Hooliganism – Introducing hooliganism

**Your task:**

Prepare a presentation in which you introduce hooliganism. You should use the text below. A good presentation also includes concrete materials. This could be images, statistics, interviews, video clips, articles, etc.

You also have to prepare one or two exercises that help your audience remember the contents of your introduction to hooliganism.

Length of presentation: 20-25 minutes – excluding exercises.

<http://www.people.ex.ac.uk/watupman/undergrad/rowlands/hooliganismintroductionhtm.htm>

FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

INTRODUCTION

Football hooliganism was once thought of purely as an "English disease. Since the 1970s and the 1980s English fans, both at home and abroad have suffered from a justified reputation as violent hooligans. The reputation of English fans reached its lowest point after the Heysel stadium disaster in 1985 when hooligan activity by Liverpool fans caused part of the stadium to collapse which killed 39 Juventus supporters at the European Cup Final. Since this incident the problem of football hooliganism has become more widespread in other European countries. This is particularly the case in Italy and Holland where there has been a remarkable growth in the amount of hooligan related activity. In particular groups like the Lazio ultras have been involved in violence with other fans and racial abuse. There is also a new threat of violence from the Eastern European states, in particular Poland and Hungary. There has been a move away from the traditional image associated with the 1970s and 1980s of the Saturday afternoon fight between two groups of supporters in or around the stadium their teams were playing in to large organised fights well away from the match. There has also been a decline in the traditional idea of the hooligan firm for example the Chelsea headhunters or the West Ham Inter City firm. It is now more likely that hooligans will meet and fight in areas of open ground, well away from stadiums and their associated police presence. These fights are often organised over the Internet and using mobile phones in order to arrange locations so the police do not know where the fights will happen. There are also political motivations behind the activities of some hooligan groups and many have far right sympathies. In the 1980s English hooligans were linked with groups like Combat 18 and the National Front. These right wing beliefs are also prevalent in other European states, one particular example are the Lazio ultras in Italy who are renowned for the racial abuse they give black players and their support for the former right wing regime in Yugoslavia.

<http://www.people.ex.ac.uk/watupman/undergrad/rowlands/hooliganismhistory.htm>

Football Hooliganism

History

Hooliganism has been associated with football since it began. In the early years of football as a professional sport so called roughs were regularly reported to be causing trouble at matches. The biggest rivalries were, and still are, between clubs from the same city or local area. Trouble was reported at these games as early as the nineteenth century. As well as attacking opposition fans, the roughs used to attack players and referees. After this period, and particularly between the two world wars, football gained a more respectable reputation and crowd violence, although not totally wiped out, started to decline. It was not until the early 1960s that hooliganism once again became a serious problem, particularly in the media. This was expressed as a part of the overriding culture of youth rebellion and moral panic at the time. This came about as a result of rising juvenile crime rates, uncertainty about the future and new movements like the Teddy boys. Along with other overriding themes that have been present when hooliganism is considered a problem there was racism in society that manifested itself in things like the Notting Hill disturbances. Football stadiums became identified as a place where fights could easily take place. It was around this time that football hooliganism began to take on the coherent structure of groups that it has today. Must of these groups emerged from the working class housing estates of the major cities. Loose alliances were formed amongst young men on match days and they occupied the terraces behind the goals at stadiums. This led to the development of a strong local feeling that had to be defended against other groups. As a result a national network of rival gangs was built up and fights regularly took place inside football grounds.

However, in recent times there has been a move away from this idea of fighting in stadiums and groups arrange to meet outside grounds, before or after matches. Football hooliganism has moved on even from the days of the firms of the 1970s and 1980s. At this time football hooligans thought they were having "a bit of a laugh." Activities like verbally abusing opposition fans and threatening them with attack. The hardcore that were violent cause most damage by causing fights between rival groups of supporters. Due to changes in the 1990s, particularly the introduction of all seater stadia after the Hillsborough disaster, hooligan activity has almost completely moved out of the stadiums. Although a hardcore does remain, most violence occurs outside the grounds. Modern technology is used to organise fights between different groups of hooligans. In particular the Internet and mobile phones have become the main weapon of the football hooligan. Mobile phones are used to finalise details and call in reinforcements. When fights do break out in football stadiums, the most common sight is someone on a mobile phone getting more hooligans to join in. Although there is not the coverage or hysteria regarding football that was seen in the 1980s. Hooliganism still takes place between rival sets of English supporters. Recently a prearranged fight took place in Rochdale between Manchester United fans, who are noted for their lack of passion and corporate approach to football, and Leeds United supporters. Local derby games often lead to violent battles between supporters; the most recent examples are in Burnley and Sheffield. On the Internet gangs from Queens Park Rangers and Arsenal taunted each other about fights after their FA cup game. Football violence occurs at all levels of the game. Bishop Auckland supporters recently staged pitch invasions and fought with police during an FA Trophy game against Burton Albion. At the other end of the scale, recent violence from England fans, most notably in Marseilles and Charleroi, shows hooliganism is a Europe wide problem.

<http://thesportjournal.org/?s=soccer+hooligans>

Introduction

No event illustrates the social phenomenon of “soccer hooliganism”
more dramatically than the deaths of 39 Italian spectators at the European
Cup Final between the Liverpool Football Club and the Italian team Juventus,
played at Heysel Stadium in Brussels, Belgium on May 29,1985 at the hands
of soccer hooligans from Liverpool, England (Kerr, 1994).

After viewing film of the incident, Belgium authorities identified
groups of Liverpool fans as those who instigated vicious attacks against
the Italian fans, which in turn led to a stampede of people attempting to
escape the violence. The Liverpool soccer hooligans were the ones wearing
ski masks and carrying various weapons including, pick axe handles and clubs
(*The Times*, 30 May 1985). The brutality of the event was further
heightened by eyewitness accounts claiming the Liverpool soccer hooligans
were urinating on the corpses and jumping around in celebration (Canter,
1989). In time, the main offenders were brought to trial and sentenced in
a Belgium court.

Non-Europeans, hearing of the incident probably considered this a
tragic, but isolated event. Sadly, British, as well as other European citizens,
are most aware of the problem that has become known as the “British Disease”
(Canter, 1989, p. 109), or soccer hooliganism.

1985 was a bad year for professional soccer in Britain, because not
only did the incident in Brussels occur, but “fire broke out at Bradford
City Football Club causing many deaths,” apparently caused by an ignited
Molotov cocktail, “and a wall collapsed at Birmingham City, which also led
to numerous deaths” (Canter, 1989, pp. xvi). Furthermore, from 1985 to 1990
all British soccer club teams were banned from European competitions as a
result of the Heysel Stadium tragedy.

Superficially, it seems inconceivable that soccer fans would die
intentionally at the hands of others, yet with deeper understanding of the
soccer scene it becomes clear why these incidents occurred. It was just a
matter of time before the activities of soccer hooligans would lead to tragedy
on the scale of the Heysel Stadium incident. Fortunately, 13 years later,
there have been no further multiple-death incidents, though single deaths
caused by soccer hooligans still occur and English soccer hooliganism is
still “in business.”

Sadly, British soccer hooliganism, as a wholly British import and
a “peculiarly English pastime” (Kerr, 1994) has spread to other countries
in Europe. According to Murray (1984),

Where soccer hooliganism does occur in countries like Holland
and Italy, it seems merely to imitate what has gone on in England over the
last 30 years, and it is a good deal less frequent and much less widespread.
Even in other countries of British Isles, fighting, when it does occur at
soccer games, is somehow different from the English variety. For example,
in Scotland and Northern Ireland when violence takes place it tends to be
based on the sectarian divisions in those countries (p. 68).

Americans may have heard of the incidents previously mentioned, but
to most the concept of organized violence and other criminal activity carried
out by so called “fans” of a professional sports team is hard to grasp. However,
in England and other parts of the world, there is a real threat of becoming
a victim of soccer hooliganism when attending a game.

Unlike the hooliganism of the 1960s and 1970s, soccer hooliganism
today rarely involves random acts of violence or the actions of an unorganized
rabble. The ‘Chelsea Headhunters’ for example, are a notorious soccer
hooligan gang in London that has a specific hierarchal leadership structure.
A recent leader of this group was Terry Last, an un-imposing law clerk for
a firm of solicitors (Keel, 1987). The following passage from “Operation
Own Goal” (Darbyshire, 1991) illustrates the fact that soccer hooliganism
is anything but random and spontaneous:

An important feature of the ‘Headhunters’ hooliganism
was the degree of detailed planning invested in setting up opportunities
for ‘aggro’ (violence) with rival hooligans. The violence they generated
was anything but spontaneous. Between them they could mobilize about 400
hooligans, marshaling them like military commanders to engagements planned
weeks, sometimes months in advance. For away games, for example, rather than
allowing themselves to be apprehended by local police security operations,
they would travel out of their way, arriving unexpectedly from a completely
different direction at a station in a particular city where trains from London
did not stop. This extravagant method of travel was financed from thousands
of pounds retained in a number of bank accounts (p. 92).

The efforts of the British police and other management agencies,
responsible for controlling and eliminating soccer hooliganism, have only
been moderately successful (Canter, 1989). Pitch (field of play) invasions
and crowd violence increased in the 1900s, and there has been scant success
in preventing the activities of the hard core soccer hooligan groups as the
hooliganism problem associated with English soccer continues to thrive.

Soccer hooliganism is now an integral part of the social fabric of
England and, more recently, other parts of Europe. The reputation of English
people in general has suffered as a result of the antics of the soccer hooligan
element with the foreign press, on occasion, describing England as a nation
of soccer hooligans (Taylor, 1992).

The majority of English soccer spectators are true, law-abiding fans
of the game, and at no time should their traditional chanting, singing, and
high spirits at soccer watches be confused with soccer hooliganism. Indeed,
some soccer hooligans are also true fans of the game, and being a hooligan
does not erase an individual’s allegiance to a particular soccer team. However,
to most hooligans the style of play or success of the team are normally
unimportant. As Kerr (1994) describes, “a particular team is merely a kind
of ‘flag of convenience’ that allows the hooligans to pursue their
activities against the followers of other teams, the police or members of
the public” (p. 4). Soccer hooligans are a small percentage of any soccer
game crowd, and some writers would even contend that ‘soccer hooligan
violence is not as widespread, regular, and frequent an aspect of crowd behavior
at soccer games…as the press would have us believe” (Canter, 1989, p.
107).

Soccer hooligan is a recently-coined term used to describe the antisocial
activities of followers of professional soccer teams. The word hooligan
originated in 19th century London from an Irish immigrant family named Hooligan
(Williams and Wagg, 1991), that terrorized the tenement areas of the ‘East
End’. The term hooligan was later used as a general descriptor for any criminal
or rowdy behavior.

The words soccer and hooligan were combined roughly 30 years ago
because of the many hooligan acts associated with professional soccer. Hooligan
attacks are usually made against rival hooligan gangs, but these same groups
may unite as one to “form a kind of super hooligan coalition for trips abroad
to ‘support’ the England team” (Hornby, 1992, p. 168). Once these hooligans
return to England the coalition disbands to be replaced by the old
rivalries.

What can be confusing when describing soccer hooliganism is that
the incidents can, and often do, occur some distance from any soccer stadium.
The hooliganism label is given to incidents involving soccer team supporters
regardless of the location. The types of behavior and actions categorized
as soccer hooliganism vary considerably. Soccer hooliganism may involve riots,
pitch invasions, the assaulting of players, fighting, vandalism, drunk and
disorderly offenses, verbal and physical assaults, the use of weapons, the
throwing of missiles, murder and mugging.

Trivizas (1980) found that 67 percent of arrests were for “the use
of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behavior, with intent to cause
a breach of the peace or whereby a breach of the peace may be occasioned”
(p. 185). This is partly due to the difficulties of arresting hooligans from
within a large group, and the fact that the police are more likely to charge
offenders with offenses that they know they have enough evidence to convict
on.

The activities or soccer hooligans can take place before, during
or after a match. The efforts of police to prevent hooliganism in the stadiums
has changed the face of soccer hooliganism. Canter (1989) states:

While one form of hooliganism is thus discouraged, another
comes forward to take its place. Fans who are physically separated within
the ground can throw missiles, coins or even seats at each other and
‘fighting crews’ from some clubs make special foray to find rival fans
in places or at times not subject to match-day policing (p. 108).