and surrounded. Then, when the others had gone, you were stood

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pg. 410

up and marched through the concourse, between the lines of armed and baton-wielding police, towards buses waiting to take you to what they called a campsite.”<sup>35</sup> These English fans were herded like cattle and constantly filmed and photographed by the world’s news and media programs. Peter Davies goes on to claim, “ To follow England here meant submitting to the effective deprivation of your liberty-it meant being treated like some sort of prisoner of war, on the most limited of paroles,”<sup>36</sup> Once you got off the bus to the campsite you and your belongings were searched and usually not put back where they were found. There were no beverages at the campsite and the site itself was an old crumbling, weed-filled stadium. Not only did they pile the fans together but there was oddly a shortage of tickets allotted for English followers. A little before game time 500 Italians fans crowded around the hooligan camp and started chanting; usually to the effect of busting English heads. Many English stayed as far between the Italians throwing missiles and the police raiding with gas and batons. Before the game, as well: English fans fought on a train from Genoa with plain clothed police; Germans ambushed English fans around the streets of the hooligan camp; and English, Italian, and German skirmishes occurred for hours or so before the game. A German had come away from these debacles with a 12 inch stab wound that forced him to be hospitalized. After the game more Italian ultras waited outside the camp looking for a fight. English fans were penned in between the ensuing conflict as police came in, again, with riot helmets and blue flashing sirens. The English national side lost that

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pg. 442

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pg. 444

day, respectively, to a dominant West German side that would go on to win the tournament.

Peter Davies, who followed the team in their adventure through Italia 1990, described the policing of the English fans as: “oppressive, aggressive, and provocative- was depressingly misconceived; that it was a paranoid over-reaction to media and ministerial prophecies of doom which, effectively, criminalized Englishness for the duration of the tournament,”.<sup>37</sup> You can see by 1990 the hype catching up to the English hooligan, in a foreign country and toned down from his former self only years before. Other people meeting English fans in Italy had commented that the stories they’d witnessed and stories they’ve heard did not match up! Ironically, the English national team was given the Fair Play award at the end of the tournament, for the least amount of booking and being the most disciplined side. Peter Davies claimed the one downer about following England in its World Cup run in 1990 was the, “[...] way that sour relations with the press hung like permanent bad weather over the camp. The squalid inventions, the loutish claptrap, the illiterate hysteria of the tabloids needs no further rehearsing,”.<sup>38</sup>

Though this is sour in nature looking back, the typical English fan completely transformed his horrible habits and/or stereotypes within only a few years. This could have been as well to allow their clubs to come back to European football and not cause any further bans, on the international side. I hope I have explained the growing paranoia politicians and media felt toward their hooligan compatriots in the mid to late 1980’s in England. This was one of my goals at the beginning of my

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pg. 460

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pg. 469

research; some of the others being track England from 1985-1990 and give a sociological briefing of the issue to better reveal the hooligans lifestyle for anyone not immediately aware. Pelè once said, “The World Cup is a very complicated tournament - six games, seven if you make it to the final - and maybe if you lose one game you're out, even if you're the best.<sup>39</sup> This tragic removal from the tournament happens to international sides every four years and its arguable that England was one of these teams, especially considering their squad strength and depth. Yet, the immense pressure put upon English football by their government, the worldwide media, and their own foolish ways must have been heavy. To see the way the fans and players performed under this scrutiny is commendable. From nearly hitting rock bottom in 1985 with the Heysel Stadium Incident, being banned from Europe for five years, and not seeing any high hopes for the immediate future: English spectators slowly after Hillsborough (1989) rose from their dirty ditches. Brushing themselves off and acting in a manner respectable to their country; and hey! Sometimes acting respectable for English fans may be polishing a beer off before the guy next to you can and ‘having a laugh’, I see no foul in this!

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<sup>39</sup><http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/p/pele531356.html#dghIR92S4U0qGWPE.99>

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