

Suggestions on hooliganism

Global Inspirations and a Theory of Non-Violence

Martin Alsjö

Independent Football Historian

Published on the Internet, idrottsforum.org/alsio130321, (ISSN 1652-7224), 2013-03-21

Copyright © Martin Alsjö 2013. All rights reserved. Except for the quotation of short passages for the purposes of criticism and review, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the author.

The phenomenon as well as the concept of football hooliganism is usually understood as supporters of opposing teams fighting each other, or fighting the police, or assaulting innocent football fans. In order to contain football hooliganism, new laws and several other measures have been employed, varying from country to country. A large number of research reports have tried to explain the existence of football hooliganism, and many researchers across the globe have labored with the problem of how to put a stop to the violent behavior that's smeared the beautiful game and scared ordinary citizens away from arenas and stadia. In Sweden, typically, a former police chief was given three years to investigate the problem and come up with a solution; his final report is due on March 21, 2013. Between then and now, idrottsforum.org will publish five short articles by Martin Alsjö that present a different approach to the problem of hooliganism and football violence. In the first article, Alsjö questioned the common understanding of what football violence actually is, by presenting "the hooligans' death list", a compilation of the 80 most deadly incidents in connection to football in the last 100 years. In the second article, he gets into the whys and wherefores of supporter driven hooliganism as well as other forms of deadly violence in the world of soccer. In the third article, published in Swedish, Alsjö analyzed three tumultuous hooligan disturbances, from 1995, 2002 and 2011, illustrating the progression of Swedish reactions to hooliganism. The fourth article, also in Swedish, is an historical and ethnological account of the first organized football supporters in Sweden, rooting for a high school team one hundred years ago. In this fifth and last article, Martin Alsjö concludes his investigation of hooliganism with a detailed look at examples of good practice in combatting violent crimes in the name of football, presenting, in the process, a theory of non-violence loosely based on a well-known taxonomy of football supporters.

MARTIN ALSJÖ has a master's degree in social science from Linköping University. As a teacher he has worked with school children of all ages from 5 to 19. He is now a writer with Idrottsförlaget i Västerås AB where his first book *100 år med allsvensk fotboll* (100 years with the Swedish Premier League) was a bestseller when published in 2011. He is also a frequent freelance writer for different magazines, mainly on football history.

For a long time we thought of hooligans as something quite typically English, Argentinian and possibly a few other countries with minor difficulties. Tragic episodes of soccer violence often tend to be viewed as incidents of chance, as accidents, when the perpetrators are working in arena security or even higher up in the soccer hierarchy. When the perpetrators are simple supporters, they tend to be viewed as madmen with no real interest in the beautiful game.

In four previous essays we have challenged these perspectives by using scientific methods to explore their weaknesses. *The Hooligans' Death List* presented 80 empirical examples, showing soccer violence as a global phenomenon with Africa as the red light continent. We concluded that economic diversity was the number one factor explaining variations in soccer violence globally. *Why Hooligans Love Their Soccer* took on a theoretical approach, searching for structural reasons why soccer of all sports is globally over-represented in sports violence. We found that soccer has an authoritarian leadership and creates extremely tough working conditions for its referees, compared to colleagues in similar sports. *Tre fördömda män (Three Damned Men)* focused on Sweden's three most (in)famous hooligans, their deeds and media reactions to their behavior. We concluded that reactions had become tougher with time, regardless of the deed itself, with calls for harsher punishments. Such measures come with a high price, though, as our hatred for the evildoers made us miss the extenuating circumstances as well as the tendency that our own hatred seems to be feeding theirs. *Lära för läktarlivet (Learning for the Life of Spectators)* continued on the individual path, by using observations and interviews from Sweden's oldest cheering squad as they celebrated their 100th anniversary. We found a multitude of rooting expressions and two young men reasoned about their own experiences of using violence as methods of defending their team's honor. The causes of soccer violence are manifold. However, all essays have suggested economic diversity as the determining factor.

Now, in this fifth and final essay I will leave the strictly historical aspect of soccer violence and say something about the many precautionary methods that have been applied throughout the world. Since many are directed towards the very bottom of the soccer pyramid in specific countries, I should perhaps point out that my examples are chosen to affect us all. To demand changes from others, without offering to change ourselves, is simply pretentious and snobbish. All methods chosen are nonviolent, since there is no use looking down on a violent individual unless we got something different and more appealing to offer. I hope these examples can inspire readers to *copy, criticize and improve* in your own countries.

Exclusive methods

Most methods that are suggested to deal with hooliganism are discriminating and try to exclude people from soccer. Longer bans, heavy fines and even death penalties are popular excluding suggestions in many parts of the world. At best these methods manages to move the problem around, making it harder for the security forces to work with it – and at worst the methods themselves provoke even more violence and further calls for harsher punish-

ments. This is quite logical as long as exclusion is perceived as punishment rather than as help.

Crime and Punishment (global)

In 2010 a small but wonderful report¹ written by Swedish psychologist Henrik Andershed (et al) on youth committing crimes was released, looking at what methods actually work towards helping them stop. It argues that the use of methods is what separates the professional from the amateur. It also scientifically evaluates a large number of methods used by social workers from different countries (mainly the US). One of the arguments is that results from similar foreign and international studies can be used universally.² Since violent soccer supporters mainly are young men, the result of Andershed’s report are relevant.

Table 1 *Summary of impacts of society’s interventions.*³

<i>Input</i>	<i>Power in meta-analyzes</i>
Family-based interventions	Minor – Medium Positive
CBT-based programs	Minor – Medium Positive
Wilderness programs	Minor positive
Military boot camps	None
Deterring interventions	Minor negative
Juvenile services	Unknown
Contact with mentoring person	Minor positive
Mediation between offender & victim	Minor positive

Andershed concludes that the most effective methods of rehabilitating young criminals have a minor – medium positive impact. We should not expect miracles overnight. He recommends the first three therapy-based methods in order to change both behavior and thought if we want a positive impact, and boot camps and scared straight interventions if we want a negative. Andershed estimates the best inputs will rehabilitate around 20% more of the youths than the worst methods. This might sound like a small proportion, but would yet be very valuable both economically to society and socially to the young individual.

Security Education (global)

Another exclusive method to control hooliganism is to improve education for people working with security around soccer. Basically this is the same kind of idea as Crime and Punishment, but focusing on the people on the other side of the whip. Going through the literature, the skill that seems to be mostly missing is negotiating strategies. Whether being military, police, guard or match steward trained, your aim at soccer games should be to keep everybody safe regardless of a person’s behavior. Judging by the 80 empirical examples in *The Hooligans’ Death List* the only security group that has not caused any mayor deadly incident are the relatively peaceful match stewards. We can therefore assume that match stewards are the ones that possess the most effective negotiating strategies in world

1 Henrik Andershed (et al), *Ungdomar som begår brott: vilka insatser fungerar?* (Stockholm, 2010)

2 Ibidem, p 151 and 154

3 Ibidem, p 154. To the best of my knowledge Andershed has not yet presented his results in other languages than Swedish, why this is my translation of his summarized work.

soccer. At least they train this ability the most. Match stewards are likely to be a vital part of improving security education for all other security groups.

Sometimes hooliganism is considered controllable only if the people in power work together. Chairman of the Swedish Soccer Federation, Karl-Erik Nilsson, has written on this issue. “A good supporter culture and safe sports events requires that all good forces pull in the same direction.”⁴ Personally I believe this kind of exclusive reasoning is likely to provoke more violence rather than decreasing it! Is it not our different experiences, opinions and perspectives that are the beauty of true democracies? What is good and bad in the large flora of supporter cultures should be open to discussion, instead of exclusively reserved for forces of one’s choice. An easier road forward would be to invite all voices to be heard and then negotiate compromises from there. Criminologist Anders Green has unintentionally demonstrated prejudices in English and Swedish supporter police thinking about soccer supporters.⁵ Security forces with this kind of problem are more likely to react violently. One way to improve such perspectives is to study carefully the writings of former violent supporters such as English Dougie and Eddy Brimson, Cass Pennant and many others. A great compulsory start is Steve Redhead’s *Hooligan Writing and the Study of Football Fan Culture: Problems and Possibilities*.⁶ For those security forces that are interested in sustainable solutions, they will sooner or later have to continue by negotiating with violent supporters, forming peaceful compromises by words instead of violence by whip.

We the People (Australia, Canada and the US)

As soccer made its great imperialistic journey around the globe in the late 1800s following the trails of British industrialization, there were always some countries that hesitated when facing the global sport and chose to develop their own domestic form of football with special rules. The common denominator in these new football sports, apart from being inspired by British soccer, was that they all flourished as symbols of anti-Britishness. Other examples to form domestic football sports were made in Finland and Sweden, but these attempts were short-lived, perhaps because there had been much less colonial oppression.

Table 2 *Six forms of football*

<i>Origin</i>		<i>Rules</i>	<i>Rule Authority</i>	<i>Ball</i>	<i>Team size</i>	<i>Offside</i>
British soccer		1863	The International Board	Round	11	Opponent related
Aussie Rules		1866	Australian Football League	Oval	18	None
Rugby		1871	Rugby Football Union	Oval	15	No forward pass
American		1876	National Football League	Oval	11	Line based
Canadian		1884	Canadian Football League	Oval	12	Line based
Gaelic		1887	Gaelic Athletic Association	Round	15	None

4 Aftonbladet 2012-09-29

5 Anders Green, *Fotboll och huliganism: utveckling, problem och åtgärdsarbete i England och Skandinavien* (Stockholm, 2009)

6 The essay can be retrieved at www.nobleworld.biz/images/Redhead2.pdf

Interestingly though, the countries that chose their own form of football over a hundred years ago are the very same that today have limited trouble of sports violence, and their history has had few, if any deadly incidents. Their peaceful successes seem to be based around a nationalism contrasting the British, but also their draft systems for players weighted in favor of poor teams, and used to enforce sporting equality between the teams. All three examples, of American, Australian and Canadian football, are all billion-dollar industries whose competitiveness is being balanced on season by season basis. The nationalism involves all different groups of supporters, violent or not, who are all assured by the draft system that even if their favorites does not succeed in winning the title this year, they will have a slightly better chance in the future. The Australian journalist David M Green even suggests AFL has made his country a safer place, since it enables his fellow spectators a space to let go of frustrations in a relatively safe way.⁷ Similar arguments has been made by soccer historian David Goldblatt⁸, but the difference between soccer and all other football sports is that soccer occasionally has become deadly violent. The deadliest incident of other football sports occurred on the 21st of November in 1920 at Croke Park in Dublin, where the home side Dublin played Tipperary in Gaelic Football. This was during the Irish liberation and the British army fired indiscriminately and without warning at the audience, killing 14 individuals and injuring at least another 60. However horrible this incident may be, it is quite unique in its harshness among the other football sports. Nationalism has had many violent examples when being used oppressively against someone excluded from the desired “we”. But using nationalism inclusively for all professional teams seems to dissolve social tension that is so easily attached to soccer. At least when attached to draft systems, which allow supporters to hope for tomorrow.

Inclusive methods

These methods are directed at all people who follow soccer from different positions and perspectives. It is the variation of perspectives that creates the necessity of tolerance. The including methods recognize that all voices should be treated with respect, but are also open to compromises when challenged by new opinions.

Dialogues (Northern Europe)

The most basic of all including methods is to establish dialogues between groups with different opinions in order to earn each other’s respect and come up with compromises. A great example of this has been made by Danish Railway Company, DSB, and domestic supporter groups. By introducing educated Football Guides on match days, the degree of violence and thrashed trains has decreased significantly.⁹ Another kind of dialogue is established between different groups of nonviolent Swedish supporter, in the form of SFSU

7 David M Green, “Where would we be without AFL?” in *The Drum Opinion* 2012-09-27. The article can be retrieved at <http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/4282868.html> (Retrieved 2013-03-11)

8 David Goldblatt, *The Game at the End of the World*, 2010-10-28. The lecture at Pitzer College (California, USA) can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qY8zWK-9Tk> (Retrieved 2013-03-11)

9 Malene Friis & Jonas Havelund, *DSB football guides: a Danish solution to an international problem?* (Copenhagen, 2012)

(Swedish Soccer Supporters' Union). According to a survey presented in *Lära för läkartarlivet* the numbers of regular fights went down about 48 % in the first years SFSU was formed as supporter clubs had a forum to discuss issues concerning them all. A third example of dialogue is the introduction of the Supporter Liaison Officers-system (SLO), which educates selected supporters to ease communication between club officials and everyday fans. Swedish Erik "Frallan" Bergqvist of GAIS soccer club has used his SLO-position to deliver critique from frustrated fans to club leaders in calm and respectful words¹⁰, which is an including method to try bringing the club forward as a whole. His colleague Alexander Ström of Helsingborgs IF soccer club has chosen to interpret the SLO-role exclusively, stating "Naturally, they should go away"¹¹ about the same kind of supporters at his own club. Dialogues have a great potential to build trust and peace, but only when used inclusively.

Every Child Needs a Teddy (USA)

Early American Football was once threatened to vanish completely because of violence. Spectators in the stands or seats have always been safe, but the game itself was so harsh that a lot of players lost their lives simply by playing the game they loved. In 1905 it had gone so far that the US President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt put a halt to all matches and called for new rules to reduce violent play. He invited representatives from the three most prestigious universities to the White House and encouraged them to reform the rules. The forward pass was introduced, but of equal importance was the foundation of NCAA, a coalition where the teams could discuss further improvements of the rules over the years.¹²

A similar solution to soccer hooliganism would be a lot harder to carry through, even if such a solution existed. This would partly depend on the fact that there are many more countries involved in soccer today than in American Football a century ago. More importantly, the International Board that governs the rules of soccer has always been dominated by the English Football Association and its servants of other home countries. Unless the British want the rules to change, nothing is likely to happen.¹³ As mentioned in *Why Hooligans Love Their Soccer*, giving the referee the benefit of video-replays and the teams the possibility to object to a referee's decision in a calm and orderly way without the risk of being booked, is likely to reduce frustration both in the stands and on the field. American Football is in this case a peaceful role-model to follow. But as long as soccer sticks to its authoritarian governance, there will be no "Teddy" available for soccer supporters.

Football Lovers' Day (India)

After the tragedy in Kolkata 1980 where fans reacted violently towards a referee's decision and began fighting each other, until 16 individuals had died, everybody realized something would have to be done. The tension between the mainly Hindu supporters of Mohun Bagan AC and the mainly Muslim supporters of East Bengal FC could always be felt, but this incident marked a violent low point. Instead of reacting with brutal force, stamping out any-

10 Interview with Erik "Frallan" Bergqvist in March 2013.

11 Speech given by Alexander Ström at the SFSU-workshop in January 2013

12 John J Miller, "How Teddy Roosevelt saved football" in *New York Post* 2012-01-22 (Retrieved 2013-03-11). Miller is also the author of a book with the same name as the headline (New York, 2012).

13 We can only speculate what the current discussion on goalline-technology would be like if had it not been for Englishman Frank Lampard's goal in the World Cup 2010, which went unnoticed by the referees. Would we even have this discussion if the unnoticed scoring was not made by an Englishman?

thing dislikable, the supporters came up with a new inclusive method. They started organizing Football Lovers' Day in honorable memory of the ones who died. On the same day as the tragedy occurred, there are annual gatherings of rival supporters who donate blood to the hospitals of Kolkata. As a reward each donor receives an autographed picture from one of his or her favorite players. The event is officially organized by All Indian Football Association together with the Association of Voluntary Blood Donors. It has been ongoing for 32 years with thousands of participants. Since losing your temper while donating blood, is likely to make you pass out, Football Lover's Day enables rival supporters to meet and network during this peaceful event. It also challenges the old mythical hooligan dream to die for your team, by suggesting an even more honorable way: to literally give your blood and thus save lives for your favorite team.¹⁴

It should be noted that such an event as Football Lover's Day does not guarantee the end to all soccer violence in India. In December 2012 Mohun Bagan AC was threatened with a two year ban from all competitive games, after a supporter had thrown rocks hitting and injuring a player during another derby against East Bengal FC. Eventually the ban was lifted, but replaced by demands of improved security work.¹⁵

I Am My Brother's Keeper (Ghana)

The tragedy in Accra 2001 occurred when supporters protested against another referee's decision, and the local police responded by firing tear gas at the crowds as a method of calming things down. Since most of the gates were locked, another controversial security method, 127 individuals from all kinds of supporter groups choked to death. The responsible policemen were taken to court but were acquitted, a decision that left the country in a confused mix of heavy emotions without relief. A monument named "I Am My Brother's Keeper" created in honorable memory of the supporters who died marks a small, quiet sanctuary close to the stadium. It is a place where anyone can come to contemplate over grief for the many lives lost. But it also speaks softly about a nonviolent method of moving forward. The expression "I Am My Brother's Keeper" suggests that I have a moral responsibility to keep my brother secure, that I have an obligation not to put others in danger. It is a message that includes both frustrated fans and intolerant security personnel.¹⁶

Justice for the 96 (England)

Another way of raising awareness on the issues of soccer violence has been the English campaign "Justice for the 96", which began as a response to the Hillsborough tragedy in 1989. The police, who were set to handle security, simply directed too many supporters into a small section of the stadium where people suffocated until 96 individuals died. Afterwards, the police and media tried to put the blame on violent hooligans. The vast majority of the dead were supporters of Liverpool FC, but the success of the "Justice for the 96"-campaign lies in the fact that it was never exclusively for LFC-supporters only. In fact, many supporters of different teams felt that the tragedy and injustice could just as

14 A short introduction to Football Lover's Day can be found at http://www.kolkatafootballs.com/indiafootball_news_2012/aug18thpart_2012.html (Retrieved 2013-03-11)

15 "AIFF lifts suspension of Mohun Bagan" in *The Hindu* 2013-01-15 (Retrieved 2013-03-11)

16 Kent Mensah, "May 9 2001 – When the beautiful game became ugly in Ghana" in *Goal* 2011-05-09 and *Asante Kotoko Express* 2001-05-17. The later can be retrieved here: <http://herbertmensah.files.wordpress.com/2008/05/vol3-no-36.pdf>

well have happened to themselves. The campaign was therefore inclusive, reaching out to all supporter groups and even included an Everton-branch from LFC's local and national rivals. For some 23 years they have been working on understanding the tragedy minute by minute as it happened, collecting evidence of nonviolent supporter behavior, and questioning the lying statements made by the responsible authority. The campaign included all kinds of supporters, where Professor Phil Scraton had a key role when publishing the truth.¹⁷

Please note that the Justice for the 96-campaign never seems to have focused the juridical justice solely, but rather the moral aspect of justice. This might be one of several reasons why the British Prime Minister 23 years later was able to apologize for the lies of his predecessors, while his Ghanaian counterpart still has not.

Salvemos al Futbol (Argentina)

Since Argentina arguably is the country that has experienced most soccer violence over the years, it is no surprise that there are at least three domestic organizations that work on these issues on a daily basis. There is one organized by the state, another one for the families who are suffering from soccer violence. However, the third organization, "Salvemos al Futbol" (Let Us Save Soccer), has probably had the strongest impact so far. It consists of supporters from all over Argentina, but is networking with lots of supporter groups around the globe. On its website www.salvemosalfutbol.org it keeps a long, detailed list of every individual that has been killed in Argentinian soccer since the earliest incident in 1922 up until today. The list includes name of the deceased, dates and a short description of each tragic incident. This brilliant research makes it very difficult for media, politicians and other actors to speculate on how good or bad the violence tendency in Argentinian soccer is. Most Argentinian newspaper will report how the latest death was exactly the 271st person being killed in Argentinian soccer history. The transparency of "Salvemos al Futbol" creates a precise picture of how high the price is when choosing the path of violence.

Terzo Tempo (Italy)

The Italian contribution to the list of including methods is originally inspired by one of soccer's many sibling-sports, rugby. "Terzo Tempo" (The Third Half) is an openhearted gathering after the actual soccer match, where supporters of both teams can eat, drink and discuss the game in a festive manner. The space for the event might be a picnic in a park or a dinner at a suitable restaurant. You will meet people with different kinds of expressions to support their team, sharing interesting arguments with potential new friends. When supporters of both teams share an evening together, it enforces respect and tolerance between them, rather than mistrust and hatred.¹⁸

¹⁷ Phil Scraton, *Hillsborough: the truth* (1989)

¹⁸ See for instance http://www.centroterzotempo.it/?pagina=detttaglio_notizie&IdLingua=1&idNews=5 (Retrieved 2013-03-11) and <http://bbsnord.com/2012/09/lazio-genoa-terzo-tempo/> (Retrieved 2013-03-11)

A Theory of Nonviolence

There have been many attempts of classifying soccer spectators according to different taxonomies through the years. Club officials put different price on different tickets. Since the 1960s, supporter clubs have pointed out the difference between themselves and violent hooligans.¹⁹ Police and other security forces have used the ABC-method to try to understand how to address different kinds of supporters. Academics have suggested yet other ways of dividing the spectators according to neat, but sometimes unrealistic taxonomies.

Table 3 *Taxonomy of soccer spectators.*

	<i>Inclusive</i>		
	Supporter	Fan	
<i>Amateuristic era</i>			<i>Professional era</i>
	Follower	Flaneur	
	<i>Exclusive</i>		

One of a few theoretical models that I think might be useful for all groups mentioned, is the one shown in table 3, which is borrowed from Professor Richard Giulianotti and, with his blessing, slightly modified here by me.²⁰ The model consists of only four groups. The two groups on the left share their origins in *amateuristic* soccer, while the ones on the right come from the *professional* era. The introduction of professionalism, the lift of salary caps, and gigantic signings with TV companies have all contributed to improve players' and clubs' performances, widening the gap between the better and the worse. This model however, suggests that the same movement has occurred among spectators. As the economic gap between teams increases, so does the frustration over our inability to keep up – which will increase the risk of violence in the end. At times and in countries where economic growth is more equally distributed, we can expect to find simple supporters and halfhearted followers only. Critically demanding fans and flaneurs moving from team to team depending on who is today's winner are both signs of a professional era. The two groups at the top of the model are usually the ones *included* as being the club's hardcore supporter or fan base, while the two lower groups usually are *excluded* as being too fickle or healthy in their soccer interest.

¹⁹ Rogan Taylor, *Football and its Fans: supporters and their relations with the game, 1885-1985* (London, 1992)

²⁰ Richard Giulianotti, "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs: A Taxonomy of Spectators Identity in Football" in *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 2002:26

This theory of non-violence means tearing down the mental barriers between all four kinds of soccer spectators. Fans and followers could have a lot to learn from each other, and the same goes for supporters and flaneurs. It does not mean that one group is better than the other. It simply means we should learn about others to gain new perspectives on ourselves. When Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi spoke about the untouchables in colonial India²¹, he might as well have spoken about today’s global hooligans. Every individual should be judged by his or her deeds, rather than our prejudices. Due to this, I have chosen seven inclusive methods and only three exclusive. The rest is up to us all, dear readers, in inspiring memory of the ones who went before us, to be the change we wish to see.

21 Zac O’yeah, *Mahatma! Eller konsten att vända världen upp och ner* (Stockholm, 2008), p 354