BBC News: “Making a new start”, Thursday, 2 May, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962503.stm>

BBC News: “Trying to spot the rot”, Thursday, 2 May, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962180.stm>

BBC News: “Running with the 'Naughty Forty'”, Thursday, 2 May, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962084.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962503.stm>

Thursday, 2 May, 2002, 19:26 GMT 20:26 UK

**Making a new start**

**Darren Wells is a known hooligan who used to be involved with the extreme far-right group Combat 18. He was associated with the notorious Chelsea Headhunters in the 1980s and was among the hundreds of England fans deported from Belgium during Euro 2000.**

**He was present at the Oldham riot last year - with other Combat 18 activists and football hooligans. Wells had been working as an informer for the anti-fascist magazine, Searchlight, for the past two years. At the end of last year, he went to start a new life abroad - where Hooligans interviewed him.**

An upbringing in the comparative safety of Hertfordshire is hardly the background you would expect from a football hooligan.

But Wells was first taken to Chelsea Football Club as a youngster, by an uncle who was supposed to be babysitting him at home.

As he grew up, fighting at football matches became a part of life, and something he witnessed week in, week out.

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| **You'd come out the ground and there'd be fighting, literally outside the ground** **endquote** |
| **Darren Wells**  |

Although he was too young to be involved in any violence, the atmosphere created by the trouble gave him a thrill, a feeling he would carry throughout his 'career' as a hooligan.

In fact, it only took a few years for Wells to move from being a teenager on the outside to getting involved in the world of football violence.

"When I moved up into London I was about 17," he said, "You get the sense of the danger of it all, even though I wasn't really part of it.

"In those days you'd come out the ground and there'd be fighting, literally outside the ground, so you didn't even have to be part of the mob, you could just be part of the crowd exiting the ground and it would just be going off."

**In the 'firm'**

Gradually, and primarily because of his constant presence on the fringes of trouble, Wells' face became known amongst the local Chelsea hooligans.

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| **I could immerse myself in it and take out my frustrations** **endquote** |
| **Darren Wells**  |

He went on to become part of the notorious Chelsea Headhunters - one of the 'firms' which constantly battled their way through the 1970s and the 1980s with the likes of the ICF (West Ham) and the Salford Reds (Manchester United).

For Wells, fighting was a way to vent his frustration with his home life.

He said: "With me it was just escapism because I was living in a bad situation with my step-dad. I couldn't really stand up to him. So when I went to Chelsea it was just like I was escaping from it.

"I could immerse myself in it and take out my frustrations. If there was a fight outside the ground, just get rid of some anger in that."

But it is not that way for everyone: "Some people are in it just for the notoriety of it, some people just love the fighting. It means different things to different people really."

**Combat 18**

He became involved in far-right activities in 1994 through Chelsea hooliganism - beginning an association with the extreme neo-nazi group Combat 18.

Throughout the 1990s, Combat 18 was associated with acts of terrorism and violence, including arson attacks. It was originally set up to act as "security" for British National Party meetings.

Wells became a senior figure in the group, but became increasingly disillusioned after 1999 when a friend was killed in an internal feud. " I knew I would either end up dead or be in prison for the rest of my life. I also began to realise the stupidity of what I was involved in".

Two years ago, Wells began working secretly for the anti-fascist magazine Searchlight as an informer.

While working with them, he travelled with far-right hooligans to Euro 2000 - where he was deported.

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| A scene from the Oldham riots |

He was also present at the Oldham riot last year - with other Combat 18 activists and football hooligans. They had travelled from around the country in an attempt to provoke violent retaliation from the town's Asian community.

Wells had hoped his information would help keep the two sides apart.

**Fresh start**

At the end of last year, he went abroad to start a new life. Wells said: "I still believe some of the things I used to believe in, but I now realise that you can't go around hurting innocent people."

Looking back, he claims that the biggest thrill in hooliganism is achieved not during the fight, but before.

"It was the build up, just the crescendo just before it all went off, you know, just that feeling of butterflies in your stomach," he said.

Despite this mentality, Darren has witnessed some horrific incidences of football violence, including stabbings, glassings and people being thrown from bridges.

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| **How do you just stop being a hooligan - I don't think you can** **endquote** |
| **Darren Wells**  |

But again, he maintains that even the sense of fear gave him a buzz.

And it is precisely this joy of being terrified that makes it so difficult to opt out of the spiral of violence.

This is also why Darren pours scorn on the notion of the reformed hooligan, and believes you are a hooligan for life.

"How do you just stop being a hooligan," he said, "I don't think you can. I don't think hooliganism is something that people just fly in and out of.

"'Strange as it sounds - I think it is really in your blood, I think it's just like people who can't stop smoking, people who can't stop the drinking or doing drugs."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962180.stm>

Thursday, 2 May, 2002, 17:26 GMT 18:26 UK

**Trying to spot the rot**

**How can the police tackle hooliganism? One man who knows is former police chief Eddie Curtis, who was responsible for spotting English troublemakers at the 1998 World Cup and at Euro 2000. He told BBC Two's Hooligans programme how he went about it.**

In his years as a chief superintendent in Nottinghamshire Police, Eddie Curtis has come to know his prey inside out.

"Even if you didn't know the individuals as a spotter, you would know that they were hooligans, it's the way they're dressed, the way they act".

One of the most challenging operations he led was Euro 2000 in Brussels. Belgian police surrounded troublemakers near the Grand Place and arrested around 500.

"The interesting thing was you could walk down that group and you could go 'Middlesborough, Tottenham, Leeds, Oldham, Shrewsbury, Newcastle,'" he said.

Curtis calls hooligans "creatures of habit" and has come to know their tactics. During the 1998 World Cup he watched them throw bottles at a family of Tunisian tourists in Marseilles at midday.

**Potential**

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| Belgian Police tactics were harsh but effective in Euro 2000 |

They hit an innocent woman and child and got exactly what they wanted: an incensed local population and a riot.

Despite detailed intelligence gathering Curtis has felt ignored by a government keen to allay public fears that it had football violence under control.

"I can remember talking to television before Brussels and more or less explaining how many people would be there, where the problem was likely to start, at about what time it would start"

In the run up to Euro 2000 a Home Office representative even explained to Curtis that domestic hooliganism was over. They didn't believe that it was just well-policed and the potential for explosive violence abroad remained.

**Tear gas**

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| **'European governments chickened out of taking away somebody's liberty'** **endquote** |
| **Retired Chief Supt Eddie Curtis**  |

Curtis's main problem is that he could never arrest or detain known hooligans on their way to a match. He might send them home from British air and sea ports three or four times as they tried to get to Brussels but the hooligans' persistence was unmatched by the law.

He said: "There's this big fear that people would rather be free than have some legislation to stop a few football supporters," and that European governments "chickened out of taking away somebody's liberty".

The Belgian police had few such qualms. At one point they tear gassed a bar full of English supporters, including hard core hooligans. "We might not have approved of the methods but they got the right people. They helped the England-Germany game in Charleroi because there were 450 odd people that would not be fuelling the riot," he said.

Curtis fears for future tournaments such as Euro 2004 in Portugal and the 2006 World Cup in Germany unless the football authorities, the government, the clubs and the police begin to work more efficiently together.

**Stretched**

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| **I would be looking very seriously at Portugal now, a place which is going to be interesting and cheap for people to go** **endquote** |
| **Retired Chief Supt Eddie Curtis**  |

"I would be looking very seriously at Portugal now, a very hot country, a place which is going to be interesting and cheap for people to go." Even the new draconian powers that have been introduced since Euro 2000 have little chance of working, according to Curtis.

"What they actually bring into being doesn't work. You get things like 'We can stop people going abroad, they will have to present their passports at police stations'.

"Great, wonderful, but somebody's got to find those people, somebody's got to make contact with people, somebody's got to make sure they go to the police station, when they go to the police station somebody's got to be there, somebody's got to document that, all those names have got to go to other people who've got to be at hundreds of ports all over the country.

"And of course the Home Office just says things like 'Do it within own resources.' Well police forces are stretched, they don't have those resources, and if government really wanted to do something about it they should attach the resources to it."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hooligans/1962084.stm>

**Running with the 'Naughty Forty'**

**Stoke City has one of the most active and organised football hooligan firms in England. For six years in the 1990s Jed ran with them, getting into scrapes in towns around the country.**

**Having since given up the life, Jed now does performances and poetry - some of it about the years he spent as a football hooligan. He feels that the phenomenon of football firms is misunderstood by an hysterical media out of touch with the realities of working class male culture**

Jed has spent much of his adult life working doors in clubs and pubs but was never really into football or football violence.

He was drawn into it in the early nineties by a friend who was involved with the hooligan firm, known as the 'Naughty Forty'.

The friend took him along to his first match and Jed soon realised that there was more to it all than just football.

Jed said: "There was a big crowd outside the away end and he turned round to me and went 'I don't like it when there's big numbers like this. Why don't you come with me, we'll go into one of the side streets, see where we could find five or ten of them on their own."

**Trust**

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| **You can't turn up, show them a CV and say now I want to be part of your firm** **endquote** |
| **Jed**  |

There was no trouble on that occasion, but that is how he got started in football violence. But becoming accepted in a football firm is not easy.

He explained: "You can't turn up, show them a CV and say now I want to be part of your firm.

"There's a lot of the lads that didn't like me for a long time, but because of the people that I went with, it was trust by association. And then, after a certain period of time, you get accepted."

But as far as Jed is concerned, once you are on the inside, your fellow hooligans will look after you.

**Heroin**

"I had my experiences specifically with Stoke City where it's a very tight firm that look after each other", he said. "There's a lot of respect and there's a lot of loyalty. The older guys and the top boys look after the young lads in match situations."

That loyalty stretches as far as helping people get jobs or weaning younger members of the "firm" off drugs.

Jed revealed the friend who first took him to a match has helped several youngsters in his firm who had become hooked on heroin.

He explained: "He's taken them to live with him for a while to get them off the gear.

"It's far more reaching than just making a phone call and knowing where to turn up on a Saturday morning, go have a row, get pissed and then leave again. People take care of each other," he added.

**Washed clean**

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| **It's as if your veins have been washed clean with iced water** **endquote** |
| **Jed**  |

For Jed, the football firm offers a kind of unquestioning acceptance that is difficult to find elsewhere.

He admits the thrill of the violence is addictive, describing it as "a pure adrenalin rush".

He added: "If you've been involved in a situation where you have that feeling - maximum velocity - and then something happens to shut it off for a moment, it's as if your veins have been washed clean with iced water".

But the thrill can become addictive, as Jed explained: "It took over a section of my life and there were some periods when I was more involved and wanted to go more often."

He also rubbished the common claim that football hooligans have no interest in the actual game.

**Reconnaissance**

"The concept that they've got no love of football and they don't go to football matches to watch a game is ridiculous," said Jed, "because some of the football matches that I've been to are so bad that you've got to love football to stand there and watch it all the way through."

And he revealed how many would-be hooligans actually planned ahead for trouble.

He said: "I know people that regularly used to go on reconnaissance missions weeks before the game so that they would know what pubs were there, the layout of the streets around the ground, if there was any waste ground near the ground, the layout of the ground itself."

But despite the protestation of the authorities that football hooliganism has largely disappeared, Jed thinks the phenomenon is on the increase again.

"There was a lull because most of the top boys throughout the country were getting loved up on ecstasy pills and going to acid house clubs.

"Then the ecstasy went poor, they got bored of it and went back to football violence. Like drugs, it's far bigger than any government figure will ever tell you," he said.