

Reducing spectator violence

Various strategies can be used to combat crowd violence at football matches. The following strategies can be remembered via the first five letters of the alphabet, A–E

All-seater stadia

The Hillsborough disaster in 1989, in which a crush developed at one end of the ground during a football match in Sheffield, UK, resulted in the deaths of 97 fans. Lord Justice Taylor's report on the inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster recommended that all grounds in the old first and second divisions of the Football League (now the Premier League and EFL Championship) should be all-seated by August 1994.

This ruling has been used to separate rival fans and create family enclosures, with the aim of changing the culture at football stadia and creating a more family-friendly atmosphere.

For more information on the UK government's all-seater policy, you can visit the Sports Grounds Safety Authority website:

<https://tinyurl.com/4p97j5uu>

Ban/control alcohol sales

The Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act (1985) was introduced in the UK to ban possession of alcohol at a football match or on a journey to a game. It also empowers magistrates to impose conditions on licensed premises within football grounds to ensure that no alcohol can be sold while the match is taking place.

Searches at the turnstiles help to ensure that alcohol cannot be taken into football stadia. Unlike rugby matches, football supporters who purchase alcohol at the actual stadium cannot take it into their seating area. Police also ensure segregation at local pubs near the grounds to keep home and away fans apart.

CCTV monitoring

CCTV is used at football stadia to quickly identify any known troublemakers and any spectators who take part in crowd disorder or commit violent acts, so that they can be ejected from the grounds.

As camera technology has improved it has had an impact on the way that security works. 'Hoolivan CCTV' was introduced in the UK in the 1980s and continues to act as a mobile control room on match days. The more recent introduction of smaller, lighter and more portable video recording devices has also had an impact. New technology has led to some football stadia stewards wearing video cameras fitted onto the front of their jackets.

Deterrents

Imposing tougher deterrents can be used to help combat disorder at football matches. The theory is that by introducing a more severe punishment regime for spectators who are caught committing violent acts at matches, fewer people will be willing to engage in such antisocial behaviour.

Punishments can include imprisonment and imposing football banning orders to prevent spectators with a record of violent behaviour from entering any football stadium in the UK or abroad. In addition, the passing of specific laws preventing 'trespass' onto the field of play helps to stop pitch invasions and subsequent potential clashes between rival supporters.

Earlier kick-off times

Early kick-offs became a feature of English football in the 1990s, initially to try to mitigate excessive alcohol consumption and potential fan violence before derby games. For example, Manchester City hosted Manchester United for an 11 a.m. kick-off in March 1993. Liverpool and United got 15 more minutes in bed before an 11:15 a.m. start in October 1996.

It was not the last time that a fixture was given a slot prior to midday. Early kick-off times are seen as particularly relevant for local derbies/games where very high rivalries exist. In such circumstances, the police may well request a midday kick-off time to try and reduce the spectators' opportunity for excessive alcohol consumption or committing violent acts due to decreased inhibitions.

Although earlier kick-off times limit the amount of time to consume alcohol before games – which traditionally start at 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon – many fans will simply start drinking earlier in the day. Unfortunately this means that violence amongst spectators due to excessive alcohol consumption can still occur.

