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THE UGLY SIDE OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME
HOOLIGANISM IN FRENCH FOOTBALL

by
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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MA in French Studies

Department of French and Italian
Brigham Young University
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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

THE UGLY SIDE OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME HOOLIGANISM IN FRENCH FOOTBALL

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Masters in Art

Football violence was a rare phenomenon in France until the nineteen eighties. Harsh economic times coupled with the challenges of unemployment brought a different type of fanatic to football stadia. To vent their frustration about the economic difficulties of their time, some fans found an easy scapegoat: the increasing number of African immigrants in France. These fans, known as hooligans, have become organized and can be found supporting most major French football clubs, disrupting what once was a relatively tranquil national pastime. This thesis traces their development in France, looks at what they borrowed from Italian and English fan groups, and suggests how their organization is now uniquely French.

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Introduction

FC Metz was the lowliest of the clubs for the 2007-2008 season of the French professional soccer league known in France as *Ligue 1*. They were promoted from the second tier (*Ligue 2*) just last season for winning that league, but they ended in last place of *Ligue 1* and are now relegated, humiliatingly sent back to the league they just conquered a season ago. Such is the fate of smaller soccer clubs throughout most of the world, especially in countries where “the beautiful game” is king and well developed.

In such countries, notably in Europe and South America, there are several tiers of professional leagues, each tier containing usually between 14 and 20 teams. Usually the three best teams of each tier move up a level at the end of the season (unless the club make its living in the top league, in which case it plays for international accolades), and the worst three teams drop a level. The number of teams that swap leagues and the system used to determine who moves vary slightly from country to country, but these tournaments make for great end of the year matches between the best teams in each league, and also amongst the worst teams, who fight for their survival while trying to avoid the shameful (and potentially economically catastrophic) drop to a lower division.

Most “promoted” teams find it hard to remain in the new higher tier since they lack the quality of players, facilities, and funds comparable to the teams used to playing in those divisions, so the majority drop straight back or survive only a couple of seasons before being “relegated” again. FC Metz has lately been such a team. Since the

beginning of the new millennium, FC Metz has been relegated twice to *Ligue 2* (2001-2002 and 2005-2006 seasons) and promoted twice again to *Ligue 1* (2002-2003 and 2006-2007 seasons), and it looks like this yo-yo performance of the club is not yet over, as they look to fall back to League 2 again by the end of the 2007-2008 season having won only 4 of the 30 matches in which they have competed in the present campaign.

Why then is this underperforming team making news in 2008? Unfortunately it is for all the wrong reasons. French soccer (to which we will refer from now as football) fans have earned a negative reputation in the past three decades for all sorts of violent acts, and though the violent fanatics remain the minority, their reputation is well deserved. Most FC Metz fans are decent sport-loving people, but the club also suffers from this disease we know in English as Hooliganism. In most clubs, we have seen in the past few decades the formation of factions of fanatics who have become violent. FC Metz has such fans, and in February of 2008 they made the headlines of newspapers around Europe for racist abuse against players of the teams they faced.

The first such incident of notoriety this year for FC Metz occurred on February 16 in a match against Valenciennes, another smaller team currently in *Ligue 1*. For the duration of the game, a few sections of vociferous fans known as “ultras” or “hooligans” chanted racist remarks specially aimed at Valenciennes team captain Abdeslam Ouaddou, who is a Moroccan international player. One fan was so annoying that Ouaddou stopped during the game to ask the referee to do something about the racial abuse, but the referee did nothing and failed to direct any of his assistants to act. This apathy from the refereeing group prompted Ouaddou to confront the fan himself, for which he was booked (penalized by the referee)!



Left: Abdeslam Ouaddou is booked during the FC Metz – Valenciennes match for confronting abusive fans. Right: FC Metz Ultras during the February 16th 2008 game against Valenciennes.

During the same game two teenage fans injured a girl by throwing projectiles at the Valenciennes team. They were arrested. These two incidents seemed strange when considering the following: first, FC Metz has foreign players in its roster; and second, this was one of the four victories FC Metz has been able to grind out this tournament, and the first win at home this year, so the fans really had no excuse to be angry having taken the full points from the contest in their own stadium. Ouaddou has filed a legal complaint after receiving this abuse.

Unfortunately, things did not end there. The very next week FC Metz played league leaders and six-time French *Ligue 1* defending champions Olympique Lyonnais (commonly known simply as OL or Lyon). Players, officials and coaches wore T-shirts that read “racism, never again” to signal their opposition to incidents such as the one witnessed the previous weekend. After their defeat at the hands of Lyon the FC Metz players moved closer to the stand and threw their t-shirts to the crowd of about a hundred supporters to promote the anti-racism campaign.

The reaction from the FC Metz fans was again shocking. A group of Ultras denominated *Jeunesse Identitaire*, members of a larger association known as *La Faction* threw the T-shirts back to the players while some of the group's members performed Nazi salutes and chanted Nazi songs and racist insults. Only two of the culprits have been prosecuted and punished so far: the ones who could be identified and partially admitted to having drunk a little too much.



Sydney Govou of Lyon (in white) and Cedric Barbosa of FC Metz fight for the ball, February 23, 2008 at Lyon's Stade de Gerland.

FC Metz has decided to file a legal complaint against its supporters, but unfortunately the measures taken by the league, its member teams, and law enforcement are typically too few and far between, and cause very little impact on the growing problem. One of the supporters was banned from attending soccer matches until the first day of June of this year.

These two incidents highlight the growing problem of violence in French soccer stadia, because unfortunately these are not isolated occurrences but only a couple of eruptions in a bursting ring of fire of soccer related violence in recent years. To understand this phenomenon we have to begin by discovering the importance of soccer in

France, and the origins of these groups throughout the continent and in France specifically.

This work will explore the important aspects that contribute greatly to today's unrest in the stands of football stadiums in France. It will show that the main cause for violence in French soccer stadia is the downturn of the French economy and unemployment, and the symptoms are racism and unrest.

The first chapter will detail the formation of the game of football, and its history in France. It will show that violence didn't exist in France with the same degree of intensity as it did in other countries, and it will provide a historic framework for its late development in the Hexagon explaining how history and the late 20th century unprecedented international French success finally brought to France the ugliness of hooliganism. This chapter will help us understand that the French hooligan is patterned after other violent fans that previously existed in neighboring European countries, and why France finally copied these patterns.

The second chapter will study how rivalries contribute to the creation of hooliganism. France, for political and economical reasons, did not have strong football rivalries until the late 80s. However, strong regional support for clubs did develop and rivalries finally emerged in France during the last quarter of the 20th century, and these new rivalries coupled with the formation of strong ultra groups resulted in the outburst of violence.

The third chapter will explore the two most important social reasons for the development of hooliganism, namely unemployment and immigration. We will review

why immigrants are blamed for some of France's social and economic woes, and how they have become the targets of French hooligans both on and off the pitch. Racism is the number one excuse for violent hooligan acts in France today.

The Fourth Chapter will dissect the violence from a sociological point of view. It will examine how the stadium becomes a focal point for displays of racial behavior and violent acts against people that the most militant fan groups consider as enemies or threats.

The conclusion will evaluate the findings and weigh what is being done to stop it and to prevent it from spreading.

CHAPTER 1

The History of Football and the Evolution

Of the Supporters of the French National and Professional Teams

To better understand any phenomenon related to football one must first know a little of the history of the game. Indeed, in the history of football are hidden many of the reasons and justifications of today's fanatical behavior. Unfortunately, the game in France has not received the same degree of attention as in other countries, especially when one considers the English game. Since England is widely regarded as the birthplace of football, or at least of the modern game known as football, we shall study the evolution in that country and also the history in other European nations as the French game is intricately linked to them. Looking at the evolution of football and its fandom will shed the first light on the understanding of today's passion for the game, in particular in France, where history helps explain why the evolution of the French hooligan happened so much later than in England or Italy, and why in France the targets of violence are people from other ethnicities instead of merely the fans of an opposing club.

In this chapter we will study the different evolution of the French Game compared to the other members of the Big Five. The Big Five is a term used in world football to designate the most important European footballing nations, both by their history and by population size. These nations are England, France, Germany, Spain and Italy. This history is vital to understand the stark contrast between the early history of (lack of)

violence in French football for the better part of the 20th century, compared to other nations of the Big Five, and its apparent sudden burst in the late part of the century. Studying the Big Five will help us understand some of the main sources of violent behavior by soccer fans in Europe and how other countries have influenced the French game and the behavior of its fans. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the historical reasons for the attitude of French fans towards the most popular sport in France and the world and their relationship with the teams they support at the national and club levels.

Brief History of the Formation of the Game

Football was not born in France; we must look to its birthplace to understand the nature of the game and the fans and how (and which of) these traditions were transplanted to the Hexagon. The basis for what is regarded today as football comes from many countries, and there are precursors to the modern game from Asia to Ancient America. However, the most direct ancestor of today's game comes from Europe. During the 19th Century diverse versions of the game existed throughout the continent. The most important one historically was a game already called football practiced in the British Isles. However, at the beginning of the century the rules still varied greatly, not only from today's game, but also from town to town. "Football was not so much a single game as an array of roughly similar tribal codes preferred by different rival schools"(Giulianotti 4). For example, in Scotland there was a precursor to football where different towns or clans would play each other in order to celebrate feasts or to resolve differences in a friendlier way than fighting, but the problem was that different clans and

regions had different versions of the game, so modifications had to be made in order to satisfy the participating parties.

The same was the case in England. What made the phenomenon interesting in England was that different versions of the game were not only played in different places, but also by different social classes. The nobles saw football as a game for distraction, but also as different associations were formed schools and universities had similar games and sometimes engaged each other. A good example would be universities such as Cambridge and Oxford playing each other. As football became more widespread, there also arose a need to set rules. Old Rugbeyans and Etonians (early regional groups and schools of football practitioners) backed a sport where handling and hacking were permitted, where Harrovians prohibited hard tackles and the use of hands. This division gave birth to the two modern games known as Rugby and Football, Rugby having two schools itself, League and Union. The modern version of football was then referred to as the dribbling game.

There is a very old and famous saying in the British Isles: “football is a gentleman's game played by ruffians and rugby is a ruffian's game played by gentlemen.” Nobles played various forms of football, some closer to the modern soccer version, some closer to the game of modern Union Rugby. The most influential early rules for the modern game of football were known as the Cambridge rules since football was always a popular sport at the university, and a set of rules that were disseminated throughout England were written at Cambridge’s Trinity College in the 1850s. The first rules of modern football were set on record in a few meetings in London pubs during the late 1950s, to which representatives of schools came to attempt to cement rules so that all

schools and other participants may have a common game. It was during one of these meetings that the schism between rugby and football took place. Most schools supported a modification to the rules of football by doing away with the three practices of running with the ball, handling the ball and hacking at the shins of a player in possession with the ball. The representatives of Blackheath refused to accept the modifications and other clubs followed suit, notably some famous private preparatory schools. This led to the creation of the Rugby Union, and the modern sport of Rugby. Those organizations who decided to adopt the new rules called their game football from then on.

From the outset this schism was important in the determination of which crowd would follow which sport more closely. According to 19th century British ruggers, the game of football requires less skill and protects too much the unskilled by disallowing the use of hands and hacking, so much so that it would allow even “untrained Frenchmen” to compete against them with the new rules with just a few days of instruction. The easiness of learning the new game, and the accessibility to its equipment (usually a round ball will do) contributed to the dissemination of the game and its adoption by the masses. Also the staunch resistance of ruggers to develop a remunerated or professional player prevented the working class to take up interest in a game that would not allow them to be compensated for their participation. Football was still practiced and popular among the elite, but also in amateur only organizations and clubs. However, the advent of the English Football Association and professional football also contributed to its popularity with the working class. To this day, Union Rugby is still more popular with the elite, while the first remunerated form of Rugby, the Rugby League, became more popular

with the working class. The elite supported amateurism, while the working class supported professionalism.

As transportation improved and urban centers gained preeminence over the countryside in terms of size of the population, associations of people of more humble origins also began to form associations or teams to distract from the daily industrial grind that the industrial revolution had brought to Britain. Since football was familiar to many people (regardless of the differences of the game) different associations started selecting their best players to engage the best selection of players of a rival association both as a distraction from daily life and as a manifestation of competition amongst themselves.

As previously highlighted, a second important consequence was the creation of the first football leagues. England pioneered this organization with the inception of the first football league in 1863, Scotland and Wales soon followed suit in 1873 and 1876 respectively. The first organized recognizable championship (the first cup) was organized by what is now known in England as the Football Association (the FA) in 1871. This event is still played today and recognized as the oldest modern organized sporting event. It is commonly referred to as the FA Cup.

The creation of the FA was crucial because it became a regulatory body amongst different clubs and eventually leagues, allowing for a homogenization of rules for the dribbling football and a greater dissemination of the game.

Competition became fiercer throughout Great Britain, and soon some players began to earn wages to participate in the contest for compensation of their time or to provide their services to the highest bidder. This new situation brought about one of the

most important events for the evolution of football as a game in the 19th century: the formation of leagues. For the nobility, who used the game as competition amongst clubs where only nobles could play, amateurism was at the heart of the sport. They considered earning wages for playing unnecessary, and a way of corrupting what was regarded as a sport for gentlemen. For poor people of more humble origins, earning wages as a player was necessary to survive and to compensate for the lost time spent playing instead of working. They also justified it as a service provided. To the nobility this would bring about corruption in the game, which indeed was the case from the beginning. The northern part of England and the midlands (where most important industrial urban centers were located) favored paying players, while the elitist south refused to believe gentlemen should earn anything to participate in the sport and allowed only for reimbursement of expenses (inadvertently opening the door for professional football throughout the Empire, first in the British Isles and later throughout the colonies).

It is vital to understand the early history of the game because it explains that from its inception football was a game of rivalries that extended beyond the pitch. Football became a spectator game from its birth and organization. However, the spectator in football was not a mere onlooker as in other sports. Footballers became de facto representatives of organizations, towns, even different social strata. People chose the best representatives to play on their behalf. Players became champions of a group of people in the ancient warrior sense of the word, they promoted their pride. “Players, although they are professional footballers, are considered by most fans as their representatives on the pitch” (Armstrong and Giulianotti *Entering the Field* 205). The group of people that footballers represented became increasingly emotionally attached to

the footballers and to the result of the game against the champions of other groups. There was pride at stake when one's team played against a competing steel mill, or against a team of a different social class. The football supporter had emotional investment in his team, and the stadium became more than a site to watch his representatives, it became a place to show his emotional support and involvement to his own players, other supporters and the opposing fans. In a mutated way, rivalries such as these are still at the very heart of the game today. We will study basis for rivalries in a further chapter because they are very varied, from teams of different social class, to rivalries based on religion and nationality.

The division of class and of amateur versus professional players is as important as the tribal and industrial rivalries because it gave birth to the creation of different leagues, which eventually evolved into the creation of a multi-tiered championship system composed of different leagues. The rest of Europe would eventually follow this model after adopting the sport. The league in which a team plays has important socio-economic implications in the modern game, and some of the problems that stem from this system are at the heart of some of the violence in this year's French championship, especially with regards to the professional first league from the French capital, Paris Saint-Germain. Football, at its core, was and is a game of rivalry and confrontation representative of a social struggle between rival factions and classes that extends beyond the stadium and the eleven players on the field.

“The dyadic drama of football takes place at a number of levels: players, teams, clubs and countries. Each player is locked into a personal battle with his “opposite number” [...]. Equally, football clubs establish cultural

identities through rivalry and opposition. Purest rivalries grow up between civic siblings. [...] Culturally, derby matches sold themselves; rival fans lived, worked and socialized with each other, discussing, joking and theorizing endlessly on past and future encounters. [...] The meanings of these football rivalries have tended to be underpinned by deeper historical and cultural divisions.” (Giuliannotti 10)

History of the French Game

As we discussed, the game of football was born in the English school system, and the English were also responsible for introducing it to France in its modern version. However, once the sport came to the Hexagon, it spread quickly while enjoying a completely different story than its British counterpart.

Soon after the formation of the English FA, the French adopted football and formed their own association. 1872 saw the formation of the first club, Le Havre Athletic Club. In the late 1800s other clubs followed, some famous such as the Girondins of Bordeaux and Paris' Racing Club de France, the Stade Français and the Paris Football Club. These clubs still played a mix between Rugby and Football, and also engaged in other sports, as they were more athletic associations than mere football clubs. However, football became the dominant sport within the clubs by the first decade of the 20th century. Football had gotten ahead of itself internationally, since the first international match occurred between England and Scotland in 1872, before Scotland had even organized a football league (which the Scots did a few months after the game). The earliest continental leagues were founded in the Netherlands and Denmark in 1889 with New

Zealand, Argentina, Chile, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy and Germany all organizing their own leagues in the 1890s. In fact, the last decade of the 19th century saw for the first time the creation of clubs which practiced football exclusively, allowing football to replace or preempt Rugby as the football of choice in continental Europe and in countries with a significant British influence. The new century saw the multiplication of players and clubs, with 72 organizations in the Parisian area alone.

“The development of the game, though, was not without its problems: the administration of this rapidly growing sport became increasingly political as rivalry developed between the emerging groupings. The *Comité français interfederal* (founded in March 1907 by Charles Simon), [...] is the forerunner of the current FFF (the Federation Française de Football or *Trois Fs* as it is popularly known).” (Dauncey and Hare 25)

The association of different clubs to different organizations (such as football leagues and associations) helped deepen the divide that already existed among rival organizations. Some joined an organization because it was pro-catholic, while other clubs favored lay associations.

It took over a decade and a half to homogenize the leagues and have the FFF join FIFA. By the time these problems were being solved the Great War descended upon Europe hindering the progress of the continental game. However, the sport survived in France through small cup competitions (cup competitions favor knock out rounds with the losing team exiting the competition, the champion being the last team standing, as opposed to league competitions where a team plays every other team in its league, and

the team with most points, earned through wins and draws, is the ultimate league champion).

In 1919 France formed its first national selection and played Belgium earning a draw in the match. The sport returned to popularity and became largely supported by the middle class. However, most French players were not professionals, as in industrialized nations such as England and Germany. In fact, the French football league did not accept professional players until 1932, much later than some of its rivals. “In the 1920s businessmen became increasingly involved in the game, and took a controlling interest in many clubs. France adopted professionalism in 1932, a reflection of the working-class involvement” (Murray 86). Although later than in neighboring countries, football was becoming the peoples’ sport, and the acceptance of the working class into the sport is at the root of the formation of supporter groups that later in the 20th century would become more militant and fanatical.

French Participation in International Football

The French did spearhead the organization of international associations with Jules Rimet, a football pioneer in France, becoming the first president of FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association), the world football organizing and ruling body. Rimet was to world football what Baron Pierre de Coubertin was to the Olympics, organizing the first World Cup which Uruguay conquered. However, France did not perform well and would not for some time. From this time France started to develop a tendency and fame for playing beautiful football, but not for producing the desired result of bringing home titles. The English did not fare much better than the French up until the

sixties. The British, who had given football to the world, erroneously considered outsiders to be inferior practitioners in a game they zealously regarded as theirs, and refused to take part in the first international competitions believing their teams to be too superior to international opposition. In the middle of the 20th century French football carried in itself the same stigma of the French performance during WWII: a big country which was supposed to perform well against the other superpowers, but which ultimately fell way short of its potential. This shortcoming would plague both the national team and France's big clubs as soon as they became involved in international competitions, collecting few if any trophies while performing well in the actual competitions.

France's teams performed in football as the country did politically, especially during the *Trente Glorieuses*. In other words, French football results reflected the French social and economical scene. For example, during the *Trente Glorieuses* (the three decades of post WWII France) saw the Hexagon take great economic leap forwards, and so did France's football leagues and teams. A note on the *Trente Glorieuses*, a historical term first coined by French economist Jean Fourastié: the historical *Trente Glorieuses* are thirty years of French economic and social prosperity, roughly counted from 1945 to 1975, since the oil crisis brought this prosperity to a halt. For football's sake, we will move this period from 1950 to 1979 when football asserted its dominance over all the other French sports, with the rare exception of cycling's famous *Tour de France* and refer to it as *Les Trente Non-Glorieuses*, since no French team won a single international competition during this time.

As previously mentioned, during these three decades France's economy flourished, as did its football. However, during these thirty glorious years France lost

control of its colonial empire through bitter independence wars such as the War of Indochina and the Algerian War. During these years, football grew in France, its domestic leagues got organized and France's national and club teams performed well at home, and became involved in prestigious international competitions such as FIFA's World Cup, the UEFA European Cup (commonly known as the Euro), the European Champions Cup (now known as the UEFA Champions' League for the top clubs) and the UEFA Cup (a sort of second tier international competition for clubs not good enough to participate in the Champions' League. UEFA stands for Union of European Football Associations.)

A few football clubs began to assert their dominance over French football during the *Trente Non-Glorieuses*. The most dominant club by far during this time was the once mighty AS Saint-Etienne. During the three decades we are currently studying Saint-Etienne conquered the French title a record nine times, almost one of every three *Ligue 1* championships went their way; an amazing feat by any sports standard. Other great teams were OGC Nice with four titles in the fifties, Stade Reims with six titles during Fourastié's *Trente Glorieuses* and FC Nantes with four titles to their name from the late sixties to the mid seventies. The international results of French clubs mirrored France's international political form: active participation with mixed results but just not good enough to win any competition. During the *Trente Non-Glorieuses* a few clubs from Spain, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and England began to lord over the continental game, most notably Real Madrid CF, Ajax Amsterdam, FC Bayern München and Liverpool FC which won multiple titles each in more than one intercontinental competition.

Clubs such as Saint-Etienne did begin to develop a loyal and devout fan base because of their local success, but during this time there were very few acts of violence on the local or international fronts. Saint-Etienne was so dominant during this period that no other team mounted a serious challenge. The fans did not have a constant rival to worry about and they would rather shift the attention to whichever team performed well during a short period of time, but before any club could established itself as a rival force, the challenge would be over. In France, the lack of a powerful rival allowed for the game to develop in a prosperous and much more peaceful manner than today.

The Influence of Macro-economic indicators and International Success

Economic well-being seemed to also quell the need for public expressions of violence in sports arenas throughout France and much of Europe. In fact, the apparent lack of success of French teams also became a contributing factor to the relative indifference of club supporters in their emotional involvement with their team's results, since they knew they expected very little as rival national teams (such as Italy and Germany) and rival foreign clubs (such as Real Madrid, FC Bayern München and AFC Ajax) seemed to dominate the European theatre.

To support this argument here follow two tables compiled from uefa.com, fifa.com and fff.fr (official sites for UEFA, FIFA and the French Football Federation respectively) that illustrate the international involvement and results of French teams during the fifties, sixties and seventies.

Table 1

Results of the French National Football Teams in International Competitions from 1950 to 1980

Competition	Year	Result	Champion
World Cup	1950	did not qualify	Uruguay
	1954	first round (11th)	West Germany
	1958	semifinals (3rd)	Brazil
	1962	did not qualify	Brazil
	1966	first round (13th)	England
	1970	did not qualify	Brazil
	1974	did not qualify	West Germany
	1978	first round (12th)	Argentina
European Championship	1960	semifinals (4th)	USSR
	1964	did not qualify	Spain
	1968	did not qualify	Italy
	1972	did not qualify	West Germany
	1976	did not qualify	Czechoslovakia



The different world football federations, with UEFA member associations highlighted in red

Table 2

Results of the French National Football Clubs in International Competitions (The European Champions Cup) from 1950 to 1980

Years	Participating Teams	Best Result	Champion
1955-56	Stade Reims	runner-up	Real Madrid
1956-57	Nice	quarter-finals	Real Madrid
1957-58	Saint-Étienne	preliminary round	Real Madrid
1958-59	Stade Reims	runner-up	Real Madrid
1959-60	Nice	quarter-finals	Real Madrid
1960-61	Stade Reims	first round	SL Benfica
1961-62	AS Monaco	preliminary round	SL Benfica
1962-63	Stade Reims	quarter-finals	AC Milan
1963-64	AS Monaco	first round	FC Internazionale
1964-65	Saint-Étienne	preliminary round	FC Internazionale
1965-66	FC Nantes	preliminary round	Real Madrid
1966-67	FC Nantes Atlantique	second round	Celtic FC
1967-68	Saint-Étienne	second round	Manchester United
1968-69	Saint-Étienne	first round	AC Milan
1969-70	Saint-Étienne	second round	Feyenoord Rotterdam
1970-71	Saint-Étienne	first round	AFC Ajax
1971-72	Olympique de Marseille	second round	AFC Ajax
1972-73	Olympique de Marseille	first round	AFC Ajax
1973-74	FC Nantes Atlantique	first round	FC Bayern München
1974-75	Saint-Étienne	semi-finals	FC Bayern München
1975-76	Saint-Étienne	runner-up	FC Bayern München
1976-77	Saint-Étienne	quarter-finals	Liverpool FC
1977-78	FC Nantes Atlantique	second round	Liverpool FC
1978-79	AS Monaco	first round	Nottingham Forest FC

The *Trente Glorieuses* did not produce a single international French championship, either on the national or club side of the matter (in fact, before the 1980s, France did not produce international champions of any kind in football). The seventies

saw the real start of fan related violence, but it did not catch on in the Hexagon. The best examples of unrest would be England and Italy, where the sport had been more developed and followed with more passion for a longer number of years. The *Trente Glorieuses* were not quite so long, or glorious, in these two French neighbors. With WWII ending in Europe and the implementation of the Marshal Plan from 1949 on, most of Western Europe saw a rise in its economy.

In Italy the economy progressed sharply during the fifties and sixties, but the seventies brought an abrupt end to this growth even earlier than in France. Also, Italy's economy had not favored everyone. Though there was significant recovery for them, especially considering they had been part of the Axis, whole sections of the Italian population were left behind. The most notable example was the impoverishment of the agricultural sector due to urbanization and the modernization of the Italian means of production. The working class did improve its situation, but a gulf still remained between their progress and that of the upper middle class. Speaking of football, Italians contrasted more with France because their teams were successful in international competition. All three of the most dominant Italian teams to this day won international accolades and awards, creating more interested and wildly devoted working class fans than in France much earlier. During the sixties and seventies Italian clubs won four Champions Leagues (AC Milan in 1963 and 1969 and Internazionale Milan in 1964 and 1965), one UEFA Cup (Juventus in 1977) and three of the now defunct Cup Winners Cup (AC Milan in 1968 and 1973 and Fiorentina in 1961). Locally AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus have had unmatched success. Up until 2008, Juventus has conquered the most Serie A (the top Italian league) titles with 27, followed by AC Milan with 17 and Inter with 16.

In terms of fans, these are three of the most popular big 5 Italian clubs. While AC and Inter enjoy a decent following throughout Italy, their core is still in Milan and Lombardy. The interesting phenomenon is that Juventus, hailing from Turin, has a weaker following in its home town, but has the strongest support of any Italian club throughout the country. Turin natives support the local club Torino more than its successful local rival.

The other two clubs that round up the Italian big 5 are Lazio and Roma, and they share Rome's Olympic Stadium as their base. Though AS Roma and SS Lazio have a huge fan base, they have not been successful in the tally of trophies. However, Italy still boasts some of the best city derbies in the world, especially AC and Inter (who coincidentally also share the San Siro Stadium), Lazio and Roma, Juventus and Torino, Genoa and Sampdoria. There are also regional rivalries that date at least to the end of WWII. These inter-city rivalries, coupled with the passion and pageantry of the Italian Ultras and the abundance of the socially and economically dissatisfied in Italy from the beginning of the seventies contributed to the eruption of violence in the Italian peninsula earlier than in the Hexagon.

In the United Kingdom the end of WWII brought an end to food and supply rationalization and economic growth began as early as the late 40s. England received more money than any other European countries from the Marshall Plan. The subsequent fall of the European economy in the seventies also affected the British. The UK had received almost the triple of money and reconstruction supplies than the Italians during the implementation of the Marshall Plan. With England being much more heavily urbanized in industrial centers, the slowing of the economy hit blue collar workers the hardest, and many of them, already die hard football fans, turned to the fortunes of their

clubs to have something to hang on to or at least to have others with whom to share the burdens of life. England has the most numerous and storied rivalries in the history of football (much more so than Italy), so the slowing economy coupled with these rivalries became a powder keg for the confrontation of rival factions of unemployed and dissatisfied fans.

As previously discussed, if we take a look at the number of championships these two countries produced during the thirty years we have just studied we will notice that England produced one World Cup (1966) and four club championships divided amongst three teams, Manchester United, Liverpool FC and Nottingham Forest. The Italians had already two World Cups before WWII and had produced a European Cup and won four Champions Leagues with two representatives: FC Internazionale and AC Milan. Both Milanese teams to this day enjoy one of the most heated rivalries in the world known as the *Derby della Madonnina* (referring to the Madonna statue that crowns the Milan Cathedral). England and Italy also enjoyed some prosperity after WWII due to the enacting of the Marshall Plan for European Economic recovery. Italy's main difference with France was that its teams performed well internationally from the beginning of the century.

The English, who also lost their colonial empire, kept closer relationships with their former colonies through the Commonwealth. While not enjoying as much international success as the Italians they had the longest rivalries and traditions of any footballing nation in the world, and a very large working class in which many members saw their lives tied to the fates of their football club, a tradition passed from generation to generation, father to son. The English fan grew up tied to its club from infancy. This

tradition would also spread to other countries with the passing of time. The English and the Italians teach us that economic prosperity is not enough to suppress football related violence (though it does help to mitigate it), but English and Italian prosperity, which had been good for two decades, came to a sharp end in the seventies. The success of a team is a double-edged sword that brings its fans fortune and reputation, but that also sparks a more devoted and militant kind of fanatic.

Big Five Exceptions to the Hooligan pattern

Two countries from the Big Five broke the mold for much of the 20th Century. The first is Spain. The Spanish clubs have some of the most politically and socially heated rivalries in the world. For example, the biggest rivalry in the peninsula, between Real Madrid and Barcelona, goes beyond the two most supported teams from the two largest cities in the land. To many Catalonian supporters FC Barcelona is an embodiment of its cultural and social resistance to Madrid's dominance of Spain as the country's capital city. Barcelona is an embodiment of Catalonian defiance to this domination. FC Barcelona in many ways represented Catalonian regionalism: a different economy, a different culture, a different language and different traditions than those of Madrid. Why didn't violence spring in Spain as it did in Italy and England during the late sixties and seventies? The answer is the ruthless dictatorship of Francisco Franco, who ruled Spain with an iron hand from right before the beginning of WWII until November of 1975. Separatist movements were kept in check through a repressive government, and thus these expressions of violence were rarely reflected on the football scene. The regional tension involved in the Real Madrid CF – FC Barcelona model is helpful to understand the heart of the biggest of all French rivalries: Paris Saint-Germain vs. Olympique de

Marseille. We will find much of the Catalan regionalist discourse in the *Marseillais* spirit as a sort of regional revolt against the dominance of the proud and snobby French capital.

Olympique de Marseille has enjoyed a steady stream of championships throughout its existence; it has conquered the French league eight times (the first in 1937 and the last in 1992) and the French cup a record ten times (the first in 1924 and the last in 1989). OM is also the only French club to win the Champions League, in 1993. Olympique de Marseille was founded in 1899. The contrast against Paris Saint-Germain is enormous from almost any point of view. PSG was born of a merger of two Parisian clubs, neither of which had enjoyed much success, in order to maintain an economical and footballing presence in the French first division in 1970. Though PSG met with disappointment in its early years, the eighties brought better fortunes to the club. In fewer than forty years of existence as a club, PSG won only two French leagues, but it became a cup specialist and it has won the French cup seven times, almost catching up with its rivals.

An interesting occurrence happened to the Hexagon in terms of derbies. The French do not have real derbies. A derby can be loosely defined as an important game or rivalry between two teams that share a common base, usually a city, maybe even a department or state. We have mentioned a few of the great derbies of Europe, some the most important city derbies are Celtic and Rangers (both from Glasgow), Liverpool and Everton (both from Liverpool), AC Milan and Inter Milan (both from Milano), Juventus and Torino (both from Turin), AS Roma and SS Lazio (both from Rome) Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur (both from North London), Real Madrid and Atlético de Madrid

(both from Madrid) and Fenerbaçe and Galatasaray (both from Istanbul). Some of the most important regional derbies are Manchester United and Liverpool, Sunderland and Newcastle United, Olympique de Lyon and AS St. Etienne, Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund.

There is another type of derby, usually referred to as a *Clásico* (Classic in English), in which a country's two most important clubs meet. This may change in some countries due to the changing fortunes of some clubs, but true *Clásicos* are timeless, hence the name. Only a few rivalries can really be included here, some are derbies, but some are not. Arguably the biggest *Clásico* in South America (known as *el Super Clásico*) is between Argentina's two most popular clubs, River Plate and Boca Juniors. The biggest *Clásico* in Europe would be Real Madrid and Barcelona because each team represents competing clubs, languages, regions, cultures and economies. Fans of each club really become emotionally invested in the outcome of the game, with millions of fans around the world joining them.

What of the French derbies? Unfortunately we cannot find in France two large teams hailing from the same city in *Ligue 1*. There is a historical reason for this: During WWII the Vichy government, to attempt to maintain order and control over the French population, did away with city derbies in order to subdue local competition. The government did this mostly through mergers and demotions of rival city clubs. It effectively eliminated one of the main reasons for hooliganism in France. Inadvertently this measure did create strong regional teams that over decades developed and nurtured a faithful following of supporters of larger regions since many times the nearest rival

would be dozens of miles away. The regionalization of the support of French clubs and its effects will be discussed in more detail in the second chapter.

The emergence of a strong Parisian club in the seventies finally created what some would argue to be a small *Clásico* in France. France now has a major (successful) team in each of its most populous cities. While Olympique de Marseille have enjoyed prolonged success (with some periods of failure and unrest) now OM are looking at a team they consider without history that can compete with them, and who actually beat the OM on a regular basis!

Like the Spanish *Clásico*, the clash between PSG is not just about two teams. The city of Marseille considers itself as the southern capital of France. It has a distinct and very different culture than Paris, which Marseille consider to be snobbish and patronizing towards the rest of the country. One such example of how Paris looks down on everyone from a sporting point of view is the name of the main stadium for the 1998 World Cup, and the home stadium for the French National Team. Paris named the bowl the *Stade de France*. However, it does not mean that is the Stadium of France, or of all the French (though many consider it to mean precisely that), it is named the *Stade de France* because it is in the *Ile de France* region, in other words the Parisian or Capital region. This *Ile de France* moniker has long been attributed a snobbish name, as meaning that Paris and its suburbs are a special island in the heart of France to which all other regions look up. It is that attitude that the Marseille fans despise. Also, the type of fanatic was also different. While Parisians adhered more to a Kop or hooligan mentality with a British influence, southern French fans adopted a more Ultra approach to their stadium pageantry with a more Italian influence. In the past decade they have both adopted practices from the

other to have a hybrid ultra-hooligan type of violent fan, which we will discuss in more detail in the next two chapters.



OM (left) and PSG (right) fans at the Stade de France in 2006

The other exception is Germany, or in this case West Germany. The German nation was battered and the country was in shambles at the end of WWII. However, with the aid of the Marshall Plan and a new found energy and dedication West Germany clung to Western Europe and rededicated itself to rebuilding and developing a new national identity. In order to break from their Nazi past and the horrors of the war, for which most of the world blames them as a people, the Germans took extra care during their rebuilding years to present themselves as a peace and order-loving nation. Though Germany saw much international success as a nation, bringing home two World Cups, a European Cup and three Champions League through the emerging German force known as FC Bayern München, Germans largely stayed away from trouble in the three decades following WWII while enjoying the largest stadia and attendances of any of the Big Five leagues.

The *Trente Glorieuses* saw Italy, England and Germany develop international rivalries since their teams competed well against each other internationally both at the national and club levels. France and Spain had to take a back seat since their teams

usually played more beautifully but suffered from poorer results compared to the other three Big Five both in head-to-head competition and against other international selections from Europe and South America. It would be the end of the *Trente Non-Glorieuses* in France, and the oil crisis and the economic unrest of the seventies that would see the proliferation of violence in the different European football leagues.

We learn that France followed the footballing trends of other nations, but at times with even a few decades of *décalage*, which helps explain why the development of hooliganism in France also came later than in its English, Dutch or Italian counterparts. Another reason was the retardation of France's industrial development vis-à-vis England or Germany. Fans needed the free time and residual income to start dedicating more time to sports as spectators. During the 19th and early 20th centuries French population remained culturally and economically more tied to their soil than the industrial juggernauts of the United Kingdom and Germany, where heavy urbanization took place for the working class in centers such as Birmingham, Sheffield, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow in the UK or the Ruhr Valley in Germany. Some of the most traditionally strongly supported clubs are still located in these areas, and some of the most heated rivalries survive there to this day. The government of Vichy destroying what could have been city derbies played a part also in at least delaying the beginning of hostilities amongst rival clubs by deluding or eliminating many potential rivalries.

Most of the teams that represent important quarters or a particular ethnical background or religion have a loyal following passed from one generation to the next that contrasts with an "other" embodied in an opposing club. Celtic of Glasgow and Liverpool in England have very strong Catholic Irish immigrant ties, and the rival city

clubs have a more protestant pro Anglo-Saxon following. Those opposing clubs are Glasgow Rangers and Everton in Liverpool whose colors are blue. At times Rangers break out the orange flags and orange uniforms in support of the protestant house of Orange to provoke their catholic Irish green neighbors of Celtic. “The Protestant community, or Protestant identity, is formed from a set o shifting characteristics including a particular history in Ireland and Ulster, a sense of being British in an Irish context, a sense of identifying with the reformed faith as opposed to Roman Catholicism, and a political identification with the United Kingdom particularly as a country with a Protestant monarchy. These characteristics are represented through a range of symbols such as the Union flag, the Northern Ireland flag, king William of Orange, the Protestant Martyrs, the six counties of Northern Ireland, the open Bible and crown, the harp with a crown on top, the red hand, the colour orange, the colours red white and blue, the blue football shirts worn by Glasgow Rangers and Linfield football clubs. [...] the support of rival Glasgow teams, Celtic and Rangers, is one of the most significant symbols of identity for Catholics and Protestants” (Dominic 12-14) Liverpool’s Irish ties are made obvious by sharing its club’s hymn with Celtic, the now famous tune “You’ll Never Walk Alone” intoned before each match. On the gates of Anfield (Liverpool’s famed ground) stands “You’ll Never Walk Alone” painted gold in cast iron.



The main door at Liverpool’s Anfield and the badge of Glasgow’s Celtic FC

The following table shows examples of these inter and intra city rivalries and how heated and extensive these rivalries have been. The rivalries we have mentioned have long histories and give the fanatics something important to look for besides winning a trophy or a championship, they can have something over their rivals regardless of either team ending a season without silverware.

Liverpool also enjoys the biggest English inter-city rivalry with Manchester United even with both clubs having a fan base of similar backgrounds. This rivalry is rooted on a geographic and economic basis rather than a historic or religious one. It may be a little confusing to understand what makes up a good rivalry. Sometimes clubs have rivalries against teams that are very similar to them, and sometimes they have these rivalries against clubs which are very different from them. The real key to a rivalry is competition. In other words, a catholic team may have a rivalry against another catholic team because they are both attempting to become the predominant catholic team (such as the American rivalry of Boston College and Notre Dame). This rivalry could be akin to two Lions fighting for the same spoils or to become the Alpha male of a pride. The other type is a rivalry of difference, such as a catholic team opposite of a protestant team, and the best global example of that would be the Old Firm in Glasgow between Celtic and Rangers, in which the rivalry involves the struggle for domination of one faction over the other, and in which the overtones of the games may be political, religious, cultural and so on. The following table, compiled from footballderbies.com, soccerbase.com, www.rsssf.com and fussballdaten.de, show the longevity and competitiveness of the results of some of Europe's most storied rivalries.

Table 3

Head to Head Competition Results in Four of the Most Famous European Club Rivalries

Teams	Games	Wins	Ties	Losses
Manchester United	174	67	50	57
Liverpool	174	57	50	67
Sheffield United	120	44	37	39
Sheffield Wednesday	120	39	37	44
Glasgow Rangers	378	151	92	136
Celtic	378	136	92	151
Borussia Dortmund	130	45	33	52
Schalke 04 Gelsenkirchen	130	52	43	45

In the previous table there are four examples of rivalries, most with different undertones to them. Manchester United versus Liverpool is a regional rivalry dominated by a struggle for regional economic predominance between the two most important urban centers of northwestern England. The Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday rivalry is more of a competition for the Alpha team of the Steel city. The Borussia Dortmund and Schalke 04 rivalry is the German equivalent of Manchester United vs. Liverpool, and finally as previously described the Rangers and Celtic Rivalry is a religious and political personification of the catholic vs. protestant struggle of the United Kingdom. What all four rivalries have in common is a very long history of competing for some type of supremacy and a relative parity of results between the factions.

Liverpool and Manchester United became a footballing representation of the economic and industrial rivalry of the neighboring north eastern cities of Manchester and

Liverpool. Liverpool even has arguably the most famous self-named supporter group: The Kop. The Kop is actually the steepest of Anfield's stands, where the loudest supporters of the club have sat for the past century. All Liverpool supporters may also be referred by this name, or they are known throughout England as The Merseysiders (the stadium rests on the shores of the river Mersey) or The Skousers. Other teams in England also refer to their loyal supporters the Kop, and many teams have their own loud Kop stand, but far and wide Liverpool's Kop is the most famous, and one of the most numerous and ardent. We will discuss the advent of the Kop and its influence in French fan groups later in the third chapter.

In Contrast the French game rivalries were weaker for a long time and the expectations lower. The next section shows that strong rivalries would not occur in France until the last quarter of the 20th Century with the creation of Paris Saint-Germain and with new found success of French clubs in international competitions. The lack of Derbies and of sporting dynasties didn't foster the creation of strong competition. There were no "Celtics and Lakers" or "Michigan and Ohio State."

The phenomenon of ultra-devoted followers and violent fanatics didn't take hold in France for a long time, but as we will study in coming pages the French have now developed named fan entities based on the English loose organizations. A present-day group of supporters of Paris Saint-Germain fans, officially recognized as the Boulogne Boys, have adopted the moniker Kop de Boulogne. The Kop may refer to either the group of fans or the location they occupy in the stadium. The formation of these groups is important both in France and in England because the fans associated with the groups have developed an identity as part of something beyond them. They view these groups as an

extended family or nation to which they belong. Over time these groups have developed distinctive insignias, group hymns, chants and websites in order to associate with each other and to differentiate themselves from other friendly but especially rival factions.



Examples of Flags and Insignia of PSG's Kop of Boulogne

CHAPTER 2

The Genesis of French Hooligans

The phenomenon of ultra-devoted fans did not start in full force in France until the late eighties, but this new breed of club follower had plenty of models from the British and Italian games to get started. Why did they wait so long to appear in France? There are two historical reasons for their late appearance that date to the last quarter of the 20th century: the development of true rivalries and the international success of French football.

1. The development of true rivalries

1.1 The strength of regional club support

Foreigners mistakenly look at France as one cohesive national unit. Anyone who has studied or hails from the Hexagon knows that France has a long history and has long been divided by deep-seeded regionalisms. France is more a patchwork of regions than one big homogeneous nation. France as a country has a long history of invasions, wars, and changing political systems. France is the product of the mixture of Germanic, Latin and Celtic tribes and traditions. And the nation of France was built over centuries of unification wars. A French person will feel French while he travels through the world, but once he is home he will feel more *Parisien, Lillois, Bordelais, Marseillais, Alsacien*, etc. The expressions of regionalism are strong, and one of these manifestations is the support of the fanatic's regional club, in most instances his sole and only option. We have mentioned that for many teams the nearest rivals are too far, for example "Bordeaux's

nearest rivals, Niort, Toulouse and Nantes are approximately 165, 215 and 265 km away, respectively, in different politico-administrative areas, which effectively confers on Bordeaux the status of representative and ambassador for the whole of the Aquitaine region” (Crolley and Hand 76).

In fact, the manifestation of this regionalism is evident in many of the club names. Let us take a closer look at some examples of how team names have taken on the identity of regional representatives (italics added for emphasis):

FC Nantes *Atlantique*

CS Sedan *Ardennes*

Es Troyes *Aube*

FC *Girondins* de Bordeaux

AS Nancy *Lorraine*

AS Saint-Etienne *Loire*

Olympique Gymnaste Club de Nice-*Côte d'Azur*

A regional club can be described as an ambassador or envoy of a supporter’s region to the rest of the nation. By noting the part of the name highlighted in italics it is easy to realize that many clubs add a regional tone to their name, which is going beyond what most clubs do in other major European leagues. This feature is exclusive to french football clubs. Some countries have distinctive features in the club names that hint to the supporter what is important to the clubs. For example, the Germans give emphasis to the longevity and tradition of their clubs, so many of the club names include the year of the foundation of the club. Some examples are Hanover 96, FC Schalke 04, Bayer 04

Leverkusen and TSV 1860 München. To many French, regional identification and representation is the important distinctive feature.

Something else that is particular to French clubs is that the grounds for most major teams are actually owned by “local councils and local authorities have traditionally given the clubs large sums of money in the form of subsidies” (Crolley and Hand 76). This particularity gives the local and regional supporters a sense of ownership and of belonging to the club not shared in the rest of the Big Five.

The media in France many times reinforces this idea by referring to the teams by their region of origin, thus including the whole region in question as the support of the team. For example, En Avant Guingamp are actually *les Bretons*, or Metz are *les Lorrains* or Bastia are *les Corses* or Lyon are *les Rhodaniens* for the Rhône river or *les Gônes* (referring to the street slang used by people in the Lyon region to talk about their young men). Many times people will ascribe the regional stereotype of the population to the way the team behaves and plays. A Good example is that the media will talk about RC Lens as being hard working and very engaging in their style of play, which is usually the type of fame that inhabitants of the Lens region have around France. These ideas help to highlight the differences of each region and the clash of playing stiles of each team as a regional ambassador. These stereotypes also deepen the animosity when important rival teams clash, such as Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique de Marseille.

1.2 The PSG-OM dichotomy

1970 saw the merger of two Parisian clubs and the new hybrid was called Paris Saint-Germain. Paris had a few football clubs that enjoyed moderate success, but only

one club from the capital (Racing Club Paris) had ever won the French league and this in the 1935-36 season. Teams that had dominated French football usually did not enjoy their time in the sun concurrently, which caused rivalries to be somewhat pallid. The two most successful French clubs of all time had their periods of dominance in different decades, with Saint-Etienne dominating the post-war *Trente Glorieuses* (winning 10 championships in all), and Olympique de Marseille earning half of their eight titles during the early nineties. This would be like saying that the two greatest rivals in heavy weight boxing are Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali because they were arguably the two greatest boxers of all time, when the truth is they dominated their sport in different eras.

Parisians never became too involved with their teams which caused Parisian clubs to struggle both financially and on the pitch. The need felt by the league and its sponsors to have a strong Parisian team caused the merger that gave birth to PSG. After a few struggling years, PSG became successful. The upstarts were seen with disdain (and with some fear) because they made Olympique de Marseille (OM) look over their shoulders.

As we have explained, great rivalries extend beyond the sporting competition, and Marseille regarded PSG as a club with no history who all of a sudden began to challenge the OM's new found dominance of the French Game. Both teams shared silverware and the largest fan bases in France. The following tables show that Marseille's dominance of French football mostly happened during the late 80s and early 90s. Regional differences began to be used as excuses to hate the other team and what they presumably represented. The following table, compiled from psg.fr and om.net, shows the successes enjoyed by Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique de Marseille since the formation of PSG:

Table 4

Palmarès of Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique de Marseille From 1971 to 2008

1971-Present**Paris Saint-Germain****Domestic Palmarès**

Ligue	Coupe de France	Coupe de la Ligue
1986, 1994	1982, 1983, 1993, 1995, 1998, 2004, 2006	1995, 1998, 2008

International Palmarès

UEFA Cup Winners Cup	Intertoto Cup
1996	2001

Olympique de Marseille**Domestic Palmarès**

Ligue	Coupe de France	Coupe de la Ligue
1971, 1972, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 (1993, vacated for bribery scandal)	1972, 1976, 1989	

International Palmarès

UEFA Champions League	Intertoto Cup
1993	2005, 2006

There was also a feeling by Marseille that they had earned the right to enjoy success the hard way, by winning championships. The OM had paid their dues, whereas PSG was bankrolled from 1991 by Canal+ in order to break the dominance of Marseille and cause French football to be more interesting while dipping into the deep pockets of the largest and largely untapped Parisian market. This new development coupled with the feelings of regionalism, and immigration problems that will be addressed further,

made for a recipe of violent expressions of devotion on each side of the *Marseillais/Parisien* football fan divide.

“The identity of Marseille in the French mind, though, is not based solely on the stereotypically passionate and volatile nature of its inhabitants. [...] Marseille has the reputation in France of being rebellious and revolutionary and largely defines itself by its opposition to Paris, seen by Marseille as representing a distant, unsympathetic and largely unjust authority. [...] A chasm of misunderstanding has opened up which is nowhere near to being bridged.” (Crolley and Hand 82-83)

“The status of Paris as France’s political capital cannot, of course, be ignored and PSG is therefore frequently referred to as “the capital’s club” [...] which serves as a simple discursive reminder of the predominance of Paris in French politics. [...] Paris owes it to itself to be exceptional. Paris Saint-Germain football club, as a representative of the capital and its region, becomes imbued with exceptional qualities in that it is expected to be dominant, to do well and to be, as Paris is to France, a focal point, the center of the French Universe. [...] However, when Paris Saint-Germain fail to live up to the hyperbole generated around them, they are castigated in the sports pages of the newspapers usually on the grounds of arrogance [...] PSG is a club with an oversized ego. Criticisms such as these reflect the view of many rival supporters whose hostility towards the Paris club is largely based on the fact that it is too rich, too proud, just too Parisian [...] capricious, carefree, and frivolous.” (Crolley and Hand 84-86)

In fact, many detractors still contend that PSG is not a real football club, born of greed and the need for Paris to have a predominant soccer entity, but for which the city in many ways could really care less (except of course for the fans in question in this work).



A representation of insignias of the different kop and ultra groups for each of the OM and PSG halves of the French *Clásico*. Many insignias have revolutionary or aggressive overtones, such as skulls, the faces of guerilla leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara and the fictional horror movie character Freddy Krueger from “A Nightmare on Elm Street”.

The emergence of other teams is also worth mentioning as Monaco and FC Nantes have mounted a few good campaigns. The most dominant team in the history of French football is now Olympique de Lyon. Lyon as it is commonly called is not the team with more championships, but since the beginning of the new millennium Lyon have won an unbelievable seven consecutive league titles and counting, having secured their last championship the second week of May 2008. The arrival of Lyon to the pinnacle of French Football with such force has in a way intensified other rivalries that existed besides the aforementioned PSG-OM, rivalries such as RC Lens vs. LOSC (Lille Métropole or simply Lille), Lyon vs. Saint-Etienne and Bordeaux vs. Toulouse. Because of the success of Lyon it has been nearly impossible for any other team during the last decade to aspire to win the French league, which turns the attention of the fans to at least beating the regional rival to keep some of their club pride. This is also a new occurrence

since the early dominance of Saint-Etienne during the *Trente Non-Glorieuses* did not tend to produce this result, at least not expressed violently as at present.

2. International Success

2.1 The Platini Era

Besides regional pride and “holding one over one’s rival” there are economic and international prestige considerations to be accounted for in the modern competitive equation. The international fortunes of both club and country changed for the French football supported from the eighties on. France, considered the world’s biggest perennial underachiever together with Spain, finally shed some of its bridesmaid fame to be crowned champion of various international competitions at the national and club levels. The first great international milestone came with the first of two great French football generations. We will refer to this time as the Platini Era taking the name of a footballer considered by football fans worldwide to be France’s greatest football hero: Michel Platini. Up to the eighties France had participated in many international competitions but had not enjoyed much success. The first salvo of the new era was let loose in the 1982 World Cup hosted by Spain. The French had a great team led by Platini, but he was hardly a stand-alone star. People still remember Joel Bats, Dominique Rocheteau, Jean Tigana and Alain Giresse among others. France made it to the semi-finals only to lose a heartbreaker on penalties to Germany on a game they had been winning and in which they handily dominated the West Germans for the most part.

Then, in 1984, the Platini generation gave France its first of many international championships in the next two decades. France, playing at home, beat the other perennial

under-achiever Spain at the Parc des Princes in Paris 2-0 to win the European Championship. With better performances also came higher expectations. Now the French had proven they had what it took to win beyond their league. However, the French selection failed to follow up on its European success in their bid to win the World Cup in Mexico in 1986 when they lost at the same stage yet again to the Germans after beating the amazing Brazilian team lead by Socrates in an amazing quarter-final match. The end of the Platini generation brought some lean years to France, as they failed to qualify to the next two World Cup tournaments.



French captain Michel Platini raises the European Cup during the summer of 1984

However, while the national team floundered, French clubs began to carry their own weight internationally. Fans had something to cheer about in Europe when Olympique de Marseille won the Champions League in 1993 and then Paris Saint-Germain lifted the now defunct Cup Winners Cup in 1996. These triumphs helped the French to maintain some international credibility, but they also helped fuel the fire between the rival clubs. These early triumphs show that success breeds fanaticism, and France became a late example of that in Europe. Higher expectations (both of titles and money) fuel the passion of the fanatic, while failures after success cause deeper

frustrations that lead to violence. Let's simply look at the two following excerpts, the first of an online article from the British Telegraph website documenting the ambiance prevailing in Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique de Marseille matches in the new millennium, and the second by Andrew Hussey, the head of French and comparative literature at the University of London in Paris. The Telegraph article mentions that in January 2003 then Interior Minister (and now French President) Nicolas Sarkozy imposed heavier fines and imprisonment for violent fanatics:

“It was prompted by fears of violence at last night's fifth-round French Cup fixture between bitter rivals Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Olympique Marseille (OM).

Previous matches between the two teams have descended into running battles between rival fans outside the clubs' home grounds. The last time PSG, whose notorious fans include a number of skinheads and right-wing extremists, and OM met in the same stadium in October last year, 2,000 riot police and gendarmes were mobilized.

Last night a similar number of baton and shield-wielding officers were deployed outside PSG's stadium at the Parc des Princes in Paris and on the city's transport system. In addition to street violence, past racist incidents include supporters throwing bananas on to the pitch when a black player from a rival team scored a goal.

A few years ago, anyone asking what the French word was for 'hooligans' would be told smugly that there wasn't one because they didn't exist here.

However, in recent years the game's authorities have been forced to introduce increased security measures, similar to those employed in Britain. These include all-seat stadiums, a ban on the sale of alcohol at matches and special training for club stewards. Gerard Rousselot, president of the security commission of the French Football Federation and the Professional Football League, said France had followed Britain's lead in the fight against hooliganism.” (Willshew)

The second article also describes the atmosphere of a (2006) PSG-OM game.

“It is now less than eight years since Didier Deschamps, the stand-in captain of the France football team, held the World Cup before an exultant crowd in the *Stade de France*. But the triumph of his team, such a symbol of progressive multiculturalism, seems already to belong to another era. This much was clear to me on a cold night in early March this year in the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. I was there to watch Paris Saint-Germain take on Olympique de Marseille, in the so-called Derby de France, which is traditionally the biggest and most hard-fought event in the French footballing calendar. There is a long history of rivalry and, more latterly, violence between their supporters, who between them represent the two polarities of French life: the hard-headed metropolitan arrogance of Paris and the freewheeling, exhibitionism of the Mediterranean south. This collision is celebrated in one of PSG's terrace chants - one of the oldest football songs in the canon - which is sung to the tune of the 'Marseillaise' and includes the lines '*Allons, enfants du Grand*

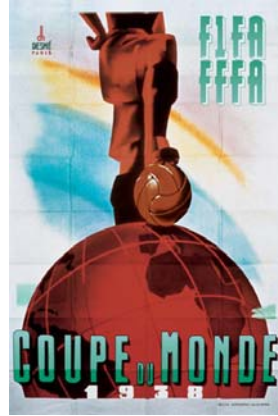
Paris ... Qu'un sang Marseillais abreuve nos sillons' ('Let's go, children of Great Paris/Let Marseillais blood flow through our terraces').

Around the Parc des Princes, the PSG fans of all races paraded coffins on the terraces, threw flares and sang of their hatred of the *Marseillais*. But there seemed to be more to this than mere footballing rivalry. The atmosphere was sour and strange, and the crowd was ready at any point to begin fighting.” (Hussey)

These two articles clearly illustrate that the modest success of the French during the eighties and nineties already showed the first indices of more fanatical fan behavior. The articles emphatically also prove that it would be the modern era, with unprecedented degree of French success, that would trigger the explosion of the current wave of violence performed by football fans by bringing more fans (especially of the violent sort) to the stands.

2.2 The Zidane Era

The end of the nineties would bring France its best football era of all time, an unprecedented wave of success that may unfortunately be winding down. After the two previous World Cup qualifying failures, France hosted the 1998 World Cup. This was France’s second chance at hosting the prestigious competition, since they French had previously hosted the cup in 1938. If France ever had a good chance to progress deep into the tournament this was it, since no host nation had ever failed to make it past the group stages of the competition.



Official French World Cup posters for 1998 and 1938

Hope seemed lost when France's brightest footballer, the feisty and controversial Eric Cantona, refused to take part in the national selection and opted for retirement. France had a few mildly recognizable players, but not one of Cantona's stature. So good and popular was this man, that at the end of the century Manchester United (his last professional team and the site of his greatest exploits) conducted a poll of which was the best player EVER to have donned the Manchester United red, and the answer came back in the form of the mercurial Frenchman.

For the opening match of the 1998 World Cup, the French squad entered the field at the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille a largely unproven and anxious bunch. They had not kicked a ball in a World Cup for a dozen years and they had not paid the price of qualification but as hosts and a few friendly matches. Their first opponent, luckily, was a team just qualified for its first World Cup ever.

France had drawn a favorable group in which they were favorites to progress, and in the Rivieran night France thumped South Africa 3 – 0 and a few nights later followed their performance with the 4 – 0 dismantling of Saudi Arabia, another weak squad. France's first real test materialized in Denmark, who the French managed to beat 2 – 1.

France had scored an amazing 8 goals in three matches while keeping two clean sheets. This feat combined with the euphoria of hosting the world's premier sporting event caused the French population to catch on fire and to follow their team, which they had always done with some apprehension in the past due to its chronic underachievement.

Once France progressed out of the group stages the challenges toughened and France's lack of a high quality striking force became evident: no French striker scored a goal in the last three matches. However, the selection managed to eke out the results they needed through goals scored by the defenders (Lilian Thuram and Laurent Blanc against Paraguay and Croatia respectively) and narrowly beating the Italians on penalty kicks. Against all odds France found itself in the final, in its new Parisian stadium, against the defending World Champions. By then the Hexagon was completely crazed about its *Bleus*. Throughout the country giant screens, packed pubs and almost every home with a TV set tuned to support their team. France, still the underdog at home, produced arguably their best performance ever by dominating Brazil and giving it its worst ever loss in a World Cup match with a 3 – 0 score line over the South Americans. The country exploded in jubilation. France had also found a new leader, the often soft-spoken child of Algerian immigrants Zinedine Zidane. He had revealed himself as a ball handling maestro and to top it all of Zidane scored two goals with his head to effectively bury Brazil in the championship map. His star rose to a near godlike status overnight, along with the constellation of his teammates.

Since that day French Football has not been the same, neither has its fandom. France, this time, did not follow its awesome performance by a few years of mediocrity as before, but two years later the now heavily favored *Bleus* conquered their second

European Championship tourney by beating Italy with a golden goal courtesy David Trezeguet. Here is a table of the French national selection performance since their 1998 triumph compiled from uefa.com and fifa.com.

Table 5

Results of the French National Football Team in International Competitions from 1998 to 2008

France National Selection		
Competition	Year	Result
World Cup	1998	Champions
World Cup	2002	First Round
World Cup	2006	Runners-up
European Championships	2000	Champions
European Championships	2004	Quarter-finals
Confederations Cup	2001	Champions
Confederations Cup	2003	Champions

After winning only one international championship in its first century of existence, French football produced a mesmerizing four major trophies while taking part in five finals in less than a decade. The French now had teams to believe in and idols to worship in an unprecedented scale: each one a log to fuel the fanatics' fire, for good and for bad. Success brought more fans to the stadium, and not all of them were the type that cared only for the sport or for sportsmanship. Some of these new fans were of blue collar origins, but had a different agenda, such as racial prejudice. From the same article that described Mr. Sarkozy's measures against such fans we read: "During the World Cup, France's football team was seen as an example of the multi-culturalism of our country, but at club level it's a different story," said a spokesman for the French Football

Federation. "Sadly there are some clubs, and PSG are one of the worst, where there is an extreme right-wing element among the supporters and this leads to racist attacks."

It would be during the nineties that these type of ultras would get a real hold of the rafters in French stadia. Unfortunately for Football, success indirectly breeds violence, and France was only one of its latest European victims. After reviewing the historical causes of violence in French football the next two chapters will study sociological, psychological and economic reasons that explain the attraction of this type of fan to the game of football.



Zinedine Zidane scores his first header against Brazil in the 1998 World Cup Final at the *Stade de France* in Paris, France.

CHAPTER 3

Two Socio-Economic Reasons at the Core of “Hooligan”

Violence

Unemployment and Immigration

France’s brand of violent hooligan is based on the English and Italian models, but it comes with a few important twists. First, violent fans need a type of brotherhood and camaraderie that they find at their club, and they also need a common enemy to solidify their union, they need an “other”, an external nemesis. Second, France would produce a hybrid version of the Kop hooligan mixed with the *Tifosi* Ultra. (A *Tifo* is an Italian term that means a flag or display of emblems in football; Italian fans in general are known around the world as the *Tifosi* because of their frequent displays of football paraphernalia.)

In this chapter we will study who will become the “other” to French hooligans and how this French “other” differs from the English “other”. Violent French fans have the following in common with their English and Italian counterparts: “they are under 21, know all about football, their club, players and technique, and frequently sport the distinctive insignia of their particular group” (Bodin, Héas and Robène). Other attributes French hooligans share with their English equivalents (especially from the sixties and seventies) are their blue-collar roots and typically lower education. This is not true of all fervent fans, but it is true of the violent groups who are not in every case a sub-section of a larger “ultra” organization. For example, many of the organizers and founders of the Boulogne Boys were actually well-to-do, upper middle-class individuals with jobs in

business and law, but now many of the adherents to the group do not share that background.

To better understand the makeup of a violent hooligan group a brief study the profile of the typical violent supporter of Chelsea FC during the sixties and seventies is helpful. Chelsea FC used to be famed for having the most violent English hooligans during the most violent football era in the United Kingdom, before Chelsea became a cosmopolitan neighborhood and before Chelsea FC put chairs in all the stands and started targeting corporate clients and a more upscale audience to the matches.

Chelsea's most violent stand was known as the Shed, it could be considered Chelsea's version of the Kop in other clubs. It was standing room only and it used to be filled with rough unemployed and blue-collar types. "As their number grew, Chelsea hooligans began subdividing into groups called "firms." The most famous of the groups called themselves the Chelsea Headhunters. After their assaults, they would leave a calling card with their skull-and-bones logo that read, "You have been nominated and dealt with by the Chelsea Headhunters" (Foer 107). The present day French hooligan groups have inadvertently followed this model of spreading, subdividing and following their more violent enterprises.

Groups like the Headhunters or Combat 18 (18 stands for the first and eight letters of the alphabet, or AH, in reference to Adolph Hitler) would gather during and after games and periodically attack sections of visiting fanatics. They were formed by drop out youth and blue collar workers on employment hiatus. Eventually many of these hooligans developed long rap sheets and earned a few trips to the hospital, some injuries

more serious than others. All this until football became more commercial and clubs saw their interest in attracting and safe-guarding a more middle and upper class patron to earn higher revenue. The Chelsea experience could help us understand what may be a solution to the present day debacle in France. But it took the British over three decades, many of incidents and dozens of dead bodies to get their act together. The following short list is an example compiled from the “Sport Disasters” page of the website infoplease.com. It is about the most famous soccer disasters with their accompanying death tolls. We will discuss the Heysel disaster in Chapter 4 to illustrate this point.

- **1971: Jan. 2, Glasgow, Scotland:** 66 killed in crush at Glasgow Rangers home stadium when soccer fans trying to leave encountered fans trying to return to stadium after hearing that a late goal had been scored.

- **1985: May 11, Bradford, England:** 56 burned to death and over 200 injured when fire engulfed main grandstand at Bradford's soccer stadium.

- **1985: May 29, Brussels, Belgium:** when British Liverpool club fans attacked rival Italian supporters of Juventus team at the Heysel Stadium before the European Champion's Cup final, a concrete retaining wall collapsed and 39 people were trampled to death. More than 400 people were injured.

- **1989: April 15, Sheffield, England:** 96 people were killed at Hillsborough stadium during a semifinal match between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. Most of the victims, who were Liverpool fans, were crushed against a barrier on an overcrowded area behind one of the goals. It is Britain's worst soccer disaster.

The British experience shows that if you allow the heart of your stadium to be made up of the socially frustrated and unemployed you will deal with this problem on a permanent basis. As we saw before, while the English were suffering from violence in their stadia the French had it relatively easy until the eighties brought two significant changes: unemployment (with all its social symptoms) and an important “other” in the form of immigrants.

Unemployment as a source of Hooliganism

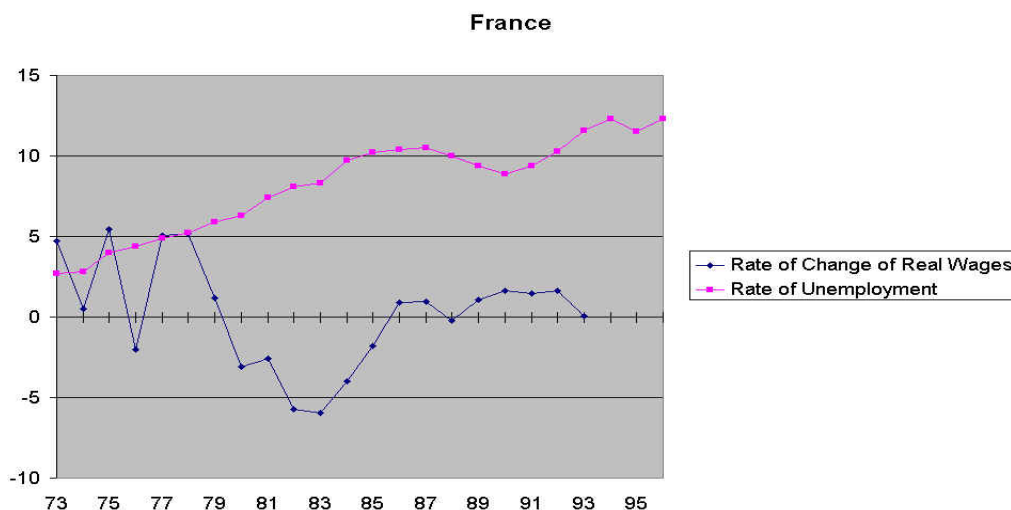
During the *Trente Glorieuses* France experienced a period of economic growth. At the same time, the Hexagon was losing grip on its colonial empire. The good times couldn't last forever, and the oil crisis brought a halt to the boom most industrialized nations had seen in the post WWII era. High prices and hyperinflation coupled with a devaluation of currencies, including the French Franc, led to a rise in unemployment. France's economy limped through the eighties with diverse highs and lows, but France did not fully recover to the employment rates enjoyed during those years. The first half of the eighties was particularly harsh and socialist governments favored heavy taxes to provide free services to the general population such as higher education and healthcare, imposing heavy burdens such as the so called “Lois Auroux” (Esping-Andersen and Regini) measures on the workforce, to support the economically unproductive people in state of *chômage* (unemployment).

Unemployment was under 5% in 1977 but during the eighties this figure spiked. At its lowest during this decade, the French economy had a 9% unemployment rate (in 1989), but the early nineties were not kind and in just a couple of years unemployment

found itself at double digits (at 12% by 1992). One of the problems was the dismissal laws, which have been played with for decades, because it is hard for an employer to dismiss an employee without lengthy justification and without a sizeable severance. Strong opposition by the well organized and deeply entrenched French unions have made these changes hard to enact, a battle that continues until today with the more economically liberal Sarkozy government. The following table, gathered from the website www.ilo.org, from an economic study of the International Labour Organization, “Unemployment, Structural Change and Globalization” (Pianta and Vivarelli) shows the alarming increasingly rising rate of unemployment in France from 1973 to 1995. For over twenty years, after the *Trente Glorieuses*, the French saw their economy misfire and stutter as unemployment grew steadily and real wages did not show any significant rate of increase. The French had more unemployment and those employed did not earn any more by the 90s than they did twenty years earlier.

Table 6

Rates of Unemployment and Change of Real Wages in France from 1973 to 1995



Unemployment rates, regardless of the strides taken by France alone and together with the rest of the European Union, continued to steadily climb throughout Europe during the 1990s. In the 2000s France has improved but they were never able to come back to the healthy *Trente Glorieuses* economic wellbeing. In 2004 France still posted a 9.6% unemployment rate. (Cahuc and Zylberberg 16). After the treaty of Maastricht it is important to look beyond French borders because these borders became less definite in terms of the labor market due to the agreements of free movement of labor across EU member states. In France the average unemployment rate from 1964 to 1973 was an almost ideal 2.23%, but that figured jumped to an unhealthy 9.7% between 1983 and 1992 and an alarming 11.86% for the period 1992-1997 (Eatwell *Unemployment: national policies in a global economy*).

Unemployment is just part of the puzzle when it comes to looking at the workforce in France. The French have usually very traditional views about employment. In fact, the French distinguish in their workforce statistics and studies the difference between traditional jobs, in which an employer is part of a larger enterprise and is contractually employed for an indefinite period of time, and more modern versions of employment such as contractual, part-time and self employment. In the nineteen nineties, around 80% of France's workforce still belonged to the "traditional" employed workforce (Edwards and Révauger 35).

While this is still true for most Western European countries, others such as the UK don't have the rigidity of the French structure and thus their workforce can more easily switch from the traditional to the non-traditional. The French forms of contractual employment make it harder for an employer to rid himself of an employee, and create

expectations (sometime too unrealistic) of job security and longevity. When hard times hit, the French are less adaptable at finding new jobs because the rigidity of the employment apparatus in France makes employers less likely to hire someone, since the employer knows that he or she will not be able to let this person go easily. In France, a strong labor code is supported by the 1946 Constitution preamble that states: no one may suffer injury, in his work or employment, by reason of his origins, his opinions or his beliefs.

“Such protection of fundamental rights is not seriously opposed by anyone [...] but very often, measures to protect employment go much farther, to the extent of regulating all the procedures by which a worker joins and leaves a firm. They provide for an official review of the “economic” justification of layoffs, they define the amount of separation pay and advance notice required, they set out in detail procedures for prior negotiation with representative of the employees and the modalities of recourse should a dispute arise, and they set out rules governing the use of short-term labor contracts.” (Cahuc and Zylberberg 86-87)

However, “too much employment protection protects employment badly” (Cahuc and Zylberberg 87) and this type of protectionism has really handicapped the agility of the hiring process and the fluidity of the labor market. Since four fifths of the workforce find themselves in this situation and since the more fluid, less traditional form of employment is too small (only around 20% of jobs are of this nature as opposed to the 80% who are of a more traditional vein), the French job market has a harder time

assimilating the unemployed once they have been pushed out the door of a “traditional” job.

Of all the Big Five, France has the distinction of having the least employed youth in contrast to France’s adult population, which ranks amongst the highest employed in Europe. The figures show that France is comparable to the UK and Germany in terms of employed people of workforce age. In economic and employment terms, France has usually performed closer to the top of the scale in the Big Five, with figures more comparable to those of the UK and Germany. Economically Spain and Italy have historically fared worse than their other big neighbors. The following table shows the workforce to population ration among the Big Five in the EU. The data in tables 7 and 8 was compiled from Chapter 3 entitled “Flexibilities and Policies in Employment: Reflections from Several European Countries” of Edwards and Révauger’s “Employment and Citizenship in Britain and France.”

Table 7

EU Big Five Employment Rates

Country	% of working population	% of under-20s in active employment
France	68.8	10
United Kingdom	76	60
Germany	68.9	35
Spain	60.6	30
Italy	58.4	20

The information in this table is staggering. France, which boasts a highly active employed population by European standards, has the lowest number of fully employed

youth. Having a low percentage of youth employed full time is understandable, since typically men and women in this age group are finishing their basic education or pursuing a higher education degree. However, in France the lack of flexibility in the workforce does not allow the youth to easily break into the labor force, as it does in the UK or Germany for example.

While many youths in France are pursuing an education, logically there are also many who are not and who are consequently unemployed. As we will see in more detail in the final chapter, our profile for the violent hooligan is an blue-collar worker (or unemployed) and socially disconnected male youth in his late teens and early twenties. The following table shows the breakdown from a gender perspective.

Table 8

EU Big Five Percentage of Women Employment

Country	% of working women
France	61.8
United Kingdom	67.5
Germany	53.8
Spain	46.3
Italy	43.7

We see that the French workforce largely favors the older generation and the establishment, and that additionally the male youth in France has a lot of competition from the female gender; as well over half of French women are active participants in the workforce. France, since the nineties, simply has many more unemployed young males than even Spain or Italy, which trail the Hexagon on total employed population, not to

mention the industrial juggernauts of the United Kingdom and Germany. As long as France cannot cope with its unemployed youth, the lure of the stadium will prove strong to many who wish to voice their malcontent with their present situation. Youth unemployment is a major source of individuals who can easily be swayed into a group of other like-minded disenfranchised people eager to vent their frustration on someone else.

“An analysis based on records of Paris Saint-Germain supporters detained for questioning by the police between 1988 and 1992 reveals that ‘hooligans’ are young, white males, predominantly working-class, employed in both skilled and unskilled jobs in more or less equal numbers. Some of the more powerful ‘skinhead’ members of the Paris Saint-Germain ‘kop’, however, come from the upper-middle classes - sons of lawyers and senior managers. According to Mignon, a number of these supporters, who in the late 1960s and early 70s might have expressed their dissociation from their bourgeois origins through a different form of solidarity with working people, are now involved in the ‘white French’, racist movement. [...]

Football rivalries may provide French fans with a sense of belonging to a group, a stage for competitive artistic display, an excuse to ‘let off steam’ and, occasionally, to prove masculinity in aggressive or violent encounters.” (Frosdick and Marsh 61-63)

This explanation refers to the earliest groups of hooligans and especially the founders of kop groups, however as time has progressed these groups have broken up and

diversified to include groups who are heavily segregated by neighborhood and especially class and ethnic background.

In the fourth chapter we will look into more detail at the profile of the hooligan, but already the articles cited previously show how many racist hooligans end up forming groups of ultras and how they show their discontent.

There is another great factor yet that contributes to violence in stadia, and that is the flood of immigrants that has arrived in France in the last two decades. In the next section we will see how they apparently create added competition in the workplace, and also how they become easy target for the malcontent. In recent years far right groups such as the Front National has targeted them and used them as excuses and scapegoats for some of France's financial troubles. The last section of this chapter will discuss in more detail the views of the Front National on African Immigrants.

Immigration and Racism in Contemporary France

The topic of immigration would be worthy of its own thesis, dissertation or major publication, but we will attempt to tackle the essentials of the immigration problematic, in the measure that it affects the football club and its spectators.

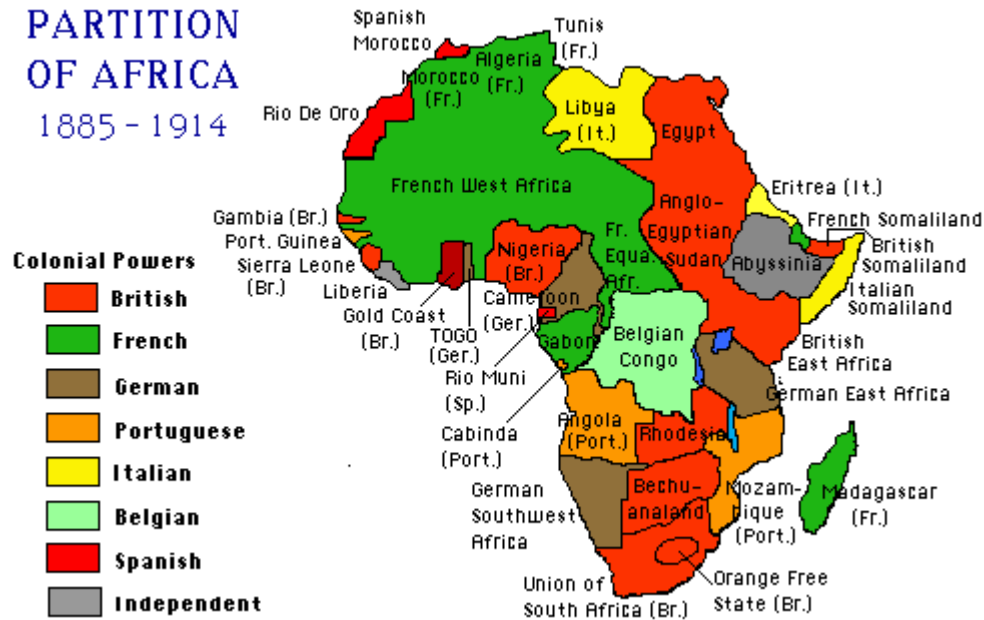
Defining immigration as a term is already a complicated matter in contemporary France. Who do the French consider an *immigré*? Here are two of the most accepted and controversial views of who is an immigrant in France. The French High Council on integration has the following definition, which is the first viewpoint, by which they measure all statistics with regards to this social phenomenon: “an immigrant is every person born a foreigner, in a foreign country, who lives in France” (Kouvidila 59). The

problem is that many sociologists and other experts in the matter do not adhere or even agree with this definition. A few demographic experts have the second viewpoint that this definition should extend to any French citizens with a parent or even a grand-parent who immigrated to France. Though this definition has no juridical value, it illustrates how protectionist some sectors of the French population are and how unlikely they are to accept and assimilate foreigners, especially those who look and behave differently compared to the traditional white and culturally catholic Frenchman whose family has been French for generations. The debate is even more complicated when it comes to deciding who has the right to French citizenship.

There exist two main conflicting positions: *Le droit du sol* (the Law of Land) and *le droit du sang* (the Law of Blood). The Law of Land sustains that any person born within the territory of France is a French citizen independently of the nationality of his or her parents. The Law of Blood requires that a person can only become a French citizen if his parents are both French citizens. The definitions are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but at times supporters of both laws do tend to act as if they were. For example, the far right (such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's Front National party) would argue that the French should follow only the Law of Blood when according citizenship.

France suffers from a phenomenon we will refer to in this work as Reverse Colonialism. In brief this term explains that France, having been a colonial power for well over a century and a half, is now experiencing immigration from peoples native to the former French colonies. In sociological terms, the population which lived in the outskirts of French civilization is to some degree urbanizing the Metropolis in search for a better future. France's possessions in Africa were significant, and so is the size of this

reverse colonialist movement. The following map illustrates the former colonies of France in Africa.



The French have had a more difficult time integrating North and sub-Saharan Africans than Poles or Mediterranean Europeans. Consider that Michel Platini is regarded a French hero and that he can obtain enough support and admiration - not only from French but also - from European coaches, directors and fans to become the President of UEFA. In Contrast, the man who just beat his all time goal scoring record for the French National Selection, Thierry Henry, may earn comments such as that of (Spain's coach) Luis Aragones' - who referred to Henry as a "black shit"! Henry is black and though he was born in France his parents are from the Antillean islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Because of his ethnicity Thierry Henry is more likely to be targeted as an outsider than Platini.

This different treatment illustrates the main policy on integration of the foreigner in France, and that policy's utter failure. France as a republic has strived to have an egalitarian system where all citizens have equal rights and opportunities; however the system has been able to assimilate some groups of foreigners much better than others. Assimilation is still the goal, but it has proven to be more difficult to assimilate a Moroccan or an Ivorian than an Italian or a Pole.

“Shaping the nation-state entailed the creation of collective memory and consciousness aiming at the ideal of cultural homogeneity. Political integration became synonymous with cultural integration, even assimilation of the individual through the national institutions. This effort at standardization is what characterizes *intégration à la française*, which, [...] constitutes the process of national integration.” (Kastoryano 43)

There are two main groups targeted for racial abuse by the French white hooligan, North Africans originary from the Maghreb area, and central Africans. Of these two groups, it is the black central Africans who have received a higher degree of racial abuse from the stands of French stadia. The North Africans have been more organized and more defiant.

Maghreb Immigrants

The Maghreb is constituted by the former French colonies of North Africa. Most French immigrants from this region come from Algeria, Morocco or Tunisia. Most *maghrebins* are Muslim and behave and look different to most white Frenchmen. They started coming to the Hexagon in larger numbers after the end of the Algerian War of

Independence. Their coming coincided with the creation, during the *Trente Glorieuses*, of *banlieues* (suburbs) where large projects of low income housing were being built to accommodate families who participated in the economy of larger cities but had a hard time making ends meet with the higher cost of living. In contrast with many American city suburbs which we will find to be made up of middle to upper class households, the *banlieues* in France are made up of low middle and lower class households. The first wave of *banlieue* dwellers was mostly French during the fifties, but by the sixties many of these native French had achieved the dream of earning more money (thanks to the economic prosperity of the times) and had moved into the city into better housing.

The next wave, during the sixties and seventies, were immigrants from countries on the fringe of the evolving European Economic Community, which included mostly people from Maghreb, Turks and Central Africans. The *banlieue* became segregated and very culturally diversified, but it heightened the difference between the newcomers beyond cultural to a spatial nature also. Muslims preserved their religious practices and did not mesh well with the rest of a largely secular (non-practicing catholic) traditional French population. The French model of integration failed. Most immigrants had to settle for smaller opportunities and lower paying jobs than their French counterparts. They also became easy targets of the ultra-right political wing anti-immigration discourse. The stereotype that these people were poorer and outcasts, and that they were even stealing jobs that should go to the native French, was exploited by those with strong nationalistic sentiment.

Inevitably, as the population of Maghreb origin grew in the Hexagon, some of them started to break into the football spotlight. The larger *banlieues* started to produce

not only footballers of renown, but also faithful follower groups from its ranks. The revered (Marseille-born Zinedine Zidane is of Algerian descent, as are many of today's French footballers, such as two of the game's most promising stars: Olympique de Marseille's Samir Nasri and Olympique Lyonnais' Karim Benzema.



OM's Samir Nasri (far left) and OL's Karim Benzema during the 2007-2008 French *Ligue 1* campaign.

Footballers of Maghreb origin have become very successful in recent years, in part due to the huge figure that became the now retired Zinedine Zidane. However, as with many footballers, they usually come from the tougher parts of the cities where they practice their sports, and they are the exception to the rule. The road is not easy and the problem of their cultural difference has been emphasized due to the fact that they have become a very large minority within the French territory. Two sociologists (Laurence and Vaisse) provide us with some eye-opening data, compiled from their 2006 “Integrating Islam,” about the numbers of Muslims living in France at the turn of the millennium on the following tables:

Table 9

Selective Immigration Statistics of the Muslim Population in France

French Cities with Largest Muslim Populations

City	Approximate Number of Muslims	Total City Population
Paris	1,700,000	11,000,000
Marseille	200,000	800,000
Lille	200,000	4,000,000
Lyon	150,000	1,200,000

Origins of French Muslim Population

Country of Origin	Total Population (Approximate)
Algeria	1,750,000
Morocco	950,000
Tunisia	425,000
Turkey	408,000

We learn from these figures that Maghreb Muslim immigrants have come in large numbers to France over the past thirty years. However, footballers of Maghreb origin did not start to make significant contributions to the game until the second half of the nineteen nineties. Even then, Muslims are an easy target for the unemployed and socially disaffected white male youth that attends football games because from a cultural, religious, social and spatial point of view French dwelling Muslims are too different to them, insomuch that they can become an “other”, a target to vent their frustrations.

The stadium has become a place of venting not only for Caucasian French youth, but also for the culturally disintegrated Muslim French youth. This disintegration is responsible for some of the violence in French stadia, and this one not related to whites.

One of the best examples occurred during a French International Friendly match on

October 6th, 2001 between France and Algeria at the *Stade de France*, where young French Muslims booed the Marseillaise just before the beginning of the game. Later, after the French national team was already winning by a 4 to 1 margin, many of these young Muslim fans disrupted the contest and charged the field, effectively ending the match with their intrusion. The goals had been scored for France by AS Roma's Vincent Candela, Emanuel Petit, Thierry Henry and Robert Pires. The consolation goal was scored by Olympique de Marseille's Djamel Belmadi right before half time. Both French and Algerian players expressed their disgust and sadness at not being able to play the game through, as this was the first time both teams had faced each other since the Algerian independence war. The BBC reported that Algerian striker Farid Ghazi said the following: "I'm really sad tonight because if you love your country you must respect its national team. I'm really sad Algeria were not allowed to play this to the end."

"When you see something like this, you must be disappointed," [...]

"We came here to play and to have a good time. It's a shame the match ended like this."



Youri Djorkaeff, a French player of immigrant descent, looks on as an Algerian fan runs through the pitch during the second half of the 2001 France-Algeria friendly match.

Players of the French team were also saddened, as many of them are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, such as Youri Djorkaeff and Zinedine Zidane, of Algerian descent himself, who was hailed and lauded by fans of both countries during the match.



Left: Young *Maghrebins* invading the pitch at the Stade de France, October 2001.

Right: French President Jacques Chirac is outraged by the aggravating lack of respect (the booing of the Marseillaise), and demands a public apology from the President of the FFF.

The FIFA disciplinary committee, after reviewing the incident, evaluated that the security measures and personnel the FFF had put together for the contest were insufficient given the nature of the match and that it had allowed also dangerous objects to be brought onto the premises. FIFA issued the following verdict against the FFF, compiled from fifa.com:

“Decision

In view of the foregoing and the applicable regulations (article 44 of the FIFA Statutes, article 19 of the Regulations Governing the Application of the FIFA Statutes, as well as Chapter I Section 1 and Chapter III section 3.3 of the FIFA Disciplinary Procedure), and taking into account all of the circumstances, the Disciplinary Committee ruled as follows:

1. A severe warning has been issued to the FFF that such incidents must not occur again in the future.

2. Should such events reoccur within the next two years, stricter sanctions will be imposed, possibly resulting in the temporary closing of the stadium.

2. The FFF is ordered to pay a fine of CHF 125,000 (including all procedural costs). The fine is to be paid to the following address within 30 days of receipt of this decision: UBS Bahnhofstrasse 45, Zurich, Switzerland, account no. 325.519.30 U.” (Mosengo-Omba)

A *Le Monde* article (translated by journalist Julia Kostova) read:

“The myth of soccer as a means of integration died that very same day, owing to the ruthless reality of sport competition. Supposedly an indicator of “friendship among nations,” soccer became a vector of the generalized social disintegration: accepted, even if not provoked, verbal and psychological abuse, adherence to non-democratic values (warring ethos, vengeance, easy money, blind adulation of idols involved in using illegal drugs), exacerbated chauvinism, the disappearance of all values of solidarity, hatred of the adversary, etc., marked the emergence of a new order imposed on the whole population. But the facts are more convincing. For the past several years, deadly violence in the stadiums, galloping corruption in a growing number of countries (Brazil, Russia, China), growing use of illegal drugs (in Italy and elsewhere), the fixing of matches, and, above all, the regular shenanigans of hooligans all over the world, particularly in Europe, finally revealed the true face of the soccer empire: a multinational with false consciousness, a degrading populist enterprise,

an ideological justification for social violence against the disinherited.”
(Brohm and Perelman 2002)

This commentary is harsh but it makes the good point that those who celebrated the 1998 French World Cup victory as the new face of a tolerant, integrated and multi-cultural France were still by and large wishfully thinking. This incident is not as common as violent incidents performed by white French youth, but it is not isolated either, and thus we see that minorities are also drawn to express their anger violently during football matches, though by and large it is the white hooligan groups who are responsible for starting the violence. Some of the confrontations between fanatics and especially between hooligans are not only inter-team scuffles, but interethnic or intercultural battles between whites and Arabs because they both have frustrations used as excuses to act violently in the setting of a football match. So French Muslims are a target not only because they are different and cause feelings of competition and resentment among the disenfranchised white youth, but also because they have at times offended the more traditional white population with public acts of defiance like the instance of the France-Algeria match.

Paris Saint-Germain is actually home to one of the strangest phenomena of inter-racial violence. The Boston State Banner reported the following in that they witnessed a strange divide in the stands in the Parc des Princes, PSG’s home ground. In the stadium, fans divide according to ethnicity. The famed Kop de Boulogne customarily sits behind one goal while the Tribune d’Auteuil, another ultra group, sits behind the other. The Kop is almost entirely Caucasian, while Auteuil is multiracial. The report mentions that other PSG groups have confronted each other over the racial divide. Two white groups, the Independents and the Casual Firm, had several clashes during the 2006 campaign against

another PSG group of supporters of multiethnic origin called the Tigris Mystic. The accounts from interviews of hooligans (some of which had been arrested after repeated assaults) are quite telling:

“One leading member of the Independents proudly recently recounted how his finger got bent out of shape during a pre-match brawl outside the Parc des Princes. “I pinned this guy over a car and went to punch him,” said the young man, dressed in a designer overcoat. “He moved his head and my hand smashed into the bonnet. It never healed properly.” The man said his gang was out to rid the suburbs of blacks and Arabs.

A high-ranking member of the Tigris Mystic said his group is fighting back against such “fascist” views. “We’ve had enough of being knocked around,” said the 23-year-old man of North African descent. The Tigris headquarters is based in the French suburb of Seine-Saint-Denis, one of the centers of the violence that engulfed Paris suburbs last year. Casual Firm hooligans wielding iron bars vandalized the Tigris headquarters in October, just days before the rioting broke out.

Violence reached new heights on Feb. 25 when Tigris Mystic members, some allegedly armed with machetes and nail-studded planks of wood, ambushed 20 Independents at a highway service station on their way back from a match. Five people were injured, including one with severed ligaments in his arm.” (Pugmire)

This racial resentment was at the core of the incident described in the first pages of this work, when in 2008 FC Metz fans racially abused Valenciennes captain Abdeslam Ouaddou because of his Algerian origin, while completely ignoring the fact that there are players of Maghreb origin in their own team. It is acceptable for them to abuse someone who is different if he is part of a rival organization. Racial abuse will hurt players and fans on both sides regardless of who is being targeted. This led Patrick Vieira, a black French player who has even captained France at the international level, to publicly state that once someone is on the pitch it really doesn't matter from which fans the abuse is coming and that he would think twice before ever returning and playing a match at the Parc des Princes because of the untenable atmosphere of the ground.

After this account of the reasons why French Muslims have become a target of racism in soccer matches follows a closer look at the case for targeting sub-Saharan Africans.

Sub-Saharan Black Immigrants

Immigrants from former sub-Saharan French African colonies pose a different set of challenges. One of the most marked distinctions amongst sub-Saharan Africans and North Africans is their attachment to religion. Sub-Saharan Africans usually don't exhibit the type of fervor about Islam or any other religion as North Africans from the Maghreb do. We are not saying that all North Africans are practicing Muslims, but that they typically are more associated with the strict observance of Islam, whether that is true or no. Sub-Saharan Africans have come to France looking for greener pastures as have their Northern counterparts, and though their religion does not set them apart too much,

their color and culture does. It is important to remember that the French considered Algeria as an extension of the republic into North Africa, and a sizeable African-born and immigrant French population did dwell in the Maghreb for over a century (particularly, but not exclusively, in Algeria). A much stronger attachment thus existed with the Maghreb from both an economic, sentimental and political point of view.

“Young people are right to go to France [...] because here, at home in Mauritania, even educated people have no place; so it makes even more sense for those who are illiterate...they can make money in France, feed themselves and their old parents. In the years to come, I plan on continuing to work in France. When I make money, I prefer leaving during the holidays, coming home, chatting a little with my folks, and then returning, going to work there again...” (Thomas 189)

This is a take from an interview of a young sub-Saharan African and his reasons for going to work in the Hexagon. France is turning into a land of promise for many young sub-Saharan Africans.

The migration of sub-Saharan Africans to France has been going on for decades. The first big wave peaked during the fifties and sixties, but the percentage of black Africans in France was still negligible. During the *Trente Glorieuses* the French were much more concerned with the immigrants from poorer European countries and especially from North Africa, as these always (and still) make up the largest proportion of the immigrant population of the Republic. However, sub-Saharan African immigrants began arriving again in larger percentages than before from the mid-eighties on. Here

follows a table compiled from the INSEE, 1982, 1990 and 1999 Censuses that shows the changing patterns of sub-Saharan immigration in France:

Table 10

Changing Patterns of Sub-Saharan immigration in France

France	1982		1990		1999	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total Population	54,295,612		56,651,955		58,518,395	
Sub-Saharan Immigrants	122,392	3	275,182	6.6	400,000	9.3

The total numbers of sub-Saharan black immigrants has increased dramatically, and so have their descendants or second generation immigrants. There is also the factor of the illegal immigration which is much harder to quantify. Culturally and ethnically these immigrants are also very different from traditional white French, so they suffered the same type of mistrust as North Africans did. Let us now examine this immigration phenomenon from a sporting point of view.

In footballing terms there exists a further distinction with black Africans: they have been heavily recruited by both club and country specifically to play football throughout Europe. The European nations with former colonies in Africa benefited the most from their African recruits and none better than France. Football in France was forever changed from the nineties on by this new policy through the influx of foreign

players who became naturalized to qualify for the national selections of their host nations. So while most black Africans were looked with disdain in the streets of Paris or Lille, a few of them began to make it big through sports. Sociologist Paul Dagla wrote:

“In much the same way that the general process of sports labour migration is accelerating, the global flow of football players between and within nations and continents is gathering momentum. [...] In the broadest sense, the transnational and transcontinental stream of football labour can be interpreted as part of the same processes of globalization which have led to the “crystallization of the entire world as a single place.” [...] Athletic talent migration has also become a major area of investigation amongst sports sociologists, historians and geographers. [...] France is currently the most popular destination of African migrant footballers.” (Mangan 217-21)

Two significant facts have affected the French game in terms of infusion of talent more than any other nation in Europe.

First, France receives more immigrant footballers than any other country, and second, France leads by far in numbers of immigrant footballers who naturalize, foregoing a place in the national selection of their birth country. When WWII was over the USSR and the West, especially the United States, scrambled over the carcass of the fallen Germany to recruit the most brilliant minds. This was known as the Brain Drain, and to some extent this sociological phenomenon continues today, where many of the most brilliant minds of the Third World still look to more economically developed countries for better opportunities in their fields of expertise. In footballing terms, Africa

suffers a talent drain vis-à-vis Europe where they can find prestigious clubs, state of the art facilities, organized and traditionally supported leagues and much higher wages than at home. Here are some of the most relevant figures:

1) Of a total of 352 players who represented their country in the 2000 edition of the African Nations Cup, 178 played professionally in European clubs. Here are the top destinations where African footballers plied their trade at the turn of the millennium, compiled from Mangan’s 2001 work “Europe, Sport World”:

Table 11

Information of African Footballers’ Migration Main Destinations

**Destination of African Migrant Footballers
1999-2000**

Country	Percentage
France	16
Belgium	15
Portugal	13
Germany	12
Netherlands	8

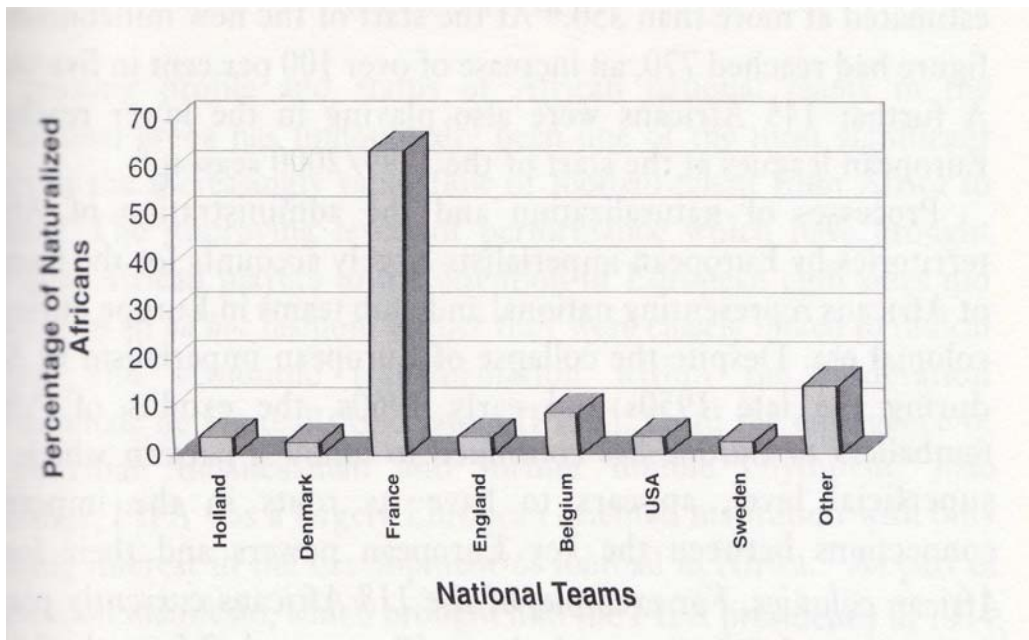
2) “The naturalization of Africans has continued into the new millennium and at present, there are 70 players who, despite their eligibility to represent an African country have chosen to pursue an international career with a European national team. With the idea of a “metropolitan” France persisting beyond the colonial era, it is hardly surprising that the French international set-up is currently, and indeed historically, the main

beneficiary of this Europeanization, in the strictest sense, of elite African football talent.” (Mangan 222)

The following table shows the amazing disparity between the naturalized African French players and those of the rest of the Old Continent. As evidenced by the current French selection for the 2008 European Championship, this policy of naturalization has effectively turned the current French team into a team of immigrants. Of the eleven starting players for the three group stage matches for the French team, there were only three white French natives: Goalkeeper Grégory Coupet, and midfielders Franck Ribéry and Jérémy Toulalan. This table was also obtained from Mangan’s “Europe, Sports World”:

Table 12

Percentage of Africans who have chosen to pursue international honours in Europe (season 1999/2000)





This large banner displayed by football fans in a French Stadium reads “welcome to Europe”. The European continent is painted in the colors of the French flag; France has become the main destination for African migrant footballers.

These facts and figures illustrate that sub-Saharan Africans have, for the past decade and a half, began to gradually supplant the native French players in the clubs and even in the National Team. Look at the amazing ethnic contrast of these three French National selections from different decades:



1958



1982



2008

The cliché that a picture speaks a thousand words could not be truer here. The ethnic evolution of the French National Football Team has not gone lost on the French, and as shown before, Africans are the biggest targets of abuse and violence besides opposing fanatics by French hooligans. The next and last chapter will explore the violence in and beyond the stadium now that we have identified some of the most important historical and socio-economic reasons and the main targets (opposing fans and ethno-culturally diverse fans) of these deplorable acts.

Roland Barthes vs. Jean-Marie Le Pen

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was a French philosopher, sociologist, literary and semiologist. In his work the *Mythologies* he studied social phenomena, notably how the bourgeoisie attempted to exert its power over all other aspects and sections of society. In contrast to him Jean-Marie Le Pen is a controversial politician that has caused much uproar in France in recent years. He has far-right political tendencies and has ran five times for the presidency of France, surprisingly becoming the runner-up in the 2002 presidential elections, only losing the last round to then incumbent Jacques Chirac. Much of his campaign focuses on (anti) immigration issues, as he champions a “white” France, and he has been deemed by both the national and foreign press as racist.

The Anti-Defamation League published a background article on Le Pen which read:

“Jean-Marie Le Pen is a right-wing extremist leader in France who has a long history of anti-Semitism, racism and bigotry. The founder and longtime leader of the National Front, a staunchly anti-immigration party

that blames an influx of foreigners for France's high crime rate and unemployment, Le Pen, 73, has repeatedly used hateful words in attempts to stir up resentment against France's minority groups, including Jews.” (Anti-Defamation League).

“Le Pen's most infamous gaffe came in 1987 when he told a reporter that the gas chambers were a "detail of history". In 1990 this got him convicted of incitement to racial hatred and fined” (McKay).

Both Barthes and Le Pen had different views of how tolerant France had become and how welcoming France should be towards immigrants. Though Le Pen left his footprint on French history two decades later than Barthes, they are each the best representative of the two sides of the coin in the issue of tolerance and acceptance of immigrants in post WWII France. One of the most controversial stances Le Pen ever took was vis-à-vis the triumph of the French national team on the 1998 World Cup. He criticized the team for singing the Marseillaise with a visible lack of spirit, and always held that it was unnecessary to bring foreign players into the national team, believing that white Frenchmen should represent a mostly white France. He claimed that too many players in the 1998 selection were either immigrants or *Français de souche récente*, in other words they were not really French, since their forefathers were too recent immigrants. When France won the Cup, many of Le Pen’s detractors claimed that this victory effectively trumpeted the arrival of a multi-ethnic France at peace with itself, since its selection was so culturally and ethnically diverse.

Roland Barthes once saw a poster of a black soldier draped in the French flag. He discussed his reaction in one of his landmark works. In *Mythologies*, Barthes' study in semiology, he recalls being handed a copy of French magazine *Paris Match* in a barber shop:

“On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor. All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naively or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great empire, that all her sons, without colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.” (Barthes)

During the summer of 1998 I worked as an intern in the restaurant of a four star hotel in downtown Brussels. I remember a nice man who worked with me. Though I do not recall his name, I remember he was Algerian. During one of our conversations he mentioned that he had enrolled in the Army in order to solidify his immigrant status so that he would not have to leave Belgium. One of the other restaurant workers, an old Spaniard from whom I had already heard a few negative comments of racist nature, overheard our conversation. A couple of the Belgian waiters had warned me that he was racially prejudiced towards Africans and Muslim immigrants. He came over when my Algerian friend left and he said to me in French with a very heavy Spanish accent: “It’s vindication, you know, the army for immigrants. This way they can claim that they have given service to this country and feel like they are a part of it, they can feel like they have earned the right to stay. But they really never become European, or French or Belgian or

Spanish. Other people will always look down on them because they are still only immigrants. No matter what this guy does, he will never be a real Belgian.”

Let us extend these reactions to the football field. In some ways sport, like the military, has served a key role in the acceptance and pacification of Western societies towards immigrants and former slaves. Sport has become a means of social vindication for immigrants and minorities. From the United States to the United Kingdom we can witness that many successful athletes have come from formerly oppressed minorities, and these athletes are hugely admired by the white majority. I suspect that Le Pen would argue that admiration does not necessarily mean acceptance, most people might be in awe of a thunderous LeBron James dunk or a magical Zinedine Zidane volley kick goal, but would not necessarily want to become friends with them or welcome them into their family. However, I think many would. The problem might be that in France the white majority may be more interested in wanting the minorities to become more like them, instead of becoming a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural nation.

During the 2002 election, Jean-Marie Le Pen secured the support of about 20% of the popular vote. Maybe this is a good indication of how big the majority of football fans have the potential of becoming ultras and hooligans, because as studied earlier, in a stadium of fifty thousand it would only be a few hundred or even a couple of thousand of the fans who can turn violent.

However, the 2002 French presidential elections illustrate that most people would either ascribe to Barthes’ ideas of a multi-cultural France, or at the very least they are tolerant enough that even though they don’t necessarily welcome immigrants with open

arms they can still live and work and co-exist with them on a regular basis. It seems that it is always that small active intolerant minority that can give the rest of society a black eye, in figurative and literal terms.

CHAPTER 4

Dissecting the Violence

The Stadium as a Focal Point of Hooligan Expression

Important Definitions

French Hooliganism is a hybrid cultural phenomenon. To understand the way hooliganism works in France we need to define some terms with more precision.

1. **Supporter:** The supporter is the follower of a particular football club. The supporter is not necessarily violent, nor does he necessarily attend most football games. He is the type of follower that may watch games on TV and follow the results through newspapers and the internet, and on occasion attends the stadium.
2. **Fanatic:** The fanatic is the next step of supporter. He attends games on a more regular basis, and spends a much more considerable amount of time, money and effort on his club.
3. **Ultra:** The Ultra-fanatic is the highest expression of football supporter. He is loyal to his team, attends most home games and when possible also attends away games. He is affiliated to an ultra supported group. The Ultra fanatic originated in Italy. “The Ultras represented a younger, more organized and militant form of fandom than had been previously known in Italy” (Giulianotti 54). These supporter groups are highly visible and recognizable through their behavior and attire. They are even ritualistic because these fans have basically chosen a group of champions to represent them on the field (of

battle) against others in a setting with defined rules. We will go into more detail of this ritual while looking at the game of football through Johan Huizinga's glasses later in this chapter. Ultras are easily identifiable because they participate in chants and coordinated taunting. They possess emblems, flags, scarves and other highly visible paraphernalia. However, most Ultras are not violent, though they are highly vociferous. Some ultras have become more violent in recent years both in Italy and France.

“The ultras represented a younger, more organized and militant form of fandom than had been previously known in Italy. While the northern European hooligans abandoned club colours and displays during the 1980s, the ultras took audio-visual passion to new heights. [...] The ultras groups are organized as more informal, autonomous and populist forums for the more visible expressions of support. They arrange their own transport to fixtures away from home; they elect their own leaders, develop their own symbols and merchandise, and have their own club premises. [...] the ultras do not originate with a formal relationship to the club, although one may evolve. The club may contribute to the costs of manufacturing large flags [...]. It may meet with ultras leaders and help to sell their merchandise.” (Giulianotti, 54-55)

This pattern in Italy has helped clubs to certain extent to help regulate ultra behavior and to negotiate or intervene when problems amongst same club ultras or with ultra organizations from other clubs arise.

French Ultras behavior is based on the behavior of Italian Ultras; the original French Ultra groups originated in the South of France, emulating the Italian model. This model clashed with the northern French model which took from a different example of fandom and which will be discussed in the next section. Unfortunately, in many French clubs there is now a mix of ultras and hooligans and it is hard to determine who is who.

4. **Kop:** We briefly mentioned the Kop as a type of fanatic group and as a location inside a stadium. The origin of the word Kop is actually South African, from a battle of Spion Kop that took place during the Boer wars. Here is a quote from a Question and Answer forum from the Guardian newspaper in London:

“THE KOP: A SUB-EDITOR'S DREAM

Why are areas of football stadiums called the Kop? asks Ian Hallam.

In 1904, Arsenal opened a mound of terracing at their Manor Ground. Regulars soon nicknamed it the Spion Kop, which means "look-out" in Afrikaans and was a hill in South Africa where 322 British soldiers were killed during the Boer War.

Two years later, Liverpool opened their own version. Within sixty years, people were singing along to She Loves You whilst slipping around in rivers of their own urine, and a legend was born.” (Murray and Ingle)

This information is critical in understanding Kop fans. First: from the beginning of the Kop there was an association to a battle or battlegrounds. The Kop fanatics in England were always the loudest while packed (usually standing up) in a steep tribune in the stadium. The location of Kop varies from stadium to stadium, but generally the loudest

supporters of working class origin sit on the stands directly behind one of the goals, or on the corners of the arena because generally these are the cheapest of the tickets. Generally visiting fans will sit directly opposite the local Kop to avoid the most ardent of the two factions to have physical contact with each other, though there are exceptions to this rule. This segregation doesn't always work and is not applied to all stadiums. Because of the steep nature of a Kop, fans usually have a good view of the field and create a wall of noise and movement that can be a daunting spectacle for players of the visiting team and their traveling supporters. This is truer in English-style stadiums, where fans sit just a few feet from the field of play with no high barriers to separate them from the players.



From left to right: the Famous Kop at Anfield, Liverpool, the Kop of RC Lens, and the "Bad Gones" Kop of Olympique Lyonnais.

During the sixties and seventies the kops transformed into battle grounds because many of the Kop fans usually came drunk. Most of these fans were of working class origin. The Kops were where the action besides the game took place. Rival teams faced each other in the kops, or if they fought elsewhere, it usually was fanatics from rival team's kops doing the fighting. While this type of confrontation began to wane down in England by the late eighties, it had only begun in France. The proximity to England and the working-class nature of the supporters of France's northern clubs (fans with

allegiances to clubs such as Lille and Lens) influenced the supporting groups in the top geographical half of the Hexagon to become Kops. The significance being that they were originally not as flamboyant as their southern rivals, but they were rougher and more violent. During the eighties, these differences of origin and of practice heightened the cultural divide that already existed between the north and the *midi* football clubs.

5. **Hooliganism:** This English term refers to violent football fans in general. Many of these violent football fanatics were part of a Kop, but no physical or psychological association was necessary, especially if your club did not have a Kop.

“The word itself, hooligan, was coined by a journalist who played on the name of a particularly violent Irish family of the Victorian era – the Hoolihans – to designate the violent behaviour then observed. After the word-play, a printing error slipped in, replacing the h by a g, the two letters being side by side on the keyboard, and the term hooliganism was born.” (Bodin, Héas and Robène)

To better understand hooligans and the contrast between Kop hooligans and ultras let's review one of the most significant violent events in world football and its impact on the game: the infamous tragedy that football fans worldwide have dubbed the Heysel Disaster.

The Heysel Disaster

In England and in Europe the authorities began cracking down on violent Kop fans and other violent supporters especially after the horrendous consequences of the Heysel Tragedy. In the final of the 1984-1985 edition of the European Champions Cup

(now the Champion's League) Liverpool, the dominant side in Europe faced Juventus, the flamboyant Italian champions at the old Heysel Stadium in Brussels, Belgium. This is one of the best examples of Kop vs. Ultra fandoms. During the pre-match activities, there was a sizeable amount of taunting occurring between the two sets of fans, which amounted to over 60,000 in total. Of course, as loud as the Liverpool Kop was, visually they were outdone by the flashy Italian Ultras.

The exacerbated Kop members became violent and as they had done for decades in England some of them broke in the sections of Italian supporters and began to assault them. Some Liverpool fans claim that it was the Italians who were at fault, that some of the Juventus Ultras had hurled projectiles at the Liverpool following. It is of course at this point nearly impossible to determine who began the escalations, but what we know is that Liverpool supporters broke through a weak police line and assaulted and gave chase to thousands of Juventus supporters within the walls of the decaying Heysel venue. A retaining wall which separated the two sets of supporters crashed killing thirty-nine Italian and Belgian fans, while hundreds more were injured. To the surprise of most, the game still took place. A bemused Michel Platini, who scored the winning goal for Juventus, claimed that communication was poor and that the commotion was so confusing that no one down in the field knew what had taken place (even though both managers had requested to postpone the match).



Images from the Heysel Tragedy in Brussels, Belgium, 1985.

As a result English clubs were banned from taking part in any continental competition for the next five years. The measure was so dramatic (and hurt the English game so severely) that England began to self regulate its venues and its fanatics more. In contrast, Kops began to sprout and grow in violence in France at this time. In fact, the official year of the foundation of the infamous and most notorious of French Kops, PSG's *Kop de Boulogne* (also known as the Kop of Boulogne), is 1984.



PSG's intimidating Kop of Boulogne at the *Parc des Princes* in Paris, France.

The French Hybrid Product

Now that we understand the two biggest influences on French fandom, it is possible to understand the present day status of the fans. As mentioned earlier, Ultras are not necessarily angry or violent fans, according to the Italian model (though now many Italian ultras are violent). Another important point is that most significant Ultra groups in France and Italy are affiliated and supported by the club. Most of small French violent groups have no affiliation to the club they support or for which they claim to fight. In other words, most violent French fanatic groups have a disconnection to the management and the status quo of the club they support. The violent hooligan French groups are either small subsections of a big ultra organization, or they are breakaway or independently formed smaller, more militant groups. The situation of violent groups is more akin to the Kop groups of England during the sixties and seventies.

From the nineties on France saw a proliferation of supporter groups that diversified and intensified the atmosphere of French stadia. The Ultra model migrated north (the pageantry, the banners, the melodic chants and the fireworks), while some of the southern supporters took on the (violence and confrontationalism of the) Kop model. Also, some of the modern groups combine the two models into one. If one were to attend an Olympique de Marseille, a Paris Saint-Germain or a RC Lens match one would find the stadium to be an amalgam of all the types of supporters listed at the beginning of the chapter. Of higher interest to this work is the evolution of the Kop and Ultra fans of course. PSG's famed Boulogne Boys are an example of a combination of Kop behavior with Ultra pageantry. In other words, as a group they take on a specific section of the Parc des Princes, but they have smaller factions who are racist, abusive and openly

violent. The *Kop de Boulogne* was originally formed by associated members of the club in 1978 and was more known as the *Jeunes Supporters*, but many more unaffiliated fans kept joining the club and the large association simply got out of hand for the original founders, many of whom had moved on, to keep in check. The Boulogne Boys were one of many sub-groups that came from the Kop of Boulogne, but their size and their involvement simply overran every other organization starting in the mid 80s.

In other words, not all ultras are violent in France. Most ultras are fans that enjoy the game, come to have a good time with a large group of friends and join a large supporting group that emphasizes displays of banners, chants, and club paraphernalia. Ultras, whether affiliated to the club or not, are more concerned with visual and audible displays of fanaticism, not with violence. The fans that concern us more are those who in most instances were at one point part of this larger picture, but were in essence more violent and broke from the main Ultra-organizations to form smaller, more militant groups. These are the French hooligans. Just because their numbers are smaller than the large group obviously does not mean that they don't have the ability to cause major security disruptions as we have seen throughout this work. Most of the violent acts, the fights, the assaults and the racist chants are either provoked by these groups, or are exclusive to them. The problem is that in France the hooligans sit and sing and participate in the game festivities with a Kop or an ultra organization, and from the protection of this larger stage launch their heinous deeds.

In Marseille it is hard to make that distinction amongst the most famous group of supporters, the South Winners (Marseille's answer to the Boulogne Boys). Many of them are just ardent fans, some are violent hooligans. It is almost as if these groups attempt to

show their involvement in the club by providing an alternate spectacle to that which is being given on the pitch with their display of fervor or through violence.



The South Winners at the Stade Velodrome in Marseille, France.

The FC Metz groups mentioned in the introduction are a good example of the distinction of the ultras and the hooligans. The racist chants were issued by the *Jeunesse Identitaire* a hooligan group which is a subdivision of *La Faction*, which is an Ultra group. The *Jeunesse Identitaire* was largely responsible for the abuse of the Valenciennes captain and also for throwing back, during the next game, the anti-racist T-shirts. In France the violence amongst football hooligans has two main veins: violence between fans of two opposing teams, and racially motivated violence. These two exponents represent the most important “others” (racial minorities and opposing team’s fans) to a group of hooligans or ultras.

Theorizing Violence in Football

How does a football match, both within and without the stadium, become the source of violent behavior? Is football responsible for producing violence, or is football

the victim? It is hard to determine which came first, but it is clearly a symbiotic relationship.

Anthropologist Paul Richards said the following in an article for the book “Entering the Field, New Perspectives on World Football”:

“The debate about soccer and violence is dominated by images and assumptions of young men behaving badly. [...] Much of the literature on this topic is unduly influenced by a widespread moral panic rooted in the changing relationship between work and social order in a post-Industrial society. Put bluntly, contemporary society at large does not know how to cope with its strong young men, raised in a decades-old, working-class tradition of disciplined manual labor. Young men turn to soccer hooliganism as an expensive idiom reflecting their plight, in a highly ritualized and organized activity, mainly directed at rival hooligans. It may not be much fun for those who have to police it, but it ranks low on the list of objective dangers faced by the general public.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti *Entering the Field* 141)

Since at the beginning, both in England and Italy, violence mostly took part in or around the stadium, the authorities did not pay much attention to the problem. With better communications and improved ways of transportation the problem began to spread farther out from the stadium in the seventies and especially the eighties, which is about when the French jumped on the hooliganism bandwagon, and it was around this time that sociologists and authorities began to follow hooliganism as a problem. We have seen

that the hooligan typically fits a certain profile, but why is this type of individual attracted to football?

Dutch historian and sociologist Johan Huizinga wrote in the thirties a magnificent treatise on the importance of play as part of culture, or how play influences culture and the formation of man's character and society entitled *Homo Ludens* (Man the Player). His theory helps us explain some reasons of people are drawn to the game of football. First, playing games has always been important to mankind because humans need distractions to everyday life. In 1999, I obtained an internship in a southern suburb of Buenos Aires, Argentina. The work was tiring, exhausting at times, working many days from 6:00 AM until past the sunset. Fortunately for me, my family lived in Buenos Aires at that time, and we attended a few football matches because it gave my father and me especially a sense of commonality with each other and with a larger group of people. For the time of the match, we could simply relax; release our tension while "our champions" carry our honor and the responsibility of winning the prize, and proving that we were better than the champions of our friends and co-workers. It is similar to the feeling of attending a college football match in the US, when our fellow students, those who play that American football best of anyone who is a part of the student body, will test themselves while representing us against the best student-athletes of other Universities. In football that feeling is even stronger because most people in Europe have either played football growing up at school or with friends, or have at least followed it. So those athletes do represent the best of the city or country to which a football fan belongs.

In the next pages I will refer in much more detail to one of these matches to illustrate Huizinga's arguments more clearly. Also, humans learn how to function in groups and in

society through playing games. How does football meet this necessity? Huizinga explains that play has three necessary characteristics:

1) The need for it is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need. [...] It is done at leisure, during “fringe time”. Only when play is a recognized cultural function – a rite, a ceremony – it is bound up with notions of obligation and duty. [...] It is an act of freedom” (Huizinga 8).

2) A second characteristic is closely connected with this, namely, that play is not “ordinary” or “real life”. It is rather a stepping out of “real” life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own. [...] This “only pretending” quality of play betrays a consciousness of the inferiority of play compared with “seriousness”, a feeling that seems to be something as a primary as play itself. Nevertheless [...] the consciousness of play being “only a pretend” does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture...” (Huizinga 8).

3) “Play is distinct from “ordinary” life both as to locality and duration. This is the third main characteristic of play: its secludedness, its limitedness. It is played out within certain limits of time and place. It contains its own course and meaning. Play begins, and then at a certain moment it is “over”. It lays itself to an end. While it is in progress all is movement, change, alternation, succession, association, separation” (Huizinga 9).

Let us examine how Huizinga can explain the imminent emergence of hooligans with these three stipulations. Before we apply the three principles to Hooliganism, it is necessary to understand that in football there is a game beyond the game. In other words,

there is the match played between the twenty-two players on the pitch, with the support of coaches and staff, but the spectators in soccer stadia have created a game or spectacle beyond what is happening in the pitch. At this the “ultras” are the best, since they command a ritualistic type of pageantry with their chants, songs, insults in unison, banner and scarf waiving, dancing, jumping, fireworks, mosaic displays, etc. The point here is: Ultras, fans and hooligans alike are more or less active participants in the game.

Argentina’s Boca Juniors vociferous fans are called *La Doce*, in English the Twelve (for the twelfth man, or the additional man or agent besides the eleven on the pitch) because the fans are so active that they are the best impersonation of home field advantage in the world. Football fans are active participants in the game, they are not an extension to the team, they regard themselves as a part of the team, which is why they enjoy themselves and suffer so much with the victory or defeat of their squad, their champions.

First, participating in sports is a choice or act of freedom. I re-emphasize participating because a RC Lens fan, especially an ultra, is part of the club, is not just a spectator. A Toulouse Ultra is a *Violet*, he is the club, and he is not just a mere sideline spectator. This fact that the fan chooses his allegiance empowers him, and for many supporters it also emboldens them to act in a way that he normally would not, as a part of an entity bigger than themselves. But to be a part of this organization, of this sub-culture, he needs these extra ceremonial elements as the insignias and the ritualistic behavior to distinguish him, at least temporarily, from the normal population and especially of the opposition, which will have comparable rites and symbols.

Second, the fan creates here an additional, second identity through his participation in the game. The temporality of the game allows the fan (as it does the player) to step into a temporary sphere of “only pretending” for a limited amount of time, which the fan controls while becoming for a time someone else, an alter ego.

While living in Argentina my father met a person who was a family man, had a respectable job and also was an LDS bishop. However, he confessed to my father that on the weekends, he became someone else. This modern Mr. Hyde admitted that in disguise, he would still attend all the Sunday matches of his club, joining the *barras bravas* (the hard core hooligan sections of argentine ultras), and sang with them, and suffered and joined with them and cussed and cursed and shouted profanities with the best of them, for those two hours in which he was at the stadium. At the end of the matches, he returned to being Dr. Jekyll to lead a responsible productive life and shepherd his congregation. We are not talking here of a disgruntled unemployed youth! If football can have that type of influence on what we may consider a responsible adult, just imagine how powerful an influence the game can have on a still growing, forming mind. The stadium provides a type of anonymity that can be only found in a large crowd, because in a football match it is easy to follow what everyone else is doing. In fact, a spectator is expected and even enticed and commanded to follow the crowd and whatever it is that this crowd is doing.



The long banner from the PSG Ultra group *Authentiks* reads: *crushed against one another we form but "one and only body"*, a strong reminder of the crowd mentality that overtakes individuals at a football stadium.

The large groups of ultras have fans who are not watching the match, but that are directing the cheers and jumping and singing with hand gestures and megaphones. So one goes to the stadium and becomes part of a group striving to behave en masse to create the sense of unity with each other in support of their champions on the field. The psychological boost for both recipients and participants is very powerful.



Ultras with megaphones direct the crowds in chants, cheers, flag waving and flare burning at French Football matches.

Third, the time and limitedness of the event allows for Mr. Hyde to come out in many of us if we find ourselves in the right situation. The stadium is a powerful setting to

relieve stress and build up emotions about something larger than ourselves in which we believe and of which we are a part. The game has a huge influence in how the crowd behaves and reacts, the crowd, as mentioned earlier, is more a participant than an observer of the spectacle. In fact, Huizinga mentions that the game starts and ends in a set time. However, with crowds and ultras being so involved in the game, the boundary of time must be extended further. The game of football doesn't start with the first whistle and it doesn't end after ninety minutes of play. The game begins when the ultra leaves home for the stadium all decked out in his colors and ends when he returns and lays down Mr. Hyde to bed until the next contest. The power of the stadium as a place of worship and as a rapturous experience is very real.

In Argentina and Brazil it is said that the first religion is football, and after it any individual may choose whichever else church he may want to follow. For the staunch football ultra, a stadium is a church where he goes and worships his idols and his sport. In fact, Spanish football commentators often refer to venues such as Barcelona's Camp Nou, Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu, Argentina's and River Plate's Monumental, Inter and AC Milan's San Siro and England's Wembley stadiums as the cathedrals of the sport. It may not be by coincidence that in many countries where football is king many religious worshipers attend a football match on Sunday instead of going to the religious service of the church to which they are affiliated. The following example will illustrate this point.



Football Cathedrals: River Plate's Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina (left) and Real Madrid's Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid, Spain.

I attended a River Plate match in the South American summer of 1999. I had an internship that would last for four months in Quilmes, a suburb in the greater Buenos Aires. My parents were also living in Argentina at that time, so I would go to stay with them most weekends. As a treat, my father took me to the Monumental stadium, my whole family being River Plate fans, to witness a Copa Libertadores (the South American version of the European Champions League) against another Argentine team, Velez Sarsfield (which had its golden era during the nineties). This was one of Argentina's prized rivalries of that decade, with River Plate and Velez splitting most domestic championships during those years. When they ended up meeting in the Libertadores quarter finals, we knew we could not miss it.

It was a Wednesday night game, and from the outset I realized it would be like nothing I had seen before. Going through the lines and up to our seats was like a mixed martial arts match with shoving and pushing and wrestling with the excited throngs. We finally made it to our assigned location, and the view was magnificent. I could see both sets of hardcore fans, the *barras bravas*, perched on either general admission side of the stadium. About ten minutes later, with less than a quarter hour before the match was to

begin, the sides made it to the pitch. First, Velez came out. The burst in noise from the Velez supporters was immediate, and loud, they could be so well heard in the two-thirds filled seventy-thousand plus oval. But then River Plate came out, and the rest of the stadium literally erupted in chants for their heroes, completely drowning the few thousand come to support the opposition. Banners were flying, people were jumping and singing in unison, the rafters shook and I felt as if the night was all the sudden much brighter.

Bad blood existed between the two teams because of their competing for so many titles during the nineties (including the teams having conquered one Libertadores title apiece), but particularly in this match because the controversial Jose Luis Chilavert, Velez's goalkeeper (one of the best ever to have donned a #1 jersey), had criticized openly the youth of River Plate, and had said that their foremost forward, the minute 17 year-old Javier Saviola, was too inexperienced to be playing first team football.

The game started and the noise went up a notch, impressive for a stadium that already reverberated with sound waves. The chants were crass, but clever at the same time. The most interesting aspect of them to me was that they were specific. River Plate opened the scoring, and I admit I have not felt that type of ecstasy anywhere else. I found myself hugging my father and screaming my lungs out, and jumping up and down arm in arm with my next seat neighbor whom I had never seen before or would not encounter again. At that particular moment, we were all one, because the whole stadium (minus the Velez supporters, walled in their section from everyone else to prevent to some extent fighting and mugging and assaulting), were interlocked and jumping at the same time.

For a moment I was dizzy and my vision became a little blurry. The stadium was

chanting a song about the goal scorer and how much he was beloved by the fans. It was unbelievable.

The action in the stands receded a little during the fifteen minutes of half time, but as soon as the players stepped into the field again the crowd picked up right where it left off. Not everyone chanted the whole game, but the famed *barras bravas* on both sides did. I noticed they had song leaders, who at many points of the game were not even watching the game, but were conducting the singing while perched on the fences so that the rest of the fans can see them clearly. The most vociferous group was the *Borrachos del Tablón* (the drunks of the big table) who are an untouchable *barra brava*.

The *Borrachos del Tablón* can usually do anything they please in the venue. They come in through a few minutes after the game has started and take up the seats they want from whoever is sitting there, but the rest of the River Plate fans give them up gladly. The *Borrachos* are sort of their hard core enforcers, the most ultra of all the ultras, the aggressors or avengers (depending on the circumstance) in the name of River Plate towards other teams and other team's fans. Everyone in Argentina knows them; in fact, most big Argentina sides have their own version of the *Borrachos*.

With less than twenty minutes to go, a pass from the talented Pablo *el payasito* Aimar (which means the little clown - in South American football every player earns a nickname) habilitated Javier *el conejito* Saviola (the little bunny) with a magnificent pass through a few defenders, which placed Saviola in a one on one situation against Chilavert. Saviola ably jukeed the keeper and knocked home the second goal for River Plate that night. The eruption of celebrations topped the first one, I even saw people cry with joy.

Poetic justice had been made, and a mix of songs (some praising the *conejito*, some insulting the “fat” Chilavert with all sorts of expletives which do not dignify repetition) filled the arena for what seemed an eternity. The game ended with the score line River Plate 2, Velez Sarsfield 0, and River effectively eliminated its rivals from the competition.

The adventure was not over. At the end of the match, among songs and cheers and dancing, the loudspeakers announced that the doors of the stadium for River Plate fans would remain closed for an extra fifteen minutes, to prevent River Plate from assaulting Velez Sarsfield’s visiting fans. I witnessed the stand where Velez fans were situated empty in less than three minutes. We started to make our way to the door with my father. As announced, the door was shut. I witnessed many River supporters screaming and jumping demanded that the doors be opened so that they could give chase to Velez and give them what they deserved. “We need to catch up with them!” accompanied with many threats and expletives echoed through the crowd. I saw men in suits with their eight year old children screaming with the rest of them (joined by their kids!). That will be part of the family legacy and heirlooms for thousands of them.

Though this experience did not take place in France, it is a perfect illustration of how masses can turn violent when they find the right setting. I imagine that most of these fans would not find the bravado to act in such manner if they were alone or at work with their peers or even watching the same match in a pub or living room with a few buddies. Some of these fans did give chase to the opposing supporters once the doors were opened, before the fifteen minutes of head start had expired. Though this was a game, for those two or three hours it was a serious situation that turned to violence because of how much it mattered to a minority of the fans. This minority of course numbered in the thousands

still. And from my own account the thrill of the experience did become a “devotion that passed into rapture” to the point that it made me wonder: if that is what I felt in my first try, how would I be if I had grown up in such a setting while still being an impressionable youth.

The Argentines have taken some measures to prevent violence, but as in France, these measures are clearly inadequate. When considering the tens of thousands of fans wrapped up in a frenzy for a couple of hours, it is amazing to think that with all the French challenges of racial integration, toleration and with the problems of the economy and unemployment that only a few hundred police and some strategically placed cameras in stadia are going to do the job of preventing violence in and around football grounds. It is clear that the FIFA evaluation of the pitch invasion during the French-Algeria friendly blamed largely the lack of security measures for the interruption of the game. FFF and politicians were hit with projectiles during that incident, and as illustrated by the Hazel disaster it could have been much more tragic. However, France is still not doing enough to prevent the spread of this contagion in the Hexagon. The government is not the only one at fault. Club managements have by and large been too passive, too uninvolved with their fans, to prevent much of what has occurred. It is unforeseeable that all violence can be averted, but much more can be done in terms of preventive and punitive measures for violent hooligans.

The stadium, with its game on the pitch and its spectacle on the stands, becomes the focal point of the explosion of passions, both of release of tension and expressions of frustration. The stadium also becomes a battlefield where we look for the enemy, it is a rendezvous with the “other” personified in the team wearing the wrong color of jersey

and its supporting accomplices, which the local crowd must belittle and to some extent tame and conquer. Unfortunately, that other also is found in people from different ethnicities, languages, countries and cultures and those fans with little control and a lot of anger many times release upon them their frustrations. The stadium is a very likely flammable bowl with the right ingredients for violence.

CONCLUSION

Football as we know it was born in England as a sport practiced by private colleges and schools. Since football in its modern version was preceded by many similar sports throughout the world (but most notably in Europe), its expansion was rapid once the game was set with fixed rules in England. The Formation of football leagues and the advent of professional football and football clubs helped the popularity of the sport to grow exponentially by making it accessible to the masses not only as a practice sport, but also as a spectator sport.

The formation of strong rivalries and the support of the working class fostered in some countries, notably the United Kingdom, the atmosphere for violence when a club underperformed, especially against a hated rival. Usually these rivalries in England mostly include people of rival clubs. In France hooliganism has taken a completely different undertone, that of racism. Violent hooligans, when they fight or target others for violence, usually persecute people from a different ethnicity, including in some extreme cases fans of your own team if they are of a different race.

Football violence was a strange phenomenon to France until the eighties. If one asked a Frenchman what hooliganism was, he would have referred to violence in football stadia in places such as England or Italy. However, hooliganism finally came to France and has unfortunately made a home in the Hexagon.

The French had avoided hooliganism through measures that prevented true rivalries to grow and through fostering strong regional teams that were very well supported. Historically also, French football clubs and their national team always

participated in international competitions but for almost a century they failed to win any silverware. It was in fact the French who, like with the Olympic Games, spearheaded the idea of international football competitions. The famed World Cup and the European Cup were both brainchildren of Frenchmen, and all other international football competitions are patterned after them. It was ironic that the country that gave the world international football contests chronically failed to win any for decades. The lack of success fostered apathy and lower expectations from French football fans, while their crazed neighbors conquered the glory.

Starting in the 80s, but especially from the 90s on, the French finally found international football success. Both clubs and country began to compete much better at the international stage. This new found success also brought two things: a more diversified and abundant football crowd, and higher expectations for French teams.

The 80s also brought to France a larger wave of immigrants from Africa, both the North and the sub-Saharan sections. This period coincided with the end of France's economic boom known as the *Trente-Glorieuses*. Disenfranchised youth, facing tougher economic times and an apparent increased competition for jobs, found these African immigrants were an easy target to vent some of their frustration. Those youth who became football fans found other like-minded individuals among football fan groups and turned football stadia into focal points of violence. Not all football fanatics and ultras are violent, but hooligans come from these groups and at times conceal themselves among these larger groups of fans.

There is evidence that the most important target of hooligans in France are people from different ethnicities, since in some clubs fans of the same team will fight each other simply because they are of a different race, not because they support a different club. Also, fans will target players who are of a different race and even the management of their own club if these fans feel that they are not doing a good job by winning trophies or playing beautifully.

The stadium itself feeds the fires of violence as a place of sport ritual and worship. People come to regard players in their clubs as their champions and representatives against those of other clubs. The atmosphere of a stadium can become ecstatic and the pressure of a crowd can influence even mild individuals to act irrationally. The atmospheres of French stadia have become much more volatile in the past two decades.

These are the reasons why hooliganism developed so much later in France than in its neighboring countries. Unfortunately, not enough has been done to quell the violence. The preventive and the punitive measures established in France have so far been insufficient. In England, it wasn't until the Heysel disaster killed dozens of spectators in 1984 that harsh measures were enforced, punishing the clubs and the country for an extended period of time, which forced the government and the FA to rethink every aspect of security. The long absence from international competition finally helped the FA and the clubs to change their stadia and security. The English started to consciously market the sport to a more upper class crowd. All the stadia became all-seated venues (no more standing up only sections). Cameras in the stadium and added police and security forces also helped to bring violence down.

France needs to take a closer look at the British security model. So far the Sarkozy government has appointed a special task force to control and punish the individuals who participate and incite violence in French stadia. The target of their control needs to be this minority of hooligans with racial agendas. In this the French differ from the British, the British violence wasn't usually racially motivated. France needs to enforce the measures it has designed, and that is where they are lacking. The French, with all their violence, have been fortunate so far that though attacks and fights have become more common casualties are still very rare. Hopefully France will have its hooligans in check before they have to live through their own Heysel nightmare and be banned from participating internationally in the sport they have contributed to bring to so many around the world and in the sport they love the most.

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