ON THE FOOTBALL TERRACE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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Summary

Introduction: Football is one of the most popular sports all over the world. Given the long history of spectator sports events consumption it is not a surprising fact that there have also been serious manifestations of spectator aggression. In this context, we realize that the rapid development of sport itself has brought problems and complicated relationships, especially at the professional level (corruption, homophobia, violence, and racism). *Methodology:* The goal of this paper is to analyze the relationship between fans' verbal and other expression and their violent behavior at selected football stadiums in the Czech Republic. Primary data were collected by a questionnaire survey (PAPI method) mainly at the Eden stadium in 2015 and 2016. A total of 462 respondents (aged 26.29 ± 10.19 years old) participated in this research and all of the respondents were attending in a stand of home team supporters. *Results and discussion:* In our research, we found that expressions of demolishing the stadium and other disturbances are considered the most serious expression of violent behavior by 79.22% of the fans. On the other hand, 77.06% of the fans stated that boo is the least serious problem. *Conclusions:* Based on the ascertained data of the research, we found that supporters under 23 years of age are more tolerant of negative social phenomena in the surroundings of the stadium.

Key words: aggression, fans, football club, Slavia Prague, violence.

Introduction

Sports spectatorship is a social phenomenon that can be analyzed from several different perspectives. Socio-psychological aspects of this phenomenon primarily take notes of the motivation for spectator attendance, spectator experience, links between spectators' relations to clubs. The reactions of spectators to the selected game situations and ways of preventing negative manifestations of spectator are not disregarded (Sekot, 2010). The behavior of sports fans has been the subject of interest for many years, not only in Britain but also in other European countries. Violent behavior of fans is, therefore, also known as football hooliganism and sometimes named English disease (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005). Precisely the issue of football hooliganism has become the subject of intense media, political and academic interest in recent years. The Czech Republic in this regard is no exception, although we can say that the hazards of football hooliganism are considerably smaller on our territory than in some other countries, but it certainly cannot be underestimated.

Unfortunately, oftentimes ignorance and lack of understanding of this phenomenon determine a view on it. It is important to distinguish hooligans from other people who watch football matches. In this context, it is possible to identify four major groups, namely: football spectators, football fans, supporters, and football hooligans (Smolík, 2008). In this paper, we will focus on the fans.

Classical fans ("normal"). These are the individuals who attend football games regularly, have a relationship with their clubs, often because the stadium is located relatively close to their residences. The fan has certain expectations for the course of the match and, by identifying with the team, experiences the highs and lows of the club. Football is usually the only favorite sport for the fan. Football fans present their identification mainly with clothing, e.g., replicas of jerseys, club scarves, baseball caps, T-shirts, flags, badges, etc. For the football fan, the division into "we" (supporters of the club) and "they" (fans of other clubs) is characteristic, (Slepička, 1990). These fans can be found mostly on the main terraces, in some cases they can even get carried away by loud cheering, sometimes with racist overtones. We note that this group of spectators usually does not get involved in other manifestations of spectator violence, except for random throwing of objects on the pitch.

Marsh, Rosser & Harré (1978), based on observations, classified seven types of social roles among active fans in the end. These are the so called (1) Chant leader, (2) Aggro leader, (3) Nutter, (4) Hooligan, (5) Organizer, (6) Fighter, and (7) Heavy drinker. Smith (1988) states that it is necessary to distinguish the so-called serious fans from regular fans. The main difference is found in the fact that the serious fan expects and utterly believes in their team winning. Hunt, Bristol & Bashaw (1999) define a football fan as an enthusiastic lover of foot-

ball. Real & Mechikoff (1992) have a similar view to the distribution, and besides the “classical” fans they distinguish the so-called devoted fan who identifies with the club. According to the motivation and differences in behavior, we can identify other five types of fans: (1) Temporary (provisional) fan, (2) Local fan, (3) Devoted fan, (4) Fanatical fan, and (5) Disturbed fan.

Material & methods

The goal of this paper is to analyze the relationship between fans' verbal and other expression and their violent behavior at football stadiums in the Czech Republic. After having stipulated the aim, a research question was set. RQ: Which attitudes, expressions, and speeches are considered most serious by football fans of Slavia Prague?

Primary data were collected by a questionnaire survey mainly at the Eden stadium and other football stadiums in the Czech Republic in 2015 and 2016. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-nine questions; some of them were scalable, where respondents rated on Likert scale (1–5) individual verbal and other expression and also their violent behavior speeches. The least serious activity was rated 1, the most significant activity received the highest grade, i.e. 5. This paper uses quantitative research, methods of analysis, mathematical and statistical methods. For the evaluation of the results, Statistica program was used.

The research is focused on the oldest football club (est. 1892) in the Czech Republic. The next reason for choosing this football club was finding that stands of the stadium (end) are the most occupied by football fans. The stand of the stadium for the home supporters is called the end, with the capacity of 3.065 seats. It consists of 5 sectors with 25 seats in 28 rows each. The end is mostly filled up to 2/3, and sold out during matches with attractive away teams e.g. Sparta Prague, Plzeň, and Baník Ostrava.

The selection of respondents was based on carefully pre-defined factors; e.g. seats 1, 3, 5, 7 in the first row; seats 2, 4, 6, 8 in the second row etc. from all the rows. The respondents were informed about the research and anonymity of the questionnaire. Once they answered the questionnaires, each of them received a small Slavia club badge. They had also the opportunity to contact the interviewer on the email stated on the questionnaire list and get themselves

informed about the research results. Filled in questionnaires by 467 fans were selected of the total 720 questionnaires. Five questionnaires from fans were answered incorrectly and incompletely, therefore, they were not included in the research.

The sample consisted of 462 people aged 26.29 ± 10.19 years; of which 372 were males (26.67 ± 10.17 years), 88 females (25.05 ± 10.14 years), and 2 persons did not indicate gender.

Results

a) Fan attendance motivation and expressions.

More than half of fans (58.44%) started attending football matches in their childhood, the other 28.14% of fans in the rest of adolescence and adulthood (13.42%). The last option was ticked mainly by women who participated in football matches with their partners. Almost half of fans (49.78%) attended the first football match with their parents, further 41.13% mentioned friends and fans, and less than one-tenth (9.09%) attended their first football game on their own. Currently, more than two-thirds of fans (70.13%) attend a football match with friends, nearly 1/4 of fans (22.94%) in the company of family and only 6.93% of fans attend the match on their own.

Fans attend football matches for various reasons. More than half of fans (57.14%) said the main reason was cheering, then the atmosphere (42.42%) and entertainment (38.96%). More than 1/4 of fans (26.41%) stated that, during a football match, they get away from their private problems and job responsibilities. More than 1/10 of fans (12.12%) attend football matches because of the party. Through cheering, the fans mostly try to support the club (62.34%), create an atmosphere (51.08%), unwind (28.57%), weaken opponents (7.79%), and intimidate opponents (4.76%). Fans try to engage in cheering the other tribunes and make the atmosphere during the matches even stormier. They also help with the choreographies, some even assist with batting pyrotechnics. Regarding the reasons for attendance and cheering, there were multiple answers possible (max. 3), therefore totals reach more than 100%.

The ownership of the club symbols. Almost every fan club own symbols (93.51%).

The most common symbols include scarves and jerseys, as well as Slavia T-shirts, silicone wrist-

bands, wallets, and shorts. At home games, symbols of the club are always worn by more than 3/4 of fans (77.49%). More than half of fans (54.98%) always carry club symbols to away games, but more than 1/5 of fans (20.35%) does not have any club symbol for the matches that are played on the fields of opponents. The reason is that fans often travel to matches on their own and are afraid of conflicts with local fans. In any skirmish, they would be reluctant to surrender scarves, jerseys and even the flag to the opponent. Therefore, the mentioned fans would rather opt for watching the match from the main terrace as opposed to supporting from the end. Some football clubs in the Czech Republic (e.g. Vysočina Jihlava, Olomouc) deny access to the main terrace with the club symbols of the away opponent. Either the visitor must surrender them during the inspection before entering the stadium or must go into the sector for the away guests, where it is allowed to have a club symbols.

Nearly half of all fans (41.56%) were annoyed by the defeat of Slavia only immediately after the match, more than a third of fans (34.20%) were disappointed until the next match, almost a fifth of fans (19.91%) were annoyed by the loss until the next win, and only 4.33% of fans were not annoyed by the loss of Slavia. Although, in past seasons, Slavia did not participate in the Champions Football League in the Czech Republic and only 0.87% of fans opted for television coverage instead of supporting the club in the stands. By contrast, almost half of fans (48.92%) visited the terraces, even though the match was broadcast on TV, and 50.22% of fans said that sometimes they visit football and sometimes not. The main reason for the students was the lack of funds, the fans also mentioned the lack of time, work responsibilities, and the weather. For the fans outside Prague, the deciding factor was the date and time of kick-off, since not all fans were able to commute back home after the game on the weekend. Regarding the negative experiences, we note that as for the fans, poor level of the games, controversial decisions of the referees, and visitors' unsportsmanlike behavior are the main concerns.

b) Fans' expressions on mentioned activities.

Pyrotechnics. Half of fans do not mind pyrotechnics (53.24%), and sometimes they help with the actual firing, but it is rather an exception. They state that the pyrotechnics belong to football and make the atmosphere complete, although they know that

launching pyrotechnics is prohibited at the stadium. Personal checks by the organizer before entering the turnstiles at the stadium are not so thorough, so a significant part of pyrotechnics are smuggled into stadiums in clothing or by women, or alternatively, through the VIP entrance, where inspections do not take place. Almost a fifth of fans (19.48%) finds this activity a serious problem, particularly with regard to safety and due to the interruption of the match, and then a forfeit. They argue that while handling pyrotechnics, there is a danger of burns, but so far, was not registered any case of burns at Slavia. We agree that some matches (Sparta, Pilsen, Baník Ostrava) were interrupted due to the indiscipline of some people, but after a few minutes the matches continued. The match has never been terminated by forfeit against Slavia for pyrotechnics. Less than a tenth of surveyed fans had experience with the firing of pyrotechnics during a football game; of those 9.09% occasionally helped with pyrotechnics and 0.87% of fans helped whenever they were present at the match. More than 90% of fans (90.04%) never helped with the firing of pyrotechnics.

Booing. It was clearly identified as the least serious expression at the stadium. More than 3/4 of fans (77.06%) marked this behavior with the lowest mark. We note that the opponents are most booed at (sometimes 43.72% and often 34.43%), referees (occasionally 55.41% and often 21.65%), chairman of the FACR and other officials (36.36% occasionally and often 35.50%). We noticed even booing at Slavia (26.84% occasionally, and often 2.16%), especially when Slavia players are not interested in the game and do not fight for Slavia.

Vulgar expressions. As for vulgar chanting, the entire end or a vulgar individual, we can say that we have achieved approximately the same results. Vulgar expressions are addressed in particular at Dagmar Damková (former President of the Central Committee of Referees) and Miroslav Pelta (President of FACR), but also to the players of the opposing team (e.g. emotional celebration of a goal in front of Slavia supporters). More than two-thirds of fans (68.39%) sometimes used coarse language, and more than 1/5 of fans (20.35%) always use coarse language during a match. Some respondents even indicated that they attend football matches for vulgarisms. The rest of the fans (11.26%) always use polite language during the match and do not use coarse language.

Physical aggression. More than half of fans (59.31%) consider the physical aggression against rival fans in the stadium as the most serious behavior. Nearly identical results were recorded in the physical aggression against the Czech Republic Police or security. Fans attend football games primarily because they want to enjoy the game itself, or admire players.

Hooligan fight. Regarding the agreed hooligan fight outside the stadium, more than 1/3 of fans (33.77%) stated that this is a very serious issue and rated it highest mark, i.e. 5. One grade lower ratings were expressed by nearly a tenth of fans (9.52%). These very fans regret that the club is related to these skirmishes. Conversely, 28.57% of fans have no problem with an arranged conflict outside the stadium and sympathize with hooligans. Hooligan fights are part of their culture, and if this type of violence is not in the stadium, it is alright with the fans. On the other hand, if the opponent fan is dressed in the jersey and scarf and meets a hooligan, they need not worry. The true hooligans are much disciplined in this, they know what this culture is about and do not beat a fan.

Stadium demolishing. More than 3/4 of fans (79.22%) marked demolishing stadium and other riots the most serious behavior and absolutely unacceptable activity that should never be associated with Slavia Prague. Hooligans themselves participate most in this activity directly (demolished seats, urinals, etc.). This is done solely during the away matches, when they destroy the property of other clubs. We have to say that the respondents (97.40%) were almost never involved in demolishing a stadium and if they are witnesses of these activities, they prefer to flee to higher floors of the stadium or leave the stands. The rest of the fans (2.60%) are occasionally involved in demolishing a stadium (in particular plucking seats) so that they can protect themselves from batons of riot police.

Throwing objects on the pitch. Almost half of fans (45.45%) believe that throwing objects onto the playing surface is also the most serious activity, which is confirmed by other 19.05% of fans, who called it too serious. Most often it happens when the wrong verdict is made by a side referee or when celebrating a goal by opposing player in front of

their home audience and the football pitch is sprinkled with empty or filled cups of beer, small coins or even lighters. We can conclude that the conduct of referees, therefore, in some cases, can even become an igniter for violent clashes, even in such cases when they themselves are in contradiction to football rules, which is at best perceived by fans either as improper conduct, or even worse, directly as a provocation. For the fans surveyed, we noted that 12.99% had already thrown some subject onto the pitch, the rest of the fans had not (87.01%).

Pitch incursion. This activity does not reach such important values as we expected. It was ticked as the most serious behavior by 37.23% of fans. We must take into account that the recorded values are influenced by the fact a considerable part of the fans had already invaded the field (16.45%). At first it was the historical progress of Slavia Prague in the Champions League (2007), where the majority of supporters in the end celebrated this special moment in the field with the players directly after the end of the match. Later, in 2014, a friendly match was played with Hajduk Split but the match was interrupted at 73rd minute. Croatian fans invaded the pitch after a while were followed by Slavia supporters. At the centre circle the two camps greeted each other, chanted, and sang hymns together. When they all returned to the terraces the match was not finished because the playing area remained dotted with pyrotechnics, cups, etc. Both clubs share common history and friendly relations because in 1911 Slavia assisted in establishing Hajduk in Prague pub U Fleků.

Racism. Racism was regarded by more than half of fans (58.87%), who found expressions against dark-skinned players a very serious problem. More than 3/4 of fans (80.08%) does not use racist chants during the match, it is sometimes used by 17.32% of fans, and is often uttered by 2.60% of fans.

According to the findings of our field survey, we must conclude that football fans find the biggest problems with demolishing stadiums (79.22%) and racism (58.87%). Most respondents agree that physical aggression against rival fans in the stadium (59.31%) and the Police of the Czech Republic or security (56.28%) is a very serious activity (Table 1).

Table 1: Fans' expressions on mentioned activities in percentage

	1	2	3	4	5
<i>firing of pyrotechnics</i>	36.36	16.88	20.35	6.93	19.48
<i>vulgar chants in the stand</i>	36.36	28.57	15.15	10.39	9.52
<i>individual vulgar expression</i>	36.36	22.08	19.91	9.09	12.55
<i>physical aggression against rival fans at the stadium</i>	4.33	5.63	14.29	16.45	59.31
<i>physical aggression against police and riot police</i>	6.49	8.66	14.72	13.85	56.28
<i>arranged hooligan fight outside the stadium</i>	28.57	12.55	15.58	9.52	33.77
<i>throw in the object on the pitch</i>	6.93	9.09	19.48	19.05	45.45
<i>demolishing stadium and other riots</i>	0.43	3.03	4.76	12.55	79.22
<i>expressions of racism</i>	8.23	8.23	12.12	12.55	58.87
<i>boos</i>	77.06	9.09	9.09	1.30	3.46
<i>pitch incursion</i>	10.39	11.26	24.24	16.88	37.23

Note. 1 – the least serious expression, 5 – the most serious expression

Discussion

We can state that violence at the football stadiums is one of the most discussed topics in the Czech Republic. The media reported that just violent behavior is one of the major factors that discourage visitors and fans from enjoyable atmosphere of the football stadiums. We consider that this is not a true statement because football stadiums in the Czech Republic are safe for the 1st league matches.

The Football Association of the Czech Republic tries to make football attractive as a product. Football matches should become the social events such as in England and other western countries. But it is necessary to say that this mentioned product will not be as attractive in the Czech Republic as in England. The fact that the stadiums are often almost empty and there are not so many families with children is not caused by hooligan fights at the stadiums. There are a lot of different leisure activities (theatre, cinema, zoo, etc.) instead of football.

We found that expressions of racism are considered the most serious expression of violent behavior by 31.25% of the fans. The same result was mentioned about the demolishing of a stadium and other disturbances. Almost one fifth of the fans (18.75%) marked that a pitch incursion is the most serious activity. On the other hand, over 3/4 of the fans (81.25%) stated that firing of pyrotechnics is the least serious problem; other least serious activities were hooligan fights outside the stadium (87.50%), and boos (93.75%).

Conclusions

To meet increasingly socially less negative phenomena in the terraces around stadiums, it is more than desirable that all existing preventive measures are now sufficiently utilized. Currently, the stadiums sell only non-alcoholic beer, sectors or ends for supporters are separated, tickets to riskier games are sold only upon production of identity cards, personal inspections are more thorough etc. For the future, also addressable ticketing and CCTV are also considered. In our view, the football clubs and the media should be more involved in the educational process through television broadcasts, as well as promoting fair play and critical evaluating the violence. However, the most important type of football violence prevention, we consider raising of public awareness, with the help of which it is possible to capture new incoming fans and prospective hooligans. The intention is to direct these people to positive cheering, i.e. without violence, group and individual vulgarities, racist insults, etc. An important aspect is the financial cost of security measures with regard to risk behavior of some groups of visitors, which probably should not be paid from public finances.

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