

## **Lines to take – Link between extreme right wing and football hooliganism**

### **Extreme Right Wing groups are orchestrating football disorder**

There is nothing to suggest any significant relationship between extreme right wing politics and football risk supporters.

The composition of hooligan groups in England and Wales tends to reflect the character of the communities from which they are drawn. In general, football hooligans come from all social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, though there are local and other variations.

Police and other agencies monitor trends but there are currently no significant links between risk football supporters and extreme right wing groups

In England and Wales, domestic football hooligan groups are based around peer group loyalty that is suspicious of people trying to infiltrate the group or influence its activities. That is why attempts by extreme right wing groups to recruit from organised UK hooligan groups have largely failed.

### **Racism is rife at football**

Great strides have been made in recent years to rid football of the kind of mass racist chanting that once shamed our national game. A number of factors and agencies have contributed to that success and it is now extremely rare for domestic football to experience overt racism within grounds.

## **ANNEX THE LINK BETWEEN FOOTBALL & RACISM**

### **Racism and Football**

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There is no complacency. Following the disorder witnessed during Euro 2000, we set up a Ministerial-led multi-agency working group to examine the phenomenon and identify what further measures could be taken to tackle its underlying behavioural and attitudinal causes (including the xenophobia and, on occasions, racism associated with a section of England's travelling support). The group reported in 2001 and made 55 recommendations covering a wide range of issues, including a number that focused on tackling racism and exploiting the potential of football as a vehicle for promoting community cohesion and delivering a range of social policies.

That report has produced a good deal of positive action, including an ongoing multi-agency nine point action plan (with targets) designed to tackle racism and xenophobia in English and Welsh football. The action points are:

- The development and adoption of a corporate briefing/debriefing process for both club stewards and the police.
- The adoption of minimum corporate standards in relation to the roles, responsibilities and training of club stewards.

- The development and adoption of a general code of conduct for players, officials and stewards.
- The communication of the anti-racism stance within clubs through the use of signage within stadiums, statements in match programmes, big screen messages and public announcements.
- The development of a proactive campaign to prevent instances of racist behaviour (e.g. prosecution, banning orders, name and shame; removal of season tickets; working in the community with young supporters).
- The development of a nation-wide system for the collation, analysis and dissemination of police Intelligence in relation to racist offences.
- The adoption, by police forces, of a common policy for dealing with racist offenders (in relation to conviction, banning orders, etc.). This policy to be supported and adhered to by all clubs.
- The development and application of a suite of corporate performance indicators in relation to key areas of racist behaviour (e.g. arrests, banning orders etc.).
- The development and adoption of a corporate media communications strategy to promote the development and commitment to the action plans (including national and local media; use of high profile players; high profile matches; etc.).

### **Football Clubs & Communities**

In addition, a good deal of work is underway (and required) in respect of tackling racism within grassroots football and exploiting the unique potential of football as a vehicle for delivering social policies, including tackling racism and social exclusion and promoting community cohesion and diversity awareness. A related aim centres on encouraging football clubs to be more adventurous in their community investment programmes as a means for developing closer links with local communities. It is desirable in social terms for football crowds to become more reflective of society generally and the clubs, particularly those in the lower leagues, stand to benefit commercially from increasing their appeal within communities that are currently under-represented at matches.

Most clubs aspire to this objective but it is complicated by a range of footballing, social, geographical and other factors. Television exposure and increased cost has tended to diversify the character of the support for more successful clubs, whereas small town clubs continue to draw their crowds from traditional (white) catchment areas. This inevitably prompts suggestions that such crowds are racist which, in turn, increases the fear factor and further encourages football fans in black and minority ethnic communities to distance themselves from their local club.

### **Football Hooliganism and Racism**

Football disorder is a complex, evolving and variable phenomenon. In general, football hooligans come from all social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, though there are local and other variations.

Football hooligans rarely graft themselves on to clubs. They are dedicated fans who demonstrate their loyalty in a perverse and unacceptable manner in order to obtain

status, excitement and peer group approval. They are generally very wary of their sub-cultural criminality being exploited by political extremists of any persuasion. Attempts by right wing extremists to infiltrate hooligan groups have not been fruitful. However, there are individual hooligans who hold and propagate right wing views and there have been and will be occasions when known football troublemakers are involved in racist incidents (e.g. alcohol fuelled attacks on Asian taxi drivers).

In short, whilst hooligan groups associated with clubs based in multi-ethnic cities and conurbations tend to reflect the diversity of local communities, in towns with a high level of inter-community polarisation, the hooligan group inevitably reflects that polarisation. Thus, expressions of racism by football thugs and other fans are invariably prompted by local social factors and tensions rather than infiltration by political extremists.

Interestingly (and perversely) overt racism among the vast majority of hooligan groups associated with clubs in London, Birmingham and the West Midlands, Manchester, Sheffield and other culturally diverse areas was largely eliminated in the 1980s when black and minority ethnic groups became actively involved in the hooligan scene. Their involvement was welcomed by existing troublemakers, including those with right wing inclinations. In practice, the experience demonstrated the tenuous link between football hooliganism and racism and that loyalty to the football club, the hooligan group and the sub-cultural world of organised football disorder usually outweighs political persuasion.