

EDITORIAL

Heysel and Hillsborough were horrific tragedies. At each event the victims were the innocent. Yet in the most simplistic of terms, the prime causes could be attributed to the low standard of behaviour to which so-called civilisation has sunk. One side, the aggressive nature of the human being carried beyond acceptable levels, on the other hand the total neglect of normal functions of duty.

By an irony of fate, the Heysel verdict on accused Liverpool followers came in the aftermath of the death toll which finally numbered 95 at Hillsborough, all of them supporters of the Anfield club. The game cannot afford to witness anything approaching either catastrophe again.

All-seater stadiums seem certain to become the norm in the future. Already FIFA has ruled such for its next World Cup series. And in this edition of the Yearbook, the Football League has produced an interesting set of projected figures for all-seater grounds among the 92 League clubs. Seating will not eliminate the hooligan, but it may help towards deterring him. The real answer is to attract a better behaved type of spectator and this may take some time.

People who have been driven away from attending games but retain an interest, must be encouraged to return. They will only do so when the atmosphere at grounds improves. The game needs strong leadership. There can be no acceptable levels of pitch invasion, no mere token attempts to ban obscene and racial chants.

None of us can escape criticism for the situation in which football finds itself. Blaming society for soccer's ills is merely a cop-out. The game cannot disown those travelling to and from matches any more than science can escape blame for its destruction of the ozone layer. The media must take full responsibility for encouraging the win-at-all-costs attitude which leads the simple-minded towards tribal warfare. The well-behaved spectator must not be naive enough to imagine his or her needs should take precedence over the priority to eradicate the hooligan.

Fences were originally erected because opposing fans could not be trusted to mingle with each other without fighting. Outside grounds they must also be separated for the same reasons. Policing costs may be crippling but withdrawing present levels would surely destroy any theory that trouble is exaggerated.

The hooligan can be either the premeditated troublemaker or the susceptible, usually the worse for drink. According to RSL Leisure Monitor's annual survey sample, the group which has the highest proportion of attendance at matches is the 15-24 age group. The same section also consumes more alcohol than any other. Another survey actually produced figures to say that 77% of 15 year olds are drinking up to half the acceptable level of alcohol per week considered wise on health grounds.

Not all these youngsters attend matches, though there must be a fair proportion of them. Alcohol abuse is the gravest danger facing the community next to drug addiction. To many people, drink and the hooligan would seem to be synonymous. Again those advocating sensible drinking habits must be given greater publicity.

The Government's identity scheme may not solve the problem. It will certainly cost clubs financially. Politicians in general must be treated with caution. The Opposition has u-turned on its principles to such a degree that the game would be at the mercy of whatever current whim possessed it, should it gain office itself. As far as the vitriolic attacks from all quarters on Sports Minister Colin Moynihan, one suspects that had the incumbent not been a boat race cox but a boxing blue built like Frank Bruno, he would not have been subjected to the same abuse - "know wot I mean, 'arry."

Naturally the good in the game is submerged by its continuing malaise. The work of the Football Trust and the involvement of football in the community is documented in this Yearbook. The government benefits mightily from its taxation of the game, but also renders excellent practical service to it through the Trainee scheme.

Attendances rose at Barclays League games for the third successive season to the level of six years ago. Family membership schemes have proved popular and must be encouraged, especially as the long term scenario will be for teenagers and young people to diminish as the birth rate drops.

The close season saw the British transfer market stunned by Chris Waddle's transfer from Tottenham Hotspur to Marseille for a record £4.5 million. Waddle's colleague in the England side Gary Lineker arrived from Barcelona to replace him at a more modest £1.5 million. A similar fee bought Mo Johnston to Rangers from Nantes. In this move, Rangers manager Graeme Souness and the club's board challenged Glasgow to show that religion has no part in sport. Johnston seemed set to return to his old club Celtic when Rangers bid for him, the first leading Catholic to join Protestant Rangers.

The Scottish Cup is to be sponsored by Tennents. The FA Cup is up for grabs itself. There seems to be no lack of sponsorship interest and with the transfer market booming, little substance for the game to complain that it cannot afford to improve its facilities or its image.

JACK ROLLIN

Rothmans Football Awards 1989

Selecting a team which will never be expected to prove itself on the field of play, might seem a comparatively easy task. But to achieve a list of the best international players from Britain over the last two decades, to mark the 20th edition of Rothmans Football Yearbook, requires as much thought and care - if not more - than a practical exercise.

Rothmans Publications Ltd in conjunction with Paragon Communications arranged for a panel of judges to choose the Rothmans Football Allstars. A distinguished quintet under the chairmanship of Ted Croker, former secretary of the Football Association, met at the Grosvenor House Hotel, Park Lane, London on March 29. The other members of the selecting panel were: Brian Roach (Rothmans Publications Ltd), Ken Montgomery (Chief Football Correspondent, *Sunday Mirror* and Football Writers Association Chairman), Ian St John (London Weekend Television) and Alan Samson (Publishing Director, Queen Anne Press), the latter being a late replacement for the withdrawal of Gordon Taylor (Chief Executive, Professional Footballers Association).

The criterion for selection of the team was that all players and the manager must have represented their country (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland) between January 1, 1969 and March 29, 1989. The squad had to be made up of 11 players, five substitutes and one manager with each player/manager considered at the 'peak' of his career within the specified time.

It was also designed to provide the best individual for each position, rather than players who might fit into any overall system in the side as a whole. Though players from all the four home countries were considered, there was no attempt to represent all of them in the final selection.

Each position was to be taken in isolation, no particular team pattern would be pre-ordained, but once judging began, it soon became evident that the selection would be easier to obtain by splitting the team into attack, midfield, defence and goalkeeper. Again, once the lively discussions began on individual players, it was agreed that entertainment value was to be a prime objective and to this end the attack and midfield areas were dovetailed to some degree.

Shortlists were voted on by members of the panel with the chairman having the casting vote on split decisions. At the end of a fascinating debate, liberally sprinkled with anecdotes about the characters proposed and with David Brain (Paragon Communications) and Jack Rollin (Editor, Rothmans Football Yearbook) holding a watching brief, the strength of the final selection is probably best judged by those players mentioned during the discussions who did not make the side or the substitutes bench.

Gary Lineker, Trevor Francis, and John Toshack were among the strikers, Jimmy Johnstone as a winger, Alan Ball, Colin Bell, Trevor Brooking, Billy Bremner and Glenn Hoddle in midfield. In defence Phil Neal, Gary Stevens, Richard Gough and Mick Mills all had strong claims put forward for them.

Goalkeepers who also came under the spotlight were Peter Shilton, Neville Southall and Ray Clemence. Then for the managerial spot, the late Jock Stein, Billy Bingham and Bobby Robson were those who entered the list of possibilities. Only international managers were considered.

The argument was constructive and thoroughly enjoyed by all present, the final selection of the panellists being a tribute to their expertise, personal preference and collective compromise.