

## SIR NORMAN CHESTER CENTRE FOR FOOTBALL RESEARCH

### *FACTSHEET No. 6*

## RACISM AND FOOTBALL

### 1. Racism and history

- 1.1** Whilst racist activity both in and around football grounds has been a feature of the 1970s and 1980s, racism within professional football in Britain has, historically, been tied to the nature of British society, in particular its colonialist and racist past. Cohen (1988) has suggested that by virtue of its imperialist phase, racism is constitutive of what has become a “British way of life”. This fact has also been reflected in English football, which was historically disinclined to co-operate, or have routinised contact with so-called ‘lesser’ footballing nations. FIFA, for example, was set up without English support in 1904, and the England team did not take part in the World Cup Finals until 1950, at which point they were summarily humiliated (0-1) by the unconsidered USA.
- 1.2** Later in the decade (1950s) the Football League unsuccessfully opposed the involvement of English clubs in European club competitions. Elements of the ‘glorious insularity’ of British football’s past is today echoed in the patrician racism revealed in comments made by football managers and senior football officials regarding black players; ‘They’ have an innate lack of discipline and consistency; a chip on their shoulder; a dislike of the cold etc. Such comments serve only to perpetuate stereotypes by working upon racial myths about black footballers, who are variously alleged to lack ‘bottle’; are “no good in the mud”; and “have no stamina”. Yet, these comments are but everyday examples of the kind of corroding, casual racism which has traditionally permeated professional football throughout the administrative, coaching and playing levels of the game. Only now are such views being effectively challenged and reassessed inside the sport, though for aspiring British *Asian* footballers a new set of stereotypes have to be overcome.
- 1.3** However, it would be unfair to suggest that the same racist attitudes and practises have been present at *all* football clubs at *all* times as there are considerable differences between the traditions at different clubs. For example, clubs such as West Bromwich Albion, pioneered the signing of black players in the modern period, and in the late 1970s, WBA fielded the talented black trio of Cyrille Regis, Laurie Cunningham and Brendan Batson and in doing so attracted considerable local black support. At many other clubs, however, attitudes towards black players seems to have been rather different. Even today it is not unusual for directors, managers and coaches to be openly racist about black players. Sport is a common site for racism, in part because ‘biological’ and genetic assumptions about the physical capabilities of blacks

are set alongside racist assumptions about their supposed intellectual limitations. It is strong in Britain because of the historical links between sport, the nation and Empire which themselves emerge out of racist traditions including, of course, slavery.

## 2. Overt crowd racism

- 2.1 Racism on the football terraces and in the stands is generally rather more overt, and for most people easier to identify, than the semi-institutionalised forms which have tended to characterise professional football culture. Terrace and stands racism typically involves individualised forms of abuse as well as collective chanting with a racist content, the most common of which has been a 'monkey' chant involving grunting sounds which may, or may not, be accompanied by monkey type gestures. There is also evidence of racist songs being composed and sung to various popular tunes. For example, one researcher observing crowds on the South Coast in the late 1980's recalls the following tune being sung to the tune of the 'Conga' and aimed specifically at black players at that time;

*"Get back on your jam jar  
Get back on your jam jar  
La,la,la,la, La,la,la,la."  
(Quoted in Holland, 1994)*

- 2.2 At some of the football venues in British football where overt fan racism has been most evident, black players have been showered with bananas and peanuts, and this strategy has been employed by racist 'supporters' not only to barrack opposition players, but also the black players representing their own club. Dave Hill recalls a reception for Liverpool's John Barnes in the late 1980s:

*"We could see quite clearly, as the teams warmed up before the kick off that banana after banana was being hurled from the away supporters enclosure. The bananas were designed to announce, for the benefit of those unversed in codified terrace abuse, that there was a monkey on the pitch" (Quoted in Hill, 1989)*

Barnes was making his debut for Liverpool in an 'away' match at Arsenal in the 1987-88 season. The fans doing the throwing were, presumably, Liverpool supporters.

- 2.3 There is also evidence that racist abuse from spectators aimed at players is not entirely new. The dark-skinned Everton center-forward, Dixie Dean, recalled how racist comments were aimed at him as he left the pitch at half time during a match in London in the 1930s. Dean, reportedly, punched the offender himself before disappearing into the players' tunnel. In light of the recent Eric Cantona affair of an assault on a fan following 'racist' comments, it is interesting to note that the authorities took no action against Dean. In fact, a nearby police officer was alleged to have informed the victim that he had "deserved" his punishment.

### **3. The role of extreme right wing groups**

- 3.1** In the context of football it is young white males who have been the main transmission lines through which racism has been expressed on the football terraces. Organised groups such as the National Front (NF) and the British National Party (BNP) have, in the 1970s and the 1980's, provided some of the vehicles, rather than the source, for racially transmitted ideologies within the football arena. Neo-Fascist groups in England have remained politically marginal to parliamentary politics and have been largely unable to capture the interest of the national electorate. At football matches however they can attract national attention in a way denied them otherwise. Fascist and racist groups have used the venue of the football ground not only to recruit and to disseminate their ideas but, more importantly, they use the stadiums as a platform from which they can project their views in the simplest and most direct form into millions of homes. They can achieve greater and cheaper publicity at a major football match than they could hope for by years of conventional political campaigning. They also exhibit a level of violence in their activities at football which many young men in Britain seem to find seductive.
- 3.2** By 1978, sympathisers of the National Front were leafleting outside a number of League grounds, being especially active at key London venues, notably Chelsea, Millwall, Arsenal and West Ham, following the launch of the National Front youth newspaper 'Bulldog' in 1977. 'Bulldog', in the 1980's, began devoting a regular column to its article 'On The Football Front', which exhorted fans to "join the fight for race and nation". At some notoriously racist football venues of the time, such as West Ham's Upton Park, the National Front were successfully selling club memorabilia doctored with 'NF' slogans and motifs. In the 1980s, clubs such as Chelsea became something of a south London focus for the activities of right wing racist and loyalist extremists, with Chelsea sympathisers also being at the core of England's racist hooligan following on the continent throughout the decade. In northern England at both Leeds United and Newcastle United, NF and BNP members and sympathisers were a regular fixture during the 1980s, distributing racist literature and memorabilia on matchdays. However, members of anti fascist organisations, such as the Anti Nazi League, along with localised football fanzine movements, and on occasion, members of local trade union organisations, have been largely successful in the 1990s in challenging the sale of fascist literature in and around football stadia.
- 3.3** Allied to the focus provided by domestic football competitions for organised, as well as more spontaneous, racist displays, the 1980s signalled, above all, the increasing spread of football-related racist activity to venues abroad. It is the English national side, especially at its matches abroad, which has been viewed by right wing groups and sympathisers as symbolically the most appropriate site for the expression of a heightened nationalism and xenophobia (see Williams et al 1990). In particular, this behaviour seems to embody a view of English national culture which is exclusively white. In Luxembourg, Denmark, and Spain during the 1982 World Cup Finals, National Front organisers were actively, and sometimes successfully, recruiting sympathisers before and after England matches. Nazi salutes, slogans and fascist symbols were common during England trips abroad during the 1980s, for example, to France 1984; to South America in 1984; to West Germany in 1987 & 1988; and to Sweden, Poland and Albania in 1989.

**3.4** Similar symbols featured at the recent abandoned international match between Ireland and England in Dublin in February 1995. The presence of far right English extremists, and of anti-republican chanting and racist literature was clearly evident, and all the more potent given the political sensitivities across the Irish sea. Such involvements are not a 'deep cause' of hooliganism. Racism is also not 'caused' by political groups. But their actions certainly contribute to violent disturbances at football home and abroad.

#### **4. Official concern and the response of Government**

**4.1** High levels of official concern about racism in English football can be traced back to the mid 1980's following two particularly disturbing incidents concerning football related activity abroad. In February 1984 the English national team played a match against France in Paris. Hooligan disturbances followed in which drunken English supporters attacked local fans, vandalised property and taunted the French with racist and nationalistic slogans and insults. The televised violence revealed the presence of NF supporters, and British politicians and the game's spokespersons promised an immediate investigation.

**4.2** A few months later, in June 1984, the England football squad left for a tour of South America. National Front supporters were reported to have been travelling on the same plane as the players. On the flight they sang racist songs and shouted abuse at black members of the England squad. During the last match of the tour, in the Estadia Nacional in Chile, Union Jacks carrying NF insignia were again prominently displayed during the international television coverage of the game. Once again, the British Minister for Sport promised an investigation into the possible links between racist organisations and supporter groups of this kind. However, little seemed to emerge from these enquiries.

**4.3** This lack of effective government intervention, coupled with what might be called a 'benign neglect' by the footballing authorities, may well have had a role to play in a major international footballing tragedy involving English fans abroad. Within a year of the serious incidents in France, officials and supporters of Liverpool Football Club were alleging that National Front sympathisers were involved in inciting the spectator violence which resulted in the deaths of 39, mainly Italian, fans before the European Cup Final at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels. In the official inquiry which followed (Poplewell, 1985), mention was also made of evidence provided by fans of the distribution of racist literature at the match, though it was not established that the presence of racist fans caused the spectator charge which led to the fan deaths.

#### **5. The 1970s 'Anti-Nazi' Campaigns ('Football fans against racism')**

**5.1** The emergence of right wing extremism on the football terraces, at rock concerts and on the streets, stirred into action a number of popular counter movements orchestrated by the political Left. In particular, links between the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), and groups of football fans began to spread by the late seventies. By 1979, local ANL groups were established at 20 British football grounds. However, professional clubs proffered little support for the avowedly political ANL and for its anti-racist activities. For example, early in 1979 the ANL-backed '*Spurs against the Nazi's*' movement was

threatened with legal action by Tottenham Hotspur. In addition, fights in Leyton between 'Orient against the Nazis'(OAN) members and 'British Movement' West Ham fans produced warnings of a ban from the club of OAN supporters from the, then, Orient chairman.

- 5.2** Whilst celebratory coverage of the violently racist activity of football terrace crews continued apace in the newspapers and leaflets of the National Front and other far right organisations, it was inevitably shadowed by opposing exposure in the anti-fascist 'Searchlight' magazine. Today, there is a new generation of local anti-racist and anti-fascist organisations, a number of which focus their activities almost exclusively on racism at football. The 'Anti-Fascist Action' group (AFA) have, since the mid 1980s, confronted the far right, both ideologically, and physically in and around football grounds by recruiting from the white, working class youth who themselves "come from football, understand the police, understand the gang mentality, and know how to fight" (*The Guardian*, Nov 25th, 1994). Less overtly confrontational, though probably more important, is the nationwide football fanzine movement in England which is predominantly non-racist and has served to challenge hooligan and racist cultures around the English game. For example, one fanzine in Leeds, *'Marching On Together'* has anti-racism as its organising principle. The *'Foxes Against Racism'* group at Leicester City has also been important in campaigns in that city (FAR, 2001).
- 5.3** In addition to these local campaigns, at the national level, especially since the stadium disasters of 1985 (at Heysel) and 1989 (at Hillsborough), a new popular agenda has been established by football fans in England. The national Football Supporters Association for example, a 'radical', activist supporters movement, has campaigned partly on an anti-racist platform. The Commission for Racial Equality has also launched a high profile campaign to 'Kick Racism out of Football' (see later) and the FA itself seemed more alerted to the importance of work in this area. These new movements, and a small but identifiable shift in supporter culture, particularly post-Hillsborough, hold out some prospects at least of untangling the racist historical links drawn through the traditions of the English game. In particular, the fused notions of territoriality and a popular "nationalism of the neighbourhood"(Cohen 1988 p32), have combined with racist ideologies which seemed to have been common for some time on the coaching ground as well as on the terraces and in the stands.

## **6. Racism and football on the continent**

- 6.1** Racism in football is not confined to the British game. Abuse of black and ethnic minority players has disfigured football in many European countries, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy, and France, as well as many eastern European nations. In 1991 Fritz Korbach, manager of Heerenveen, was censured by the Dutch footballing authorities for racially abusing his country's black international star, Brian Roy. During Euro 96, Dutch midfielder Edgar Davids was sent home after complaining that black players were excluded from tactical meetings and had no input into the team, these privileges only being extended to white members of the team. Racist chanting and banana throwing greet blacks in Belgian football on a regular basis. Aston Villa's Dalian Atkinson returned from Spain after one season with Real Sociedad, unhappy with the reception he received, and identifying racial abuse as a major factor in his rapid departure from the Spanish Club. Paul Ince also complained

about open abuse during his spell with Inter Milan in Italy, and British-based players have been abused in Italy and in parts of Eastern Europe on a regular basis in club competitions.

- 6.2** In Germany there have been many incidents of racist abuse, some of an especially vicious kind in the last several years. In 1990 there were reports of right wing skinheads barracking the small number of black players playing in the Bundesliga. Weise, in Merkel (1996), comments that monkey grunts and airborne bananas are “part of weekend to weekend normality” in German football. In 1992 neo-nazi groups in Germany began using football matches as occasions to plan and organise attacks against local ethnic communities and East European refugees. In 1994 the Borussia Dortmund star, Julio Cesar threatened to leave the club after he was refused admission to a local night-club because he is black. High- ranking club officials have openly revealed racist attitudes towards black players. Merkel (1996) relates the opinion of one club official who stated in 1994 that managers and coaches liked black players’ skill, speed and power, calling them “black antelopes”, but then conceded that, unfortunately, they have “little intellectual capacity”.
- 6.3** In Italy, Ronny Rosenthal, playing for Israel’s Haifa team in 1989, was subjected to anti Semitic taunts. Black footballers playing in the *Serie A* top flight in 1993 were also racially abused. Two black Dutch players, Ruud Gullit and Aaron Winters, have spoken out against such racist taunts. Their complaints spurred a day of action on 13 December 1992, with the slogan *No al razzimo!* (No To Racism) being paraded by all players in the two Italian divisions. French football has been plagued recently by an increase in right-wing racist activity in and around football grounds, causing concern for the World Cup 98 organisers. Many Eastern European countries, including Hungary, Czech Republic, Croatia, Poland and Romania, are currently struggling with a growing hooligan element among football supporters. English observers liken the burgeoning hooligan culture in these nations to that of England during the 1970s. Ominously, far-right groups are infiltrating these groups and racist violence, as well as other forms of anti-social behaviour are on the increase (see, Brown, *When Saturday Comes* , November, 1997).
- 6.4** A number of organisations and groups have grown to counter this disturbing trend. The Netherlands Government pumped the equivalent of £948,000 into a anti-racist activities in Holland in 1991. The *Nederlandse Sport Federatie* (equivalent to Britain's Sports Council) has been very vocal, organising a conference in 1991 - *Kluer Bekenner* ('recognising colour') - to raise public awareness of the issue in Holland. Belgian authorities have aimed their anti-racism campaign at the grass-roots level, working through local sports clubs to encourage more minority participation.
- 6.5** In Germany, Hamburg's St Pauli club fans responded decisively to outbreaks of racism in the German game. With the slogan, *Gegen rechts* ('Against the Right'), a combination of fans and students took to the club's terraces in 1992 to stand up against politically motivated racism. In December 1992, all the teams in the German League followed the St Pauli lead and, over one weekend, all players played in shirts displaying the slogan *Mein Freund ist Auslander* ('My friend is a Foreigner'). The German Sports Youth’s 1995 “No Chance for Hatred” campaign has promoted activities against racism and xenophobia on a national scale, encouraging local clubs to participate. Unfortunately, this campaign has not spurred German football

authorities into further action. Merkel (1996) reports that they vehemently refuse to acknowledge that racism is a major problem, and dismiss racist abuses as isolated incidents which have nothing to do with the sport. Most of their measures are concerned with law and order - cutting down violence at matches - but anti-racist action is very sparse. Anti-racist initiatives are designed to create positive publicity but generally consist of little more than token gestures, such as rock concerts and short term advertising campaigns.

- 6.6** Despite dire predictions of right-wing hooligan violence within the English press prior to the 1996 European Championships, crowd trouble was almost non-existent. Back, Crabbe, and Solomos (1996) are critical of both the popular and tabloid press for sensationalising potential violence by predicting a “third world war” on the terraces between fascist groups from competing nations. They are concerned that racism is popularly connected always to violent right wing extremists - to 'others' rather than those inside the sport. They see this as yet another example of the press focusing on the “racist/hooligan couplet”, reducing the, “forms of popular racism expressed in football . . .to a simple archetype”. By blaming far-right activity for all racist activity, the problem is successfully located “outside of the institutions of football and into the shady interstices of quasi-criminal subcultures”. The game itself and its institutions are thereby freed from any stain of racist activity. These authors recommend a stronger focus on 'banal' everyday racism in football institutions in order to get away from comforting stereotypes which mean that racism can be connected to violent 'outsiders' rather than to 'us'. They also want to locate fan racism within the context of other forms of exclusive and aggressive partisanship that operate among fans at football matches. Their focus here is to work against incidents of *racism* in football, rather than simply label some white fans as irreducibly *racist* (Back et al, 2001).
- 6.7** A new European anti-racism in football network **FARE** has recently been established. This collects and disseminates information on football racism in Europe and also supports fan groups and clubs in anti-racist activities and events. The FARE network can be contacted at: [www.farenet.org](http://www.farenet.org)

**7. The CRE/PFA/Football Trust Campaign  
(‘Let’s Kick Racism Out of Football’ and ‘Kick it Out’)  
AGARI (‘Let’s Kick Racism’ and ‘Respect All Fans’)**

- 7.1** In August of 1993 the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), and the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), along with the Football Trust launched the 'Lets Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign. Whilst there have been other campaigns against racism in football, this one has been the first to win support from all the football authorities and nearly all of the professional clubs, along with the endorsement of several top players who have lent their weight to the campaign. By 1991 all but one of the professional clubs in England and Wales had publicly endorsed the campaign, and many had started to take anti-racist initiatives of their own, beginning with posters and public statements as the start of a serious programme to fight racism.
- 7.2** The initial main aim of the new campaign was to get clubs to act on a 10-point action plan. The PFA, the FA, the FA Premier League, and the Endsligh League all joined the CRE in persuading clubs to take action in the following respects.

## **Kick It Out Campaign**

### **Ten Point Plan for Action by clubs**

- To issue a statement saying the club will not tolerate racism, spelling out the action it will take against those engaged in racist chanting and individual racist abuse. The statement should be printed in all match programmes and displayed permanently and prominently around the ground.
- Make public address announcements condemning racist chanting and individual racist abuse at matches.
- Make it a condition for season ticket holders that they do not take part in racist abuse
- Take action to prevent the sale of racist literature inside and outside the ground.
- Take disciplinary action against players who engage in racial abuse.
- Contact other clubs to make sure they understand the club's policy on racism.
- Encourage a common strategy between stewards and police for dealing with racist abuse.
- Remove all graffiti from the ground as a matter of urgency.
- Adopt an equal opportunities policy in relation to employment and service provision
- Work with all other groups and agencies, such as the Professional Footballers association, supporters, schools, voluntary organisations, youth clubs, sponsors, local authorities, local businesses and police, to develop pro-active programmes and make progress to raise awareness of campaigning to eliminate racial abuse and discrimination.

**7.3** This new campaign was closely aligned to the existing PFA 'Football in the Community' scheme which, whilst co-ordinated nationally, is managed locally from within each professional club. Working within the wider premise of the promotion of closer links between professional clubs and the community, the 'Football and the Community' initiative continues to pursue one of its chief original aims, that is, the involvement of minority and ethnic groups in social and recreational activities around local clubs.

**7.4** Carver, Garland and Rowe (1995) defend the CRE 'Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign against criticism that it was largely superficial and failed to accomplish

tangible results. Slow progress in terms of practical measures has been due to the conservative attitudes of clubs and the campaign has perhaps faltered in that respect. Moreover, even relatively progressive anti-racist programmes at clubs have continued to acknowledge the separate spheres of the dressing room and the training ground (Garland and Rowe, 2001: 191). On the plus side, the national campaign has brought increased publicity to the issue of racism and been a catalyst for encouraging local groups, club and local authorities to initiate programmes to combat racism.

- 7.5** In 1995-96, the 'Let's Kick Racism Out of Football' campaign evolved into the Advisory Group Against Racism and Intimidation (AGARI), which widened the scope to fight intimidation as well as racism. New slogans were 'Let's Kick Racism' and 'Respect All Fans.' In 1997 this became the 'Kick it Out' campaign, which is funded by the CRE and by football organizations, but which works independently to promote anti-racist practices in football.
- 7.6** Club based anti-racism initiatives have included football clinics and coaching courses for minorities, and taking measures to eliminate racism within the ground. In this way clubs aim to forge links with local ethnic communities, both to encourage local players and coaches and to attract fans from these communities. Among the most successful programs are Charlton's 'Red, White, and Black' or CARE scheme, Derby County's 'Rams Against Racism' from the early 1990s, and Sheffield United's 'Football Unites, Racism Divides' or FURD project (see Bradbury, 2001a). Leicester City, Everton, Leeds United and Millwall also have substantial campaigns in effect. The Leicester City initiative Foxes Against Racism, was working with the club in 2002 on a new campaign to review City's policies across a range of activities, including employment and recruitment policies, working with young ethnic minority footballers and attracting more ethnic minority fans to the club's new stadium.
- 7.7** The football fanzine movement continues to be a strong anti-racism force in England and carries inserts from KIO and other organizations on the importance of countering football racism. Other recent initiatives include 'Kicking Out', and 'My England', plays designed to educate youth on 'racism through football' theme and produced by the Arc Theatre Company. Originally funded by Leyton Orient, this work became part of a successful CRE/PFA campaign and was viewed by 130,000 teenagers during a tour in the mid-1990s. Community based projects have also prospered. In 1997, the FA, PFA, CRE, and the EC lent their support to an anti-racist video (*Show Racism the Red Card*) launched in the north-east and featuring dozens of high profile footballers, including many from the three local Premiership sides (Newcastle United, Middlesbrough and Sunderland). It has been distributed throughout Britain and several other western European nations. A second SRRC video was produced in 2000 and included interview with top players talking about their experiences of racism. In 1997, the City of Sheffield in conjunction with its two major football clubs initiated the 'Streetwise Junior Football Coaching Scheme', which provides playing and coaching instruction for minority children and adults in the community.
- 7.8** Within the climate of large-scale support for English anti-racism campaigns, a century of sectarian tradition centred on the Old Firm of Rangers and Celtic is increasingly coming under attack. Celtic have responded with the 'Bhoys Against Bigotry' campaign, initiated in 1996 by owner Fergus McCann. Coupled with a commitment to numerous charitable causes in Glasgow, there has been support for the Northern

Ireland Holiday Scheme to bring Catholic and Protestant children together. In addition, McCann was determined to crack down on bigotry within Celtic Park. The singing of IRA songs has been forbidden – though it continues among fans - sectarian advertising is banned from the club's official magazine 'Celtic View', and political and musical groups with links to sectarianism are no longer allowed access to the venue as a stage for their views. Glasgow Rangers, for their part, finally abandoned their long-standing tradition against the signing of Catholic players. Murray (1998) points out that until Rangers join with Celtic in directly attacking sectarianism there will not be much of a shift in attitudes. However, the libertarian fan group *Liberio!* (1998) have also, controversially, argued recently that the Celtic campaign is actually aimed against traditionally 'tribal' sporting styles and traditions and is designed more to 'sanitise' supporter cultures for 'family' groups than it is to rule out fan bigotry and racism.

- 7.9** According to the 2001 *FA Premier League National Fan Survey* (SNCCFR, 2001a) Black British or British Asian fans comprise only 0.8% of the total sample of active top level fans (compared to 0.7% in 1997) way below the figures for the population at large. Black players probably account for between 13-15% of professional footballers nationwide. Even in areas of the country with large ethnic minority populations match attendance from among these groups is very low. Regional disparity is very small here, with ethnic minority attendance strongest at clubs such as Arsenal - and generally higher in parts of London - and weakest in parts of the north-east and in Scotland. Racism clearly remains a problem to some extent at *all* professional clubs. 27% of FA Premier League fans polled in 2001 reported witnessing some racism aimed at players at matches, with 7% identifying racism against spectators. These figures tally with those for the Football League national fan survey for 2001 (SNCCFR, 2001b)
- 7.10** Black and Asian fans generally report higher levels of racism than do white fans. However, those clubs with a tradition of signing black players and especially those with positive working relationships and traditions involving local ethnic minority communities as players and spectators, generally attract the most ethnic minority fans and exhibit the least racism among fans. Strong examples are Arsenal and Wimbledon, which have among the lowest numbers of fans reporting racist abuse against blacks, 17% and 9% respectively. Clubs such as West Ham, Everton and Sunderland tend to register high levels of reported racial abuse at their club's matches. Leicester City fans report quite high levels of racism – but mainly from *visiting* supporters. Fans under 30 years of age are most likely to report hearing racist abuse at football. This may reflect the areas where younger people watch the game, but it may also represent a greater sensitivity among the young to racism. Reports of racist abuse tend to diminish as fans get older- reaching a low of 19% for those over 60 years of age. Most fans seem to be largely satisfied with their club's attempts to counter racism (SNCCFR, 2001a: 20).
- 7.11** These survey results also show that, unlike sensitivity to foul language, sensitivity to *racism* is fairly constant among fans across age ranges and social groups and does *not* depend, for example, upon social context or changing sensitivities. That is, sensitivity to racism does *not* increase if you attend matches with children, though sensitivity to foul language does. These data may lead to a disturbing conclusion - that fans are

actually more offended by foul language, and its effects on partners or their children, than they are by racist language.

## 8. The Football Task Force

**8.1** The *Football Task Force*, a government initiative set up in 1997 to ensure a 'fair deal' for football fans released its first report on March 30, 1998, entitled '*Eliminating racism from football*'. The Task Force's remit in this area is to investigate and recommend *new* measures to deal with the public's concern on eliminating racism from football and encouraging wider participation by ethnic minorities, both in playing and spectating. It is a far-reaching and ambitious report, which contains mandates for the government, the football authorities, the clubs and the local authorities. Among its main recommendations are:

- *The FA should issue new guidelines to referees that any racist abuse on the field of play should mean an immediate red card.*
- *Local authorities should exclude local football clubs with a record of involvement in racist incidents from council-owned facilities.*
- *Professional clubs should adopt a comprehensive written equal opportunities policy to cover the recruitment and treatment of non-playing staff.*
- *The PFA and LMA (League Managers Association) should recommend inserting an anti-racism pledge into players' and managers' contracts with breaches incurring severe sanctions (fines or dismissals)*
- *The FA, the FLA and the Football Safety Officers Association should ensure that football stewards are trained to deal with incidents of racism at football matches as part of a mandatory NVQ qualification or equivalent. New methods of reporting racism should also be established by police and clubs*
- *Football clubs should review their scouting activities and work in local communities to ensure they are recruiting ethnic minority community members as both players and spectators.*

**8.2** The focus here on racism in *local* football is an important new departure and is a recognition of the problems faced by black and Asian local clubs in facing and overcoming prejudice and abuse (Williams, 1994; Highfields Oral History Group, 1994). With government backing and monitoring this campaign may be part of an important new departure in this area.

**8.3** In 2001 Steven Bradbury assessed some of the progress made at professional clubs to deal with racism under the auspices of the Task Force recommendations. His conclusions were that some progress had been made here but much more needed to be done by clubs. More specifically:

### An Audit of Professional clubs and Policies on Racism 2001

- 88 (96%) football clubs in the FA Premier League and the Football League responded to a postal questionnaire survey on racism at football and relationships with minority ethnic communities.
- Of these 88 clubs, 45 (51%) are situated in areas which have a minority ethnic population of 5% or more. 23 clubs (26%) are situated in areas where between 5% and 1.5% of residents are of minority ethnic background.
- All London clubs and three-quarters (75%) of all Midlands clubs are situated in areas which have substantial minority ethnic communities. Most FA Premier League clubs and most larger, urban-based, Football League clubs are sited in areas with significant local minority ethnic populations. More, smaller, Football League clubs are sited in largely 'white' areas.
- Nearly, two-thirds (65%) of respondent clubs claimed that they already *appeal to all members of the community* and one-third (33%) of clubs feel they are already 'successful' in *attracting black and Asian fans to matches*. However, according to supporter surveys, the actual level of 'active' minority ethnic support for most football clubs in England is probably between 0-2% of the total crowd. Most clubs which are sited in areas with substantial minority ethnic populations have very low proportions of these populations represented in their 'active' support.
- 60% of clubs in areas with large local ethnic minority populations admit they have *not* been successful at attracting minority communities to matches. Claims for 'successful' recruitment of minority ethnic fans on the part of some clubs seem to us to reflect more a relative lack of *ambition* among clubs on this score rather than real successes in this respect.
- At some North West and Midlands clubs, which are sited in 'high' minority ethnic areas, responses to dealing with racism and to the issue of appealing more directly and more appropriately to minority ethnic communities seem very limited.
- Three-quarters (76%) of all club respondents felt it unnecessary to *do more work specifically with black and Asian fans*. Over half (52%) of all clubs also felt they were *already open to all fans*. Clubs which claimed to be already *open* to all fans were also among those which seemed most often to be the least 'racially aware', and to be the least active in terms of being generally geared up to deal with racism if it occurred.
- More than half (57%) of respondent clubs were unaware of any *recent incidents of racism* amongst spectators at their home matches. The implication here, that racism is simply not a problem at most football grounds, is rather challenged by fan experiences at clubs, as reported for example, in supporter surveys. Fewer clubs (41%) had taken any recent *direct action* against racist incidents at home matches.
- Only eight clubs (9%) have *telephone hotlines* for fans specifically to report incidents of racism at the clubs matches, even though this approach was

recommended by the government's own recent Football Task Force. Despite this relative lack of formal procedures for reporting racism at many clubs, 41 clubs (52%) had received recent *reports of racism* at home matches from fans.

- Minority ethnic *workers* are considerable under-represented in the *administrative departments* of professional football clubs. Only *two* minority ethnic employees, nationally, hold what one might describe as a *senior* administrative post at any of these 88 professional clubs.
- The administrative *recruitment procedures* at a large number of football clubs seem effectively 'closed' to outside applicants, including members of minority ethnic communities. Many clubs (35%) still admit to using methods of '*word of mouth*' or *personal contacts* in order to recruit senior administrative staff.
- Fewer than one-third (31%) of all clubs, according to our returns, have written *equal opportunities policies*, despite this being a specific recommendation of the Football Task Force. Furthermore, two out of three of those clubs which claim to have equal opportunities policies do not seem to *adhere* to these policies.
- A small number of professional football clubs have worked hard at dealing with issues of racism at the local level. There has been real progress here. However, the responses of most professional football clubs to the implementation of anti-racism measures identified in the Football Task Force recommendations have been much more limited.

Source: Bradbury, 2001

## 9. Anti-racism and football: a new direction?

**9.1** The racist abuse of black players and black and ethnic minority fans alike has been a consistent aspect of the British game in and around football grounds throughout the game's history but especially over the past thirty years. It has often provided an intimidating and offensive environment for black people and has arguably stifled the development of the game by restricting the influx of talented black and Asian players into the British game and, by tarnishing the image of football, ultimately affecting the commercial attractiveness of the game for potential sponsors.

**9.2** However, a number of factors have contributed to what, in the era of the sport, is an excellent opportunity to oppose racism in the football environment. The pioneering role of black players of the 1970s, have provided the impetus and the role models for the young emerging black talent which now leads the way in both Premiership football, and at international level. Paul Ince recently became the first black player to captain England. The England World Cup team of 2002 usually contained four or five black players. The new coach of the England Women's team is a black female, Hope Powell. Around one in six professional male footballers in England are black, whilst fewer than one in a hundred supporters are black, and the CRE/PFA campaign hopes to redress this imbalance by making football grounds a much more 'civilised'

environment. Asian spectators are also vastly underrepresented at matches, especially in light of the fact that many grounds are located amid large Asian communities. The post-Hillsborough shift in terrace culture and the associated changes in the general behaviour of fans also provides a potentially promising basis for the future of black and Asian involvement in the British game.

- 9.3** Recent campaigns designed to offer more ‘inclusiveness’ around the England national team have drawn ambivalent responses. Carrington (1998) for example argues that the ‘Football’s Coming Home’ new lad’ agenda for the generally hooligan free 1996 Euro Championships effectively excluded many potential black England fans because of its iconography and its focus on the historical footballing traditions of the colonialist English. The 2002 World Cup campaign – and especially the promotion of the cross of St. George for England supporters rather than the racism-tarnished Union Jack - has also been argued to offer a ‘new England’ for a new era. Whether England followings at matches *in Europe* will continue to be ‘inclusive’ in this way is awaiting empirical test.
- 9.4** While blacks have fought through prejudice to excel at the highest levels of English football, we still await the Asian ‘breakthrough’. There are very few British Asian professional players in England. None play first team football at the highest level. Many people within the game offer up tired stereotypes as explanations: “they are not interested in football” or “their builds are too slight to take the physical abuse”. Jas Bains (1994) in *Asians Can’t Play Football* sought to address the reasons for the lack of Asian representation in professional football. His findings are illuminating: football is extremely popular among young British males of Asian origin, many aspire to be play professionally, and most feel that the lack of Asians in professional football is due to lack of opportunity. Further findings expose the ignorance and racism of the football establishment: 55% of club officials surveyed thought that football was ‘not popular’ among British Asians, 69% thought that Asian footballers were physically inferior to those from other groups, and 86% thought they were either definitely or possibly less talented than players drawn from other groups. 65% of Asian footballers claimed to have regularly suffered racist abuse while playing ‘organised’ football. As a result of racism, Asians often play on segregated sides and in segregated leagues; leagues which professional football clubs do not scout.
- 9.5** From the inception of the anti-racism movement in football in the 1980s, actions in this area have generally targeted the far-right, neo-nazi skinhead groups. But now that this type of violent, overtly racist activity has been drastically reduced, anti-racist efforts must not, simply, slow down. Back, Crabbe, and Solomos (1996; 2001) warn against the perception, perpetuated by the media, that all racist activity within the game is personified in or typified by the ‘skinhead Nazi.’ Such a “narrow emphasis on fan behaviour and an out of date image allow more subtle forms of racism to go unchallenged”. (*When Saturday Comes*, November 1997). Back et al condemn what they call the ‘Blind Eye Syndrome’-where racist name-calling or playful racial insults at football matches are seen as acceptable because the perpetrators are ‘normal’ people, not neo-Nazis. Such ‘everyday racism’ is pervasive and even widely accepted, and is often seen by fans as no more harmful than taunting a player because he is bald or overweight. Television commentators have been guilty of avoiding the unpleasant subject of racism. Racist chanting and abuse has traditionally been lightly dismissed as part of the ‘electric atmosphere’ of a big match, or condoned as merely

the crowd 'getting at' the player. More recently commentators have tended to highlight foreign fan racism, implying we have solved our own problems in Britain. But, for the most part, racism inside clubs has still not been effectively addressed. (Back, et al 1996)

- 9.6** Back, et al. (1996), also see *institutional* racism as a strong force in football today., commenting that it is: "*easy for everyone to support a campaign against racism in football when it is targeted against pathologically aggressive, neo-Nazi thugs. It might prove a little more tricky to generate football-wide support if we were to start asking questions about the attitudes in the boardroom, on the pitch, and in the training ground*". Black managers are rare, as are black club officials, or even club employees. Widespread racist stereotypes about blacks abound among the nearly all-white club managers, coaches, administrators and officials, particularly that they are athletically gifted but intellectually inferior. Within British football culture in which 'whiteness' is normalized – even in the era of foreign imports - blacks do not make suitable managers or coaches (Back et al 2001). British Asians, for their part, are seen as physically and athletically inferior, lacking the robust physique as well as the skill needed to play professional football in Britain. Breaking down the persistent institutional racism within the game will be a tremendous challenge, perhaps more difficult than reducing the hooliganism and neo-Nazi racist activity prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s.
- 9.7** The 1990s present, potentially at least, the opportunity for a new era within British football. The restructuring of the game, a massive ground improvement programme, a revitalised commercial interest in the game, rising attendance and the general improvement in fan behaviour has placed football firmly back in its place as a central part of the cultural fabric of the nation. Within the national sport black and Asian participation is not only to be welcomed; it is absolutely necessary for the future of the national game. This is not to mention the wider social benefits of a sport which accommodates black and Asian spectators and players. The way forward is succinctly outlined by the CRE/PFA campaign which states that:

*"If football is to be played and enjoyed equally by everyone, whatever the colour of their skin, and wherever they come from, it is up to us all, each and every one of us, to refuse to tolerate racist attitudes, and to demand nothing less than the highest standards in every area of the game".*

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