

Perspective and Purpose: The Changing Views of British Football Stadiums
1923-2019
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University of Wisconsin-Madison Senior Thesis in History
May 2021

Special thanks to my advisor, professor David MacLaren McDonald and the Trewartha grant from UW-Madison's Honors college in Letters and Science

"It's less about the architecture of the stadium and more about the people who fill it."¹

Mark Waldon, *London's Fields*

Like no other place, stadiums can create vivid depictions of the community in which they stand. This quote, from Waldon's survey of fandom among London's many professional football clubs, captures the role of spectators and their community play in giving meaning to the stadium's physical form. Much as theaters, parks or community centers draw specific sections of their host communities, stadiums attract their own clientele, football supporters. Given their sheer size and football's wide popularity as a spectator sport, these stadiums assume their own symbolic power across Great Britain, embodying the shared identity of their supporters' communities in towns or cities, as with Huddersfield² or Manchester, regions, whether Cardiff's Welsh supporters or Newcastle's Geordies, and even religious or ethnic affiliations, as seen in Glasgow's "Auld Firm" rivalry or the enduring association of Tottenham Hotspur with its original Jewish neighborhood. Of course, on a grander scale, stadiums often serve as vessels for the expression of national identities, at such venues as England's Wembley, Scotland's Hampden Park and their counterparts around the world.

This paper examines the shifting roles that stadiums have played in Britain during the past century of football's growth as a mass spectator sport, a period spanning the notorious "White Horse Final" that inaugurated Wembley in 1923 to the opening of Tottenham's gleaming new stadium in 2019, just before the COVID pandemic made all grounds inaccessible for the first time in a century. Through this period after the Industrial Revolution, these stadiums

¹ Waldon, Mark. *London's Fields: An Intimate History of London Football Fandom*. Pitch Publishing Limited, 2021. Page 147

² Though not discussed in this paper, Huddersfield has an interesting stadium history. In an area where rugby long dominated as the favorite sport, Huddersfield Town AFC and its rugby counterpart now share a stadium. In this ground, currently sponsored as the John Smith's Stadium, was one of the first modern creations built cheaply and to wide acclaim outside of sporting circles. For more, see Inglis, 1996, Huddersfield Town. Inglis, Simon. *Football Grounds of Britain*. CollinsWillow, 1996.

became sites in which the British created stronger links of identity through the shared participation in sport spectatorship. By the mid- 19th century, football (as this paper will refer to the primary subject) had codified its rules and formalized what had begun as a village and public school sport with varying rule into to a national pastime rooted in social clubs, schools, churches, and pubs during the British Industrial Revolution.³ As spectatorship expanded in the early 1900's, stadiums were constructed on a wide scale, usually featuring a single seated stand for richer guests and wooden or earthen terraces that served standing zones usually occupied by the working-class crowds of a club's resident community. Along with football's continuing progression of football to the level of cultural, financial, and global significance it occupies today, its stadiums were adapted to keep pace as a means of funding clubs and creating better spaces from which to view a match in the ground or around the world. **In this progression, British football stadiums feature many concurrently visible functions, and a diverse array of spectators and social causes will emphasize certain purposes more than others.**

To analyze this evolution in stadiums' uses, I offer a distinctive periodization to explain the history of these structures between 1923 and 2019. By illuminating the forces and people who shaped stadiums' physical development, as well as the perceptions that resulted, one sees shifts in the timing of key changes at different points in the history of stadiums that differ from studies of their design or stories of football in general. Drawing on such sources as newspapers, academic studies, memoirs and fanzines, this new chronology emphasizes how opinions have evolved, as well as the wider societal pressures that determined when events may initiate change, such as disasters at stadiums, the location of a match, or new features that increase or decrease accessibility. As a result, the guiding principle of this paper comes by sampling the perspectives

³ Vamplew, Wray. *Pay up and Play the Game : Professional Sport in Britain, 1875- 1914*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988. Page 15

found in the diverse groups occupying a stadium and how they determine “purpose”, which describes historic usage in a given commercial, political, or social context from new sources of money, pressures from above, or changing demographics of attendance.

An initial group that held and still wields the most power are the leaders of football’s professional clubs and its administrative authority: the Football Association.⁴ For much of the sport’s history, those in charge saw stadiums as places from which to generate money through the spectatorship of a match. Even when early football clubs were stewarded by boards of local community leaders, they relied on gate receipts to continue putting on matches. This system first focused on building local support before mass transportation, but resulted in little attention to the stadium conditions until the team on the field performed well enough to finance renovations, such as Millwall’s eventual move to the New Den in 1993. As this paper demonstrates, this neglect of stadiums’ structural integrity resulted in several key disasters at stadiums throughout the British Isles. Still, a lack of protest by spectators and owners’ or boards’ unwillingness to show matches on television meant that such incidents did not create financial pressures for reconstruction until the 1980’s and 1990’s. In this trend, it becomes important to trace how club leaders responded not just to disasters, but to the social pressures of hooliganism and its threat to longstanding desires of commercialization, especially after the 1960s. Through this, the leadership of football clubs impacted stadiums through their desires to increase revenue – a strategy that surpassed any desire to improve the safety of attendance.

⁴ The Football Association traces its roots to 1863, when meetings were held in London to formalize a particular rules code around football in order to differentiate it from Rugby. From there, the FA Cup, the world’s oldest organized football competition dating back to 1871, permitted open entry from any club. As the organizers of the FA Cup (until recently England’s) most important competition), runners of the English national team and early arbiters of the professional sport, the FA grew from an administrative body coordinating matches to an institution of popular significance as football expanded from Northern industrial cities to the entire country. It remains a separate organization from the Football League and Premier League, which handle routine fixtures at multiple levels. For more see Russell, Dave. *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995*. Carnegie Publishing, 1997.

The spectacular failure of the European Super League in April of 2021, which sought to give 12 of Europe's most well-supported clubs extra revenues for playing each other more regularly, showed that football's commercialization remained driven by its owners even in the face of fan-led opposition and poor planning.⁵ Though less impactful on the use of stadiums, the changes in ownership that resulted in a legitimate attempt at a "Super League" are among the same clubs that commercialized stadiums in the early 2000's.

Second, the influence of politicians and political acts came to have a progressive influence on the public's perceptions of stadiums, though it took much longer to enact needed physical changes through law. This lag in reactions to stadium collapses occurred despite the numerous governmental reports that routinely followed disasters; these studies repeatedly revealed that politicians saw stadiums as troubling spaces. Though casualties and crimes marked professional football's modern history, the events of the seventies and eighties led politicians to take a greater role in deciding how stadiums shaped cities and minds. In their influence through parliamentary reports, policy and speech, politicians could sway public opinion despite a lesser understanding of the sport or the role that stadiums served for society.

After the owners and politicians come the media, which used stadiums as a source of income through their ability to promote sport and selected voices. Their perspective as the original orators of an event made the media important in promoting early communal and national identities within stadiums. However, the increase in violence around football resulted in the media focusing on stories of disaster and fighting between fans, which made stadiums take on a physical and threat to social order that dominated multiple eras in their history.

⁵ Panja, Tariq, and Rory Smith. "How the Super League Fell Apart." *The New York Times*, April 22, 2021, sec. Sports.

The final group worth mentioning in this thesis are the supporters themselves, also referred to as fans, or the neutral term of spectators, which covers both. Through using the ground as a way to celebrate a team's success, represent a community in a shared space, or honor generational support, supporters were the most numerous occupants of a stadium yet had the least direct influence on larger issues in the game. However, the ties of community formed in stadiums often guided discourse around the space, making them permanent fixtures in cities big and small. Within this history, the voice fan's voice evolved into one of violence as well, as hooligans received increased attention from the press and felt emboldened to claim a stadium as their territory. But, a growing literary movement through fan-written magazines (fanzines) and memoirs in the late eighties and nineties would help organize a stronger voice capable of giving stadiums more of a social than commercial purpose.

In order to understand the analysis of action and speech, consider two different moments that occurred in the same place: Tottenham Hotspur's White Hart Lane stadium. Tottenham, one of the largest and most popular clubs in London, occupied the same stadium from 1899 to 2017 before moving to a larger, modern structure closer to their historic East End home. The first moment appears in a report in the *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald* from 1903 and noted a large rush of patrons that forced their way into a match after losing patience with standing in long lines, though plenty of seats were still open in some parts of the ground:

There was room for two or three more thousand, and if there had been better facilities for entering it would have been fully utilized. It is unfortunate that the club should have to suffer because of the lack of a very necessary provision.⁶

⁶ "The Weekly Herald, Friday January 2, 1908. Ediron7 - Pathe. • Wu - Mem New Century. Matth Ews Hare Km! | Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald | Friday 02 January 1903 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed April 4, 2021.

Though outside the timeline of this paper, this moment illustrates how the reporter used his ability to share information to express disappointment that the club lost money because fans entered without paying and still not filling the ground. However, this moment also served to criticize the club for not taking advantage of their support by improving the stadium's infrastructure and making sure to fill the seats for each match. At this time, the stadium, according to the reporter, served as a place to spectate a match and benefit the sporting club by paying for a ticket. While the reporter used this moment to deplore the club's loss of revenue due to the crowd's rush, he also criticized the club for failing to improve their facilities to avoid this problem.

Compare this last moment to a later one at the same ground in 1962, reported in the *Daily Mirror*. In a letter to the editor, a supporter who expressed his displeasure at the conditions of watching a match from the terraces:⁷

By the time the game started at three o'clock my friends and I were literally tinned sardines.... I challenge two of your directors to give up their comfortable seats in the Directors' Box to a couple of old age pensioners and for the directors to join the crowd on the terraces and experience the dreadful conditions.⁸

By publicizing his voice to reach a larger audience through a letter to the editors, this supporter expressed how the stadium served as a location to socialize while watching a match. In addition, by publishing the discontented supporter's letter, the left-wing *Daily Mirror* likely sought to criticize the Tottenham board members in front of a national readership for neglecting a section of the club's support base. Most importantly, seen alongside the earlier moment, this

⁷ The terraces, angled sections of a stadium without seats that offered cheaper prices, would never receive favorable treatment throughout their existence in stadiums.

⁸ "Remember the Fans, Spurs! | Daily Mirror | Friday 30 March 1962 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed February 23, 2021. <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/bl/0000560/19620330/228/0031>.

quote reveals how the layout and uses of stadiums had not evolved substantially in 60 years. However, this moment also noted a change that had occurred since 1903: the directors now sat in a separate box that allowed for a different experience determined by the ability to pay more for a ticket. Additionally, by asking the directors to give their seats to pensioners, it suggests that elderly fans who had supported a club throughout their life contribute more to a club than directors who ignored the dangerous circumstances within their grounds by segregating them.

Through these two moments, while the setting remained largely consistent, the experiences felt by these two writers identified a lack of desire among club leaders to manage stadiums persisting from the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century. Though not all groups, be they fans, owners or politicians, were afforded the chance to speak in this moment, a similar form of analysis will assist in identifying who had the most to say and how change took place.

As this history develops, it becomes important to note that this paper focuses primarily on the experience at national and larger club stadiums because they set the benchmarks followed by all clubs below them in size and wealth. Another key argument is the setting of the national stadium, in this case Wembley, which serves as the benchmark for the shifts across time in how all other stadiums are perceived and used. Additionally, by tracking governmental and media responses to the disasters and hooliganism discussed below, the differences in reactions over successive decades are key in figuring out when change occurred and why.

If stadiums are spaces that underwent little physical change, the shifting identities and contexts that shaped supporters' impressions of the game, their teams and their expectations over a span of decades lend these stadiums a layered history that recalls the sedimentary strata visible in sandstone. Though the primary use of a stadium remains the same, the history of these spaces

resulted in different layers rising to the surface as specific uses and groups exercise greater sway over what transpires during successive periods. For example, while Tottenham went half a century and longer without addressing the dilapidation of its stadium, supporters at Millwall would later protest the rebuilding of their dilapidated home ground (when?). In between, ownership structures would change, major matches would happen, political regimes and economies both rose and fell, but stadiums remain a place to gather and watch a football match.

As this history becomes more-clear from 1923 to the present, this paper will consider who set the stage and why their actions had an impact. The first layer of a stadium's purpose defines stadiums as integral to forming a national identity from 1923-1948. From the first FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium in London in 1923 to record British attendances at Glasgow's Hampden Park⁹ in 1937 and the final post-war peak in crowd size during 1948, stadiums were used to emphasize collective national, local, and club identities through shared experiences in sport, whether as a testament to one's ability to persevere in a chaotic scene or constructing pride in one's country.

The next era saw stadiums become sites of resistance to change from 1946-1958. Combined with the growing cultural expansions represented by TV and cars, few physical changes were made to stadiums even when the first major disaster in 40 years occurred at Burnden Park in 1946.¹⁰ Additionally, the attempt to deal with the aftermath of World War II saw the period of "Austerity"¹¹ and re-tooling the economy in a postwar society take precedence

⁹ Hampden Park is the national football stadium of Scotland, based in Glasgow. It is one of three stadiums in the city that could nearly 300,000 spectators combined when capacities were at their most lax in the early 1900's (See *Inglis, 1996, Hampden Park*). Built in part to give Scotland a neutral site to play important club matches, it is also the home of the Scottish national team and has featured as the backdrop to many famous matches between England and Scotland and on a club level between Celtic and Rangers.

¹⁰ The historic home of Bolton Wanderers, a team from a small town to the northwest of Manchester that occupied Burnden Park until 1997

¹¹ Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina. *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

than the alarming decay of football grounds. As a result, a hesitance or unwillingness to change stadiums became compounded by the slow adoption of floodlights and a repeated lack of effective government action in the face of disaster over the coming generations. A new layer would become evident between 1958 and 1970 as stadiums became sites of division. In response to the growing influence of younger generations as disposable income increased, stadiums did more to divide social classes than unite them, with fences installed to prevent objects from being thrown on the pitch and to keep those with less money to spend in confined spaces on the standing-room terraces. The differences would then become more exaggerated through the media, which gave greater coverage to fighting between rival fans than negligent boards. Following this, the period from 1971-1985 emphasized a layer of social and physical danger within stadiums. After the 1971 Ibrox disaster in Glasgow,¹² ensuing discourse in the media and in legal guidelines depicted stadiums as dangerous spaces. Alongside the parallel rise in the militancy of hooligans in the stands, major protests by unions in cities and colliery towns combined with even more loss of life over the first few months of 1985 at Bradford and Birmingham.

The turning point for this argument comes from the next layer in which football stadiums come to be seen as problematic spaces from 1985-1989. Major disasters at Heysel and Hillsborough, at which Liverpool's fans were first perpetrators and then victims, saw stadiums

Austerity was the period of government mandated rationing that began during World War II but lasted longer than anticipated when over in 1955. At its onset, it was a part of supporting the military. By its conclusion, black markets had spawned to spread goods that were no longer in short supply. For many neighborhoods and stadiums, it was impossible to fill in the gaps or make proper upgrades for years after the war had ended. This will be explained in the second section of this paper, but a good cultural example can be seen in *Passports to Pimlico* (1949), a comedy of a London neighborhood that still dealt with an unexploded bomb and seemingly lived isolated from many changes in society at the time.

¹² This too will be explained in section four but at a glance can be explained by the death of 66 people in a crush on stairway 13 at Glasgow Rangers' Ibrox Stadium. Known as a faulty point from an incident three years before, attempts to fix a steep staircase with chokepoints at turns in its descent were not successful, and the apparent fall of one individual resulted in a horrendous crush.

become places whose hazards could no longer be ignored. Under the divisive Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher, responses to these disasters formed part of a general mobilization against those the government sought to represent as threats to order and prosperity in the UK. Thus, to contain hooliganism, the government tried to mandate a special identification card for stadium entry. This measure, like the Thatcher government's attempt to levy a regressive "poll tax," sought, and ultimately failed, to impose "accountability" to an estranged working-class.

To solve the problems of safety and strife, the next layer introduced stadiums as the solution from 1990-1998. Through the Taylor Report as a response to Hillsborough, all-seater stadiums were made mandatory. Additionally, the FA, English football's highest governing body, commissioned the *Blueprint for the Future of Football*, which guided many financial changes in stadiums by turning generational "supporters" into fans who can be capitalized for commercial advantage, as well as paving the way for the Premier League to increase financial gains. This League, which attempted to separate itself from older systems of egalitarian revenue sharing, made stadiums emphasize how to increase financial gain; in order to fund renovations dictated by the Taylor Report and to give the biggest clubs more sustainable revenue streams. Here, the case of Millwall, their status as the first club to build an all-seater stadium laid exemplified the difficulties of making a stadium commercial welcoming when little structural change had occurred since the world wars.

At the conclusion of this history is the layer of stadiums as sites of commercialization from 1998-2019. As the longest period since the interwar era, the early 21st century witnessed the most successful attempts to introduce new forms of moneymaking to stadiums. This came as a direct result of the nineties, which stabilized income through the Premier League and the

installation of seating and made the image of football more palatable to a corporate market. When Arsenal chose to play important matches at Wembley stadium – a larger ground than their historic home at Highbury, they signaled a focus on making more money over the resistance to change long present within the boardrooms of many clubs and minds of many fans. As numerous clubs also built or renovated their grounds to match a corporate audience, Arsenal represented the most notable example by building the first major modern ground and transitioning their board to commercial instead of sporting goals. As other clubs caught up with this strategy of making money, Tottenham complete this history when their new stadium opens in 2019 as the last major club to redevelop their ground. However, the completion of Tottenham’s stadium did not single the end of football’s wider commercialization, as the aforementioned collapse of the European Super League in 2021 and its international influence were only possible through owners who had previously redeveloped their stadiums and still sought more money.

In the wider literary examination on the history of stadiums, their purpose receives more attention from geographers, but seldom in a periodized analysis. Most notably, John Bale has written several books on how stadiums fit into their surrounding environments and can take on roles far removed from their primary objective in hosting spectators. In comparison, the historical studies of stadiums that do exist are more often focused in their architecture and design than in use and practice.¹³ Instead of focusing on the physical structures emphasized by these authors, I seek to understand how perception defines the use of a designed space.

Other texts, including Simon Inglis’ *Football Grounds of England and Scotland (1996)*, provide detailed historical analyses by specific stadiums instead of by major moments. In this,

¹³ Paramio-Salcines, Juan. “From Modern to Postmodern: The Development of Football Stadia in Europe.” *Sport in Society* 11 (January 1, 2008).; John, Geraint, author. *Stadia : The Design and Development Guide*. Fifth edition. New York : Routledge, 2013., 2013.

Inglis still offers discussion of Wembley Stadium's role in a modern society and the results of the Hillsborough disaster, but I wish to expand these debates into dealing with their impact upon stadiums nationally. When examining stadiums from more diverse perspectives, works by Dave Russell and David Goldblatt help place the structures into better historical context through their focuses on English and world football, respectively.

A different contribution that will feature heavily in this study comes from sociologists at De Montfort University in Leicester.¹⁴ In their development of a human explanation for hooliganism, Dunning, Murphy, and Williams were the first to provide a historical basis for the socially troubling behavior by fans that received more academic attention in the 1980's. Because it took until 1988 for this explanation to gain influence, the persistence of hooliganism assists in showing how stadiums developed their most notable features over decades instead of in isolation.

Before moving on to the paper itself, consider this idea, which came from an analysis of football clubs during the summer of 2020 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic:

The ease with which those outside football clubs switch seamlessly from expecting them to be sound businesses to an expectation that they be a fundamental part of the cultural fabric of local moral economies indicates the hybrid nature of football clubs. All of which illuminates the fragile, and somewhat externally imposed, commercial imperatives and contrived communitarian impulses that now run through the core of elite clubs.¹⁵

While the true intent of this quote warrants exploration in how commerce influenced football, or if football re-designed its own commerce, it helps to illuminate how the spaces of

¹⁴ Dunning, Eric, Patrick J. Murphy, and John Williams. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism: An Historical and Sociological Study*. Routledge, 1988. For more on hooliganism than this paper will offer, anything written by Dunning et al gives good explanations to a complex field of analysis. In brief, "Hooliganism" defines ritual acts of violence or crime performed as much for enjoyment as in support of a team. While hooligans were often generalized as working-class citizens interested in getting away with crime, by the eighties it was shown that those in white-collar service jobs were just likely to participate as a way to break up the monotony of life. In either case, hooliganism became over-exaggerated by the press and invariably damaged the image of football and its stadiums, especially in the seventies and eighties.

¹⁵ Kennedy, David, and Peter Kennedy. "English Premier League Football Clubs during the Covid-19 Pandemic: Business as Usual?" *Soccer & Society* 22, no. 1–2 (February 17, 2021): 27–34. Page 30

football balance many concurrent uses. The precarious nature of this balance remains a steady fact of life for football clubs as organizations reliant on regular but limited events. Breaking this pattern will become a discussion by the end of this paper, but watching this strategy develop through the treatment of stadiums will make certain sections of this history appear more important than at first glance. In understanding how football clubs captured this multi-faceted existence and remain unable to escape it, the modern history of stadiums provides an excellent method to analyze how these spaces were impacted by their perceived uses, from the earliest national venues to its contemporary examples.

1923-1948: The Stadium as Constructing a National Identity

Before 1923, British football stadiums had been constructed in various shapes and sizes; Wembley's opening that year would mark a new era in the design and use of facilities for most of the ensuing century. As the host venue for international matches, as well as major national competitions, Wembley and its Scottish sibling Hampden Park would serve as sporting symbols of national identity between 1923 and 1948.

This period opened with the "White Horse Disaster", Wembley Stadium's debut and the date of 1923 FA Cup final, marred by delays associated with outsized crowds and the attendance of King George V. The next twenty-five years until 1948 saw generally rising attendance figures throughout the United Kingdom, most notably in 1937,¹⁶ when in a single week Hampden hosted the two largest crowds in the history of British football. Through these two grounds and their association with games of national and international significance, early discourse around

¹⁶ Reade, J. James. "Football Attendance Over the Centuries." Henley Business School, Reading University, 2020. Page 8

stadiums emphasized their roles in the construction of national identities in settings not replicable in any other location.

Wembley Stadium, originally the Empire Stadium at Wembley, was built for the Empire Exhibition of 1924 and opened a year earlier. Completed just five days before the FA Cup final on April 23rd, the stadium was a remarkably average structure, built well within schedule and barely over budget.¹⁷ Before its construction, the FA Cup¹⁸ final had rotated through cricket grounds at the Wembley Oval, the first site of the final in 1887, and Crystal Palace Stadium. Both but especially the ground at Palace revealed the need to create a football stadium that could surpass the capacity and infrastructure of any existing club ground, as well as capture the moment of picturesque late spring London days without forcing spectators to watch a match from limited points of visibility offered by a wide cricket ground with shallow-raked stands.¹⁹

The move from a cricket ground to a full-fledged stadium originated from a combination of commercial foresight and of political need. The first step came from Sir Edward Watkin, who already owned a leisure park in Wembley, a popular destination for Londoners, as well as the cricket ground which hosted crowds of over 100,000 for FA Cup and cricket matches. Despite failed attempts to make Wembley into a landmark instead of solely a leisure park, he expanded the transportation network in 1906 and turned a failed Eiffel Tower competitor into an exclusive residential development. With a large leisure/residential area filled with strong transportation links, the British government then took advantage of the space to put on the Empire Exhibition, which attempted to revive interest through a World's Fair-style event in the face of external threats after World War I. And with that, Watkin began construction with the initial backing of 1

¹⁷ Hill, Jeffrey. 2004. "2 'The Day Was an Ugly One': Wembley, 28th April 1923." *Soccer & Society* 5 (2): 152–68. doi:10.1080/1466097042000235182. Page 152

¹⁸ See 4

¹⁹ WSC Book, page 287; page 103-104

million pounds, a number greatly improved by the publicity from the Prince of Wales's personal donation of 100,000 pounds himself. Because the project melded promoting the empire socially and commercially through maintaining trading links, the origins of Wembley Stadium came from national instead of sporting origins. While this would translate into the discourse of nationalism discussed below, how a widely-backed project would open with more chaos than celebration was the result of cheap construction materials, inexperienced engineers, and a lack of preparation for what would come next.²⁰ As the stadium came to a finish, it should then appear as no wonder that Wembley was not prepared to handle the influx of people set to descend on its opening day.

That uncontrollable day came to be known as the "White Horse Final", the first FA Cup final of Wembley's long run as hosts of the match, which Bolton won 2-1 over West Ham. The combination of controlled chaos in an unfinished stadium, a kickoff delayed by 45 minutes due to oversized crowds²¹ spread on the field instead of in the stands, clearing for the arrival of King George V, and the eventual order established by a policeman and his grey horse that appeared white in newspapers, combine to provide a unique scenario at this new national ground that became more legendary for what went right than wrong.²² Additionally, match's legend grew so strong that it was alleged a foot emerged from the crowd next to the pitch and kept a ball in play to assist the winning goal, and little attention was given to the ransacking of the King's box after he departed.²³ Through the averting of a spectacular catastrophe, Wembley legitimized everything that its predecessors built for it by contributing infrastructure meant for important

²⁰ Hill, Jeff, and Franco Varrassi. *Creating Wembley: The Construction of a National Monument*, *Sports Historian*, 17 (2), 28-43. Pages 31-36

²¹ In an unfinished stadium, reports of fans climbing over construction zones and fences to enter the stadium made it difficult to track who was going where and how many even showed up, and the crowd was likely at or above capacity with failed infrastructure to guide attendees to the right areas of the stands, with an estimated 50,000 or more spectators gaining access without tickets. For more, see Hill, 2004, footnote 16

²² Ibid, page 159

²³ Dunning et. al, page 91. The original source comes from the *Leicester Mercury*, 30 April 1923

matches. Because Wembley served the purposes of celebrating the empire, gathering, and then football, the stadium represented a power that no other could match in capacity and in importance to the nation. But, even when recommendations were made to better manage crowds in the aftermath of the “White Horse Final”, the only rule to persist was the requirement to purchase tickets to Wembley matches in advance (though only by also purchasing access to the Empire Exhibition).²⁴

To understand not only what took place but also how the legend of Wembley was constructed, much can be gleaned from the main piece in *The Times* of London:

... The day was perfect; and by the irony of fate, the superb organization of the many railway lines converging on the stations round the Stadium was the crowning factor in producing such a crowd that it was impossible for any arrangements there to be carried out according to plan. Except on two important points- the spirit of the people and of the police, and the absolute loyalty, of a very mixed congregation, to the king- the day was an ugly one.²⁵

Were Wembley not based around trying to promote a British nation and empire, then this writer may have discussed the match’s worst moments before its high points, and the chaos that took place may have been taken more seriously. However, by interpreting the events with optimism first, Wembley takes on an air of importance that it would not have otherwise garnered without the number of converging factors from a large crowd, a major match, and the presence of royalty.

Other notable quotes from a different piece in *The Times* perfectly highlight some of the conversations still plaguing stadiums to this day:

The Wembley Park Stadium is so well and strongly built that a catastrophe of that kind (Ibrox) is quite out of the question.

²⁴ Hill, 2004, page 163

²⁵ (FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.). “The F.A. Cup.” *The Times*, April 30, 1923. The Times Digital Archive.

There must be no possibility of repetition. For the moment we need to enter into the question of fixing the responsibility which the governing body of the Football Association has disclaimed.²⁶

The first line identified that the stadium already held some reverence within the people's minds, both by experience and by hearing the stories of a large new stadium capable of hosting a spectacular performance, even though Wembley was not completely prepared by its opening. The second quote highlighted how danger at football matches had already occurred when the author refers to a fatal incident in 1902 and he felt the need to remind readers of its significance, though it did more to reinforce how Wembley became superior by avoiding fatalities.²⁷

Because Wembley's own disaster was resolved without serious injury, cries for further regulation in its aftermath, of which the only addition was the requirement of tickets for all attendees (though only to also gain a ticket to the Empire Exhibition), Wembley becomes an object of reverence instead of warning.²⁸

Scotland's Hampden Park had already found a permanent location in Glasgow by 1903.²⁹ With experience hosting major matches for 20 years, Hampden already developed its capabilities as a national ground to compare with Wembley by the time the English constructed their stadium. But, Hampden did so by serving the growing national identities tied to sport through a more natural accumulation of cultural milestones and without government or royal support. As a result, while Hampden had already solidified its role as a national stadium by Wembley's

²⁶ "The Crush in the Stadium." *The Times*, April 30, 1923. The Times Digital Archive.

²⁷ Walker, Graham. 2004. "3 'The Ibrox Stadium Disaster of 1971.'" *Soccer & Society* 5 (2): 169–82. doi:10.1080/1466097042000235191. This was the first major incident at any football ground in modern history when 25 died when a wooden stand collapsed at Ibrox Stadium in Glasgow during a match between Rangers and Celtic, but the teams continued to play, and spectators stayed to watch. This matchup will be discussed in further detail below, and Ibrox will also feature heavily in the 1970's for their inability to avoid fatal incidents.

²⁸ Hill, 2004

²⁹ See Inglis, Hampden Park

establishment, it would wait to celebrate its signature moment until setting the largest attendances in British football over a single week in 1937.³⁰

“Indeed, if Hampden had not existed, it may have been necessary to invent it.”³¹

This statement, which comes from renowned stadium expert and historian Simon Inglis, spoke to the need³² of a neutral ground to settle conflicts even in football. As a part of understanding why, examining the religious division but also the unity against England of Scotland in the early 1900’s help explain why Hampden traces a different, but important growth trajectory in comparison to Wembley.

From Bill Murray’s work on *The Old Firm*, Rangers and Celtic in Glasgow are football clubs that began with unique aspects in need of a larger stage to settle their differences. Both clubs were founded in the 1890’s, with some intention on both sides, to be a Protestant club for Rangers and a Catholic club for Celtic.³³ Because of Northern Irish diaspora that spread across Glasgow, the tensions that followed made it inevitable that the clubs had a tense relationship due

³⁰ Sold by Queen’s Park in 2020, Hampden Park was a roving location until it settled at its current site in the Mount Florida neighborhood of Glasgow in 1903, in what was the third and final move of the site. An Archibald Leitch design, as was each of the three stadiums in Glasgow, it already had a capacity of 65,000 in 1903 and would slowly expand to 150,000 by 1937. In the meantime, crush barriers were upgraded in 1928 in response to the White Horse final five years before. It’s also worth mentioning Queen’s Park, which is Scotland’s oldest club but had long since fallen from the limelight by trying to remain an amateur institution, which would put them at odds with both Rangers and Scotland, which will be discussed below but by 1900 had become the richest teams in the country. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, Queen’s Park made the decision to sell the ground to the Scottish FA, which reflects the alternate history of football from its stadiums in how important the stadium is while the club fell by the wayside.

³¹ See 2, page 461-462

³² Sectarianism is a form of religious bigotry most commonly seen in clashes between Irish protestants that supported staying in the United Kingdom and catholic that sought to separate from royal rule. As a dispute that dates back multiple centuries, sectarianism was the focus of the Irish troubles throughout the 1900’s, and often saw bombings of the opposite sect for no other reason than their religion. Particularly in Glasgow where Hampden, Celtic and Rangers were based, a large Catholic population had migrated from Northern Ireland to the Eastern side of the city, and a similarly large protestant population was based in the West, with some protestant immigrants from Ireland contributing to another large section of society.

³³ Murray, W. J. (William J.). *The Old Firm : Sectarianism, Sport, and Society in Scotland*. Edinburgh : J. Donald Publishers ; Atlantic Highlands, N.J. : Distributed in the U.S.A. by Humanities Press, [1984] ©1984, 1984. Pages 59-84. In fact, much of this book is needed to fully understand the way in which Celtic and Rangers tell the history of modern Scotland and the depth of sectarian disputes. The focus of this text explains the continued intertwining of this conflict within football from the beginning of these club’s histories.

to religious bigotry in the early 20th century. However, what led them to still work together was the profits gained from playing each other and leading the drive for professionalism.³⁴ Indeed, the first time the two clubs faced each other at Hampden occurred in 1904, when the term “Old Firm” was coined to denote their financial collusion.³⁵ When a national stadium gave rise to a phrase that signaled divisions in both sport and religion, the stadium itself contributed to its role as a symbol of a national identity given the size and significance of Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant communities in Glasgow and across Scotland. However, considering what a neutral ground could do for a national rivalry, Hampden hosted the Old Firm in the Cup final just three times in the first half of the 20th century while hosting the match nineteen times in the second half.³⁶ That Hampden’s major moments are not simply a story of the Old Firm and are instead a culmination of many matches helped to make it more important through its role as a national ground, and it took two record setting crowds in 1937 to solidify this position within Scottish society and in comparison to Wembley.

Those two matches took place on April 17th between England and Scotland and April 24th when Celtic played Aberdeen in the Scottish Cup final. The first match set the European attendance record³⁷ of 149,415 and the second of 146,433 hosted the largest audience for both a domestic cup final and any match between two teams in the same country.³⁸ Across Scotland, excitement for these matches had grown well before the match neared and local administrators attempted to sell tickets to the first affair as early as February, a marketing move generally

³⁴ Ibid, page 31

³⁵ “The Old Firm Story: When Fans Joined Forces to Riot.” Accessed February 24, 2021.

<https://www.scotsman.com/sport/football/old-firm-story-when-fans-joined-forces-riot-1473665>. The idea of the Old Firm comes from their early matches and behaviors, which effectively made them the two most powerful and profitable clubs in Scotland from the early 20th century to today.

³⁶ “Category:Old Firm Matches.” In *Wikipedia*, July 25, 2020.

³⁷ “Hampden Park - Glasgow | Scottish FA.” Accessed November 18, 2020.

³⁸ “Scotland’s Record Football Attendances | The Scotsman.” Accessed January 27, 2021.
<https://www.scotsman.com/sport/football/scotlands-record-football-attendances-1449406>.

unheard of in this era.³⁹ By promoting matches at Hampden more than others, it became similar to Wembley in how the space was sold as a unique environment only found on special occasions. Others also made note of extensions added to the ground in order to accommodate 150,000 spectators to ensure that the match “will be played before the greatest concourse ever brought together around a sports arena in Great Britain.”⁴⁰ (Throughout this paper, the presence of hyperbolic descriptions should become somewhat familiar.)

However, it was the context of Scotland’s competition for superiority with its southern governors that made national matches more notable in this era. Interestingly, one Scottish commentator found fault - or at least took pity on - a group of “fans” who attended with a friend who was too short to see the full field. “Unfortunately, the international was also a mecca of a multitude of other enthusiasts-one hundred and fifty thousand of them.”⁴¹ Quite possibly, just because this small group actually expressed an interest in watching the match instead of attending for the pride in Scotland’s grandest sporting stage, this commentator wondered why they had even bothered coming. Even beyond the inability of a spectator to see the match, the fact the writer suggested that when Scotland played England, the match itself was of less consequence than supporting the nation against a common enemy. For the Scots and throughout the history of Hampden, even among their internal sectarian disputes, Hampden served as a primary point from which to perform a national sporting identity, both in the continuing sectarian conflict and in maintaining independence from England.

³⁹ “Football Hotch-Potch | Bellshill Speaker | Friday 12 February 1937 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 18, 2020.

⁴⁰ “Montrose «p. 11.10 Ft,«- Fld, Berwick British Prestige Was Hot Enhanced During The Olympic Games Berlin Last Summer. Review The | Linlithgowshire Gazette | Friday 01 January 1937 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 18, 2020.

⁴¹ “Football ‘Fans’ At Hampden. | Arbroath Herald and Advertiser For The Montrose Burghs | Friday 23 April 1937 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 18, 2020.

Through their special role in hosting matches of national significance, Wembley and Hampden symbolized the first period of stadium use between 1923 and 1948. The unique chaos of Wembley during the White Horse Final and the record crowds of Hampden in 1937 were reflective of the attempt to use stadiums for the construction of national identities around sport. Attendances continued to rise at record-highs until 1948 and have gone unmatched since. In this trend, the major moments at Wembley and Hampden matched the ebbs and flows of spectatorship across Britain.⁴² Additionally, the less savory moments at matches were seldom treated seriously, as would later be the case. Thus, the ransacking of the King's box at Wembley and a riot sparked at Hampden provoked plenty of press coverage but little action to regulate behavior in their aftermath.⁴³ Through the two national grounds of England and Scotland, the language that surrounded stadiums, their embodiment of expressing national identity in this era outweighed concerns over negative moments.

1946-1958: The Stadium as Ritual, Complacent and Resistant

The years from 1946-1958 saw the stadium become more notable for resistance to change amidst wider societal evolutions. While in the first period, football stadiums stood out for their record attendances and historic matches, these spaces now contended simultaneously with the aftermath of wartime destruction and a rapidly changing society. Instead of trying to adapt as English society craved new freedoms in the aftermath of World War II, football grounds were marked out by their *lack* of change, besides the slow/gradual adoption of floodlights.

⁴² See Reade

⁴³ "Pandemonium At Hampden Gates | Dundee Courier | Monday 26 April 1937 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed November 18, 2020.

Additionally, the fifties were the origin of notable rituals of fandom developing on shoddy terraces and propelled by increasing travel by away fans on newly provided “football special” trains scheduled on match days.

Although it occurred as attendances were still rising, the Burnden Park disaster of 1946 emphasized a different set of ideas from the first period due to an inadequate reaction in the face of wider societal questions after World War II. The “disaster,” in which 33 spectators died and over 400 were injured, took place at an FA Cup semifinal game held at Burnden Park in Bolton, an industrial town northwest of Manchester. 80,000 spectators were in attendance, largely accommodated by the stadium’s terraces, which were simply dirt hills with bricks inserted for steps but still surrounded by rudimentary fencing between what was inside the stadium and out. As supporters continued to pile into the park for an important match, one chose to open a gate to prevent the crush from becoming unbearable. Instead of relieving the pressure, the opened gate encouraged more patrons to enter until it overwhelmed the fences at the back of the earthen terrace to the point of collapse.⁴⁴ Following this tragedy, the government commissioned the so-called Hughes Report⁴⁵ in an attempt to understand the causes and prevent it from occurring again. Instead of heeding the report’s advice, the Labour Party presented a muted reaction to its findings as their concerns had not yet turned to sport despite football’s attendance numbers continuing to rise to a yet-unmatched high in 1948.⁴⁶ While the lack of reaction to a high-profile incident was also present in the few regulations enforced after the White Horse Final, the choice

⁴⁴ Johnes, Martin. “‘Heads in the Sand’: Football, Politics and Crowd Disasters in Twentieth-Century Britain.” *Soccer & Society* 5, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 134–51.

⁴⁵ The Hughes Report is named after a Member of Parliament in the Labour Party, the Welshman Moelwyn Hughes. Though his term as an MP finished in 1945, he was still commissioned to investigate what happened at Burnden Park. Because he was out of office, he may have had the time to focus on the disaster in ways that the government itself was not willing to pursue. Even though he served for the ruling party, little came as a result of his investigation.

⁴⁶ Reade, page 8

not to act after what happened at Burnden, though under a Labour government with greater concerns in recovering after the war, would set the tone for disasters in the years to come.

This reaction demonstrated that the leadership of the Labour party either knew little or did not care to deal with football's problems in the immediate postwar period. In their defense, there was a bevy of other problems that needed careful management after the war. By 1945, Britain elected its first government with a Labour majority in Parliament and in the Prime Minister, Clement Attlee.⁴⁷ As a result of a growing desire to return to greater state intervention were preferred, the election of Attlee helped to initiate a change of government and behavior during the "Age of Austerity" after World War II.⁴⁸ In terms of their actual actions, the NHS was introduced in 1948 to provide universal health insurance and grew to take up 17 percent of public expenditure by 1949.⁴⁹ Given the government's unsuccessful attempts to control stadium management in later decades, the early circumstances in which this political hesitance developed provide important context to this period and to a returning feature throughout this history.

While the NHS was important, so was Britain's wartime debt and how to overcome it. By the late 1940's, 44% of the country's machinery imports had come from the US, to which their debt had increased "fourfold" since 1939.⁵⁰ In this situation, British legislation had more concern with the quality of the economy than in managing the expansion of leisure activities. Thus, the Labour government nationalized the steel and coal industries where many football fans were likely employed, in the coalmines of the Northeast and the steel factories of the Northwest.⁵¹ This helped keep these industries afloat as they transitioned away from a wartime economy to one that

⁴⁷ Black, Jeremy. *A History of Britain: 1945 to Brexit*. Bloomington, IN, UNITED STATES: Indiana University Press, 2017. Page 119

⁴⁸ Judt, Tony. *Postwar : A History of Europe since 1945*. New York : Penguin Books, 2006. Page 73

⁴⁹ See 47, page 76

⁵⁰ See 47, page, 87

⁵¹ See 46, page 122-123

could service its people, but with many football teams still built around heavy industry, the reduction of investment may have restricted the ability to spend on improvements for stadiums and playing staff.⁵²

Additionally, the Labour party was hesitant to end rationing after World War II and held out with limits on gasoline sales until 1947 and of sweets until 1953, indicating how the war still affected everyday life for many years after it ended.⁵³ When considering the timing of the Burnden Park disaster and the lack of attention it drew, an expectation developed that the game would survive without governmental supervision, and did not necessarily desire it without financial support as well. When contrasting reactions to the Burnden disaster by clubs and politicians, the reserved approach in this period becomes more-clear.

In his report, Hughes warned "these safety measures cannot be secured without legislation. "The Council of the Football Association are anxious for the safety of the crowds that attend the matches of their member clubs, but they do not desire, and are not equipped to lay down or enforce the necessary ground conditions."⁵⁴

To emphasize these points Hughes made it clear that clubs were not willing or felt unable to increase the safety of stadiums on their own at their current commercial levels. As a harbinger of what would occur in the seventies and eighties, Hughes's report after Burnden pointed to an attitude that would prevail throughout the postwar years: no matter who was in charge based on their political leaning, football's leadership would react to disasters by installing mild safety measures or engaging in wars of words and only acting when legally obligated.

⁵² The maximum wage for football players in Britain was not abolished until 1961, and even beyond that wages weren't much higher than that of the working class until the late 80's and 90's. In this context, a lack of money was less likely to impact an inability to recruit players, as wage ceilings were kept in manageable places until players increased their protests. Though I haven't read it, the biography of Tommy Banks, *Ahm Tellin' Thee*, describes the story of a player who was active in fighting for players rights in the 1960's.

⁵³ See 46, page 125, 127

⁵⁴ "Leicester Evening Mail | Saturday 06 July 1946 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed February 4, 2021.

A review of the *Hansard* record of parliamentary discussions reveals 80 mentions of "Hughes Report" between 1946 and 1951, but none as a concurrent phrase or responding directly to the events at Burnden Park.⁵⁵ When searching for references to "Bolton Football" for the same time period, only two queries appear, both in 1946.⁵⁶ While some politicians asked whether or not this disaster could occur elsewhere and by the same cause, James Chuter Ede, the Labour leader of the House of Commons and Secretary of State for the Home Department, responded by suggesting that, "One would hope that spectators who find themselves,[sic] unfortunately debarred from getting in,[sic] would exercise some sense of the sportsmanship they expect from the players on the field."⁵⁷ In one an early misguided statement by a politician about football, a prominent leader in the government did not understand how spectatorship remained key to identity. By timeline, this disaster occurred in two years before the initial period had completed and fit into that context as an important cup match with large attendance, the eventual loss of life and ensuing political reaction presented a different story from the importance of national identity built through stadiums and high attendance numbers.

In continuing, the inattention towards stadiums and sport fit into a wider societal trend in which football was no longer the primary or only attraction. Where this related to the lack of change in how stadiums were managed came from the lack of response to these trends by football's authorities, who resisted everything from the radio and television broadcasting of matches to installing floodlights for evening matches. To start, management found themselves in

⁵⁵ "Find References - Hansard - UK Parliament." Accessed February 4, 2021.

⁵⁶ "Hansard, House of Commons," March 11, 1946.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/search/ContributionsendDate=1951-02-04&partial=False&searchTerm=Hughes+Report&startDate=1946-02-04>.

Accessed February 4, 2021.

⁵⁷ "Bolton Football Ground Disaster (Inquiry) - Monday 11 March 1946 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Accessed February 4, 2021. [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1946-03-11/debates/0cf908ff-8362-4428-8880-cd05d266e5a2/BoltonFootballGroundDisaster\(Inquiry\)highlight=bolton+football](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1946-03-11/debates/0cf908ff-8362-4428-8880-cd05d266e5a2/BoltonFootballGroundDisaster(Inquiry)highlight=bolton+football).

a changing social environment as attendance declined, but to levels only surpassed in the 21st century,⁵⁸ and the loss was less significant at larger clubs.⁵⁹ This came about for a variety of reasons, from the rise of the average wage for male workers steadily over the 1950's but also the rise of inflation, which limited the ability to spend money as one saw fit.⁶⁰

Distractions from football matches included the rise in television ownership from 2.3 million sets in 1950 to 9.1 million by 1965: football's administrators certainly regarded television as a threat to their business.⁶¹ Coinciding with this was the rise in car ownership, which did not have a substantial impact on attendance, but bigger clubs were shown to attract more support from wider geographic areas.⁶² Though the impact on attendance remains more difficult to prove, the geographical spreading out of the population and more pulls on their attention created a situation that football's management failed to address by improving their stadiums in substantial ways.

The sport's leaders' mistrust of radio and television provided another sign of how stadiums came to represent the resistance to change within football's management. Thanks to the BBC, the FA Cup had already been regularly broadcast on radio since the 1920's, but even in the fifties, the *Radio Times* did not have permission to give advance notice of commentary, as club leaders feared its impact on crowd size.⁶³ In fact, television proved more successful in reinforcing the stadium's national power, as the FA Cup final in 1953 between Blackpool and Bolton, known as

⁵⁸ Russell, Dave. *Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995*. Carnegie Publishing, 1997. Page 133

⁵⁹ Ibid, 136

⁶⁰ Ibid, page 134; "All Data Related to Earnings and Working Hours - Office for National Statistics." Accessed November 11, 2020. The expansion of television and other entertainment options also made competition for leisure time more important than it had been previously. This issue will return during a similar period of transition in the nineties.

⁶¹ Russell, page 135

⁶² King, Anthony, 1967-. *The End of the Terraces : The Transformation of English Football in the 1990s*. London ; New York : Leicester University Press, 1998., 1998. Page 39

⁶³ See 60, page 135 According to David Tossell in his book *All Craze Now* covering football in the seventies, it would take until late in that decade for the mistrust of television to subside in favor of its growing financial benefits. (Page 205)

the “Matthews Final”,⁶⁴ became a key moment through shared experience of millions watching the game on screens for the first time instead of undermining physical attendance as an alternate leisure opportunity.⁶⁵

A different match that represented the antiquated attitude of this period came later in 1953, when Hungary upset the English national team at Wembley in what came to be called the “Match of the Century”. Entering the match, England were on a 24-game unbeaten streak and regarded their team as one of the most talented on offer in Europe. However, Hungary featured one of the best teams in the entire world and were a far superior opponent in their abilities; they won with little difficulty by a 6-3 margin. That the defeat took place in Wembley was doubly problematic, given the nationalistic connotations long associated with the national ground and England’s history as the founders of football in this form.

Where the Matthews Final took place in April and evoked English traditions reminiscent of FA Cup finals before it, the loss to Hungary became a “spectacle” for the Hungarian team’s dominance as well as in the England’s humiliation in football’s national home.⁶⁶ Additionally, this match offered a chance to re-evaluate the English style of play and improve compared to continental opposition, but this also did not work out, as a return fixture in 1954 saw the Hungarians win 7-1.⁶⁷ If the “Matthews Final” and the “Match of the Century” demonstrated Wembley’s enduring role as the home of English football, they failed to produce meaningful

⁶⁴ The Matthews Final of 1953 added to the allure of Wembley Stadium as one of the biggest games contested between two clubs in this decade. Named after Sir Stanley Matthews, the first player to be knighted while still playing, he helped Blackpool to their only FA Cup success after making the final three times in six seasons. Matthews himself was considered one of the greatest players of the era even among his peers and his long career, which lasted from 1932-1965, with a six-year interruption in his prime to serve in the Royal Air Force. If there is one sign to point to the continuities within English football, it is the career of Stanley Matthews that tells this story as a star long past the athletic prime one would consider noteworthy today. For more, see *WSC Book*, 2006

⁶⁵ Russell, page 139

⁶⁶ From Our Association Football Correspondent. “England Lose Record To Great Hungarian XI.” *The Times*, November 26, 1953. The Times Digital Archive.

⁶⁷ See *WSC Book* “Match of the Century”

changes in the sport or its setting for spectators in another sign of the complacent treatment of stadiums at this time because neither resulted in the mass introduction of televised matches or in changes to how England's football players were trained in comparison to foreign opponents.

A similar resistance to change became apparent during the introduction of floodlighting to play matches during the work week and nighttime, a practice that many regarded as a "gimmick".⁶⁸ While Southampton had first installed permanent floodlights in 1950 at their south coast ground, the first League match under the lights took place at nearby Portsmouth, on the cold night of February 22nd, 1956.⁶⁹ In the end, the stadium lights failed an hour before kickoff, delaying the match by 10 minutes, while the players had to change by candlelight before taking to the field.⁷⁰ Despite the technical troubles at Portsmouth, English football had a far longer history of lighting, as the first floodlit game took place in 1878 at Bramall Lane in Sheffield. However, the innovation failed to catch on, as it was sparingly seen until the 1950s after the impact of friendly fixtures with club sides from the European continent.⁷¹ A notable example came when Wolves, a team in central England that dominated on the field in the fifties, hosted a tournament with a number of top European teams in 1953, but their successes did failed to catch on as well as there still little infrastructure in place to erect them at all stadiums.⁷²

It also bears noting that in 1954, only 25 of 92 league clubs had installed floodlighting, so demanding uniform investment presented a challenging task when infrastructure varied between clubs.⁷³ As a result, it took until a friendly in 1955 at Wembley Stadium between amateur teams

⁶⁸ Russell, Page 138

⁶⁹ Webb, Clifford. "Brighter Than Broadway Is Floodlit Soccer Slogan | Daily Herald | Saturday 28 October 1950 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed November 11, 2020.

⁷⁰ Inglis, 1996; page 295

⁷¹ WSC Book, 2006, page 144

⁷² Ibid, page 438

⁷³ "No Move To Raise Football Prices | Nottingham Journal | Saturday 18 April 1953 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed November 11, 2020.

representing London and the German City of Frankfurt to make floodlights endorsed by clubs across England. Even when credible arguments existed in support of lighting, the FA continued to resist their usage because they believed that floodlit matches were more a fad than a lasting trend.⁷⁴ However, with Wembley now fitted with lighting, approval would come by 1956 for uniform access to night-time matches and encouragement for participation in those games.⁷⁵

Before moving on, the postwar context that limited the political reaction towards stadiums also impacted them physically through damage and use. Because damage spread throughout England in stadiums and in their host cities, the slow introduction of floodlights likely reflected on a lack of free capital to invest in a leisure activity, even one as popular as football. Among the clubs that suffered damage to their stadiums were Manchester United, whose Old Trafford ground was near the Manchester Docks; German bombardment had destroyed their entire main stand, dressing rooms, offices and the pitch, which forced them to groundshare with Manchester City while rebuilding. Other clubs, including Arsenal, who will feature heavily in the 1990's, had a bomb damage their terracing in 1940, followed by fire bombs in 1941; as a result very little of their ground underwent renovations until the sixties saw a new wave of fencing installed and ground improvements due to resurgent interest in the sport associated with the World Cup. Elsewhere, Birmingham City's St. Andrews' stadium took damage from 20 bombs in 1940 and Burnden Park was used by multiple branches of the military.⁷⁶ When this fits into the breadth of the destruction across England during the war, there was only so much for those in charge of football to do, and in the wider sentiment of returning to pre-war stability, less changes were made to change the way in which football grounds were treated even as their financial successes

⁷⁴ "Soccer's Back-Room Secrets, *The People*, Sunday 01 April 1956

⁷⁵ "Football League Distraction." *The Times*, March 5, 1957. The Times Digital Archive.

⁷⁶ Inglis, See Arsenal, Birmingham City, Bolton Wanderers, Manchester United

waned. Through the lax reaction to tragedy, the resistance to embrace new forms of communication and the slow introduction of floodlights in the face of financial hardship, stadiums became sites of complacency and resistance to change in this period.

1958-1967: The Stadium as Divisive

According to Ken Ramsden, the long-time secretary of Manchester United, the 1958 Munich disaster was the beginning of when rival supporters' groups needed to be separated as much as possible, referring specifically to a song made light of the air crash that cost 23 lives, including many United players, while sparing the famous manager Matt Busby, who was lucky to escape with his own.⁷⁷

It was a shame, because that is when football became tribal, then we had to have segregation of crowds. Before that, supporters of opposing clubs used to walk to the match together and the rivalry (between Manchester City and United) was a lot friendlier.⁷⁸

The two Manchester clubs, both formed in the 1880's, had established a relatively cordial relationship dating back to the days when City allowed United to play at their Maine Road home until Old Trafford's reconstruction after World War II. In his association with the club, Mr. Ramsden likely considered his own experience as a working participant and community member, so he could attest to the nature of the relationship. Yet, the idea of hooliganism or rowdy fans that Ramsden noted had existed throughout the previous period, although it was often

⁷⁷ While already a popular club, the Munich disaster raised Manchester United to a national level of support as the news of their tragedy spread far and the ensuing support was just as wide in the press and among fans. Because the previous period was not seen as divisive as what would come, the use of the Munich disaster as an insult became a sign of division between two different treatments of professional football and the spaces it occupied. For more, see Gary James's *Manchester: A Football History*

⁷⁸ Conn, David. *Richer Than God: Manchester City, Modern Football and Growing Up*. Quercus, 2014. Page 287

underreported, and investigations showed that referees only noted 138 moments of "misbehaviour" by spectators from 1946-1959.⁷⁹ Yet, this number likely underestimated the incidence of hooliganism, to judge from the 31 editorials on the problem published over a 31-month period in the *Leicester Mercury*. But, this differed from the 31 different op-eds were published in the *Leicester* newspaper in a 31-month period after 1957.⁸⁰

What made crowd behavior at football matches come to seem so troubling when incidents of structural failure causing injuries at stadiums had a longer history in the sport? To begin with, the fifties saw the growth of "football special" trains provided cheap access to the railroads for young supporters, with growing incomes, who wanted to follow their team to away game. The accessibility of this transportation allowed groups who may have caused similar problems locally to now leave their destruction as a marking of their travels nationally. As a result, the need to separate visitors from the home-side supporters emerged as a persistent issue in this period. Additionally, during 1965, Manchester United and Chelsea would both install "Executive boxes," from which attendees willing to pay for them could watch behind glass and in comfort while others were penned in behind fences, creating a clear division between those who could pay more for their ticket. While there were also a number of reported dangerous moments of vandalism and violence at matches, the presence of fencing and boxes and the growing attention to hooliganism made stadiums in this era a site of economic and social division, rather than danger related to older stadiums, in this period.

On the cultural front, along with the increase in mentions of incidents in the crowds, the 1950's initiated increased media attention to the new wave of youth culture, which resulted in

⁷⁹ See 10, page 136

⁸⁰ See 10, page 141 Not to be confused with the "director's box" described at Tottenham in the introduction (page 6), executive boxes provide services to fans who aren't board members and are willing to pay a higher price for admission to a separate space.

growing independence and notoriety by the sixties. This culture evolved into three distinctive styles, from the Teddy Boys of the 1950's to the Mods and the Rockers in the 1960's. Outside the makeup of these groups, which were young and modelled on distinctive dress codes, their most important contribution to this era was nationwide coverage of their actions in famous beachfront brawls on the south coast.⁸¹ As wider youth culture received more attention, football also felt the power of the young grow as teenagers could attend matches without financial assistance of older relatives.⁸² For a society in which differences between classes and age groups received exaggerated media coverage, past rituals of match attendance as a communal activity appeared to break down as more divisions appeared in British society.

Though receiving more attention in the sixties, crowd troubles at football matches began long before the first World War. But, they become more important to address as national public transportation networks eased access for football supporters wishing to travel to away matches in the previous period. These "Football Special" trains began in the early 1950's, and examples of vandalism reached noteworthy levels in 1956, when Everton fans ransacked a train car while returning from a match at Manchester City.⁸³ Through incidents like this, Everton fans would garner the nickname "Merseyside maniacs" for their exploits and by the 1980's became known for their shoplifting across the country.⁸⁴ Despite such trains' existence as early as the 1923 White Horse Final, the incidence of reports on destruction did not appear with frequency until the 1950's and for the next 30 years.⁸⁵ As a side effect of the wider spread of transportation networks and freedoms afforded to younger generations based on increased income, further

⁸¹ Cohen, Stanley. *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Routledge Classics. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2011. Page 10

⁸² See 10, page 27

⁸³ See 10, page 152. Taken from *The Times*, March 5, 1956

⁸⁴ Evans, Two Tribes

⁸⁵ "The Cup Final At Wembley." *The Times*, April 28, 1923. The Times Digital Archive.

social damage to football came from the press, who gave more attention to the destruction described above. If any one cause influenced the decision to introduce fencing on the terraces, riotous fans from other cities certainly had a role to play for executives, whatever their personal opinions of those who stood on the terraces actually were. Though both trains and destruction caused by youths had existed since the fifties, an increase in coverage by the sixties would come to highlight the differences increasingly evident within stadiums.

In consideration of wider trends in attention and on whom, the discussion around fencing revealed more about the efforts to divide crowds up than about preventing further danger. Indeed, club leaders' attitudes reflected a resistance to change that originated in the fifties but came to emphasize division as a way to maintain the status quo. As Everton⁸⁶ chairman Peter Moores put it:

To call it fencing is wrong. We are not fencing our followers in; we are erecting barriers immediately behind the goals and barring a small section of terracing to the spectators. The last thing we want is for the vast majority of followers of this club to be penalized for the sake of a thoughtless few.⁸⁷

These statements came in the aftermath of an order to erect fences at Goodison Park, their Liverpool-based stadium, after an incident with the crowd during a match in 1963. As the first club to build fences in response to crowd trouble in the sixties, Moores claimed that he was acting in the best interests of protecting his investment: the players on the field. After all, average player wages rose throughout the 1950's and 1960's.⁸⁸ But, in this context, erecting fences likely

⁸⁶ Long called the "Mersey Millionaires" for their expensive teams, Everton was one of the most well-supported teams in England until an inability to expand their stadium or generate enough financial support saw them fall behind. As of 2020, their plans to move to a new modern stadium on the Mersey River would make them the last of the historically important teams to leave their old home. They do not feature as the final stadium in this paper because their new facility has yet to be built but would certainly fall into a similar category of stadiums built to commercialize the space. For more on their original history, see Inglis, 1996, Everton.

⁸⁷ "Everton F.c. Get Warning About Crowd Conduct | Liverpool Echo | Thursday 21 November 1963 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed November 4, 2020.

⁸⁸ Russell, 175

appeared as the simplest solution to dealing with a young group on the terraces that grew in cultural power and drew negative media attention in the sixties.

Notable examples of separation occurred with a more financial focus, as Manchester United and Chelsea both built the first executive boxes in 1965, though only in Manchester did they become a staple of the scene⁸⁹ while Chelsea's were soon put out of use.⁹⁰ While lacking in the kind of press coverage that could illuminate a wider discussion? of this new space, the presence of a separate box with increased amenities, such as an open bar when the rest of the ground sold no alcohol, created a key sign of separation not by danger, but by class difference, when other spectators were still crowded in behind fences.

Stuck in the Fifties: The 1966 World Cup as both out of place and epitome

With stadiums changing little physically, beyond fences and floodlights, during the past 60 years, the culmination of English football in the 1960's came with the 1966 World Cup, which England eventually won. Mirrored by a brief rise in attendance,⁹¹ the furor caused by the World Cup was often called a "rebirth" for the English game when it merely halted the decline in spectatorship that would continue until the mid-80s. Additionally, the World Cup final in Wembley Stadium, which England won 4-2, created nationalistic commentary around the competition similar to that of the "White Horse" era, though the 66 World Cup remains the English national team's only international tournament success outside of British competitions to date.

Before the tournament took place, the selection process for host grounds would reveal how little stadiums would change. The most emblematic story of this experience came

⁸⁹ Inglis, 1996, page 236

⁹⁰ Inglis, 1996, page 117

⁹¹ Reade, page 8

Middlesbrough, whose Ayresome Park stadium only became a host venue after Newcastle United failed to secure required ground renovations.⁹² Despite the adjustment in plans, Middlesbrough would go on to host a famous visit from the North Korean national team but recorded the worst total attendance of any ground, with just 57,182 total spectators attending three matches in a stadium that could hold just under 50,000.⁹³ Their stadium later stood out for the closure of multiple stands in the seventies, despite improvements made just a decade before for the '66 World Cup. Because Newcastle lost their place as hosts and for Middlesbrough benefitted little from hosting, this situation harkened back to the lax installation of floodlights as the World Cup did not result in substantial ground renovations.

In total, eight stadiums would host World Cup matches across England, with two based in London and the rest spread further north.⁹⁴ The criteria for hosting matches stipulated that their capacity measure over 50,000, but this only applied to half of all grounds selected.⁹⁵ This rule also required the addition of more seats, which reduced the overall attendance that one could fit into a standing section, while also increasing the division within a ground by raising the cost of attendance in more areas. If the facilities had become a point of emphasis earlier, then perhaps more grounds would have been prepared and recorded higher attendance numbers. Instead, even when adaptations were made, they became more aesthetic than effective and diminished the World Cup's impact on changing how stadiums were treated.

⁹² See Inglis, 1996 see Middlesbrough and Newcastle United

⁹³ Both of Middlesbrough and Newcastle would come to mirror the general stagnation of the sport and its management over the next two decades, with Middlesbrough specifically notable for the decrepit nature of the ground and an incident in which a wall collapsed and killed an elderly man in 1980. Though less discussed, Newcastle United's St. James' Park is built on the same land where the gallows used to lie in the 1300's, and their modern stadium story reflects the commercial attitudes of the nineties and 21st century.

⁹⁴ FIFA.com. "1966 FIFA World Cup England™ - FIFA.Com." www.fifa.com. Accessed March 7, 2021. <https://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/england1966/>.

⁹⁵ Chisari, Fabio. "When Football Went Global: Televising the 1966 World Cup." *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 31, no. 1 (115) (2006): 42–54. Page 46

To emphasize the culturally transitional nature of this era, journalist Arthur Hopcraft's *A Football Man* elaborated how the sixties were a site of intense changes for football. In his book, Hopcraft captured the turning point within professional game after the maximum wage's abolition, which allowed clubs to pay players wages more equal to their value. He studied the sport primarily by interviewing players, managers, directors and referees instead of recalling tactics and scores.

By also recalling his own experiences, Hopcraft provided excellent context for and commentary on the changes taking place. One particular quote comes from his recollection of the 1966 World Cup final at Wembley, where he sat in the seats instead of in the press box: "But it has always nagged at my fond recollection of that day that a lot of my companions might as well have been at Wimbledon."⁹⁶ As he theorized, those who occupied the more expensive seats would have been the crowd to spectate a wealthier sport at the All-England tennis tournament, where English players represented Great Britain as a whole, instead of just England.

When watching the crowd around him, he felt that certain spectators were more focused on the "British Empire" beating German opponents and he equated their patriotism to that of Conservative Party members looking for the "revival" of a nation. While ruling the absence of those who usually occupy the terraces in the seats near him (working-class, attentive crowd), this small moment gives rise to a sentiment of separation that even he, a distinguished journalist at the time,⁹⁷ felt out of place in the seated area. In the national stadium, and its firm place as a site of national identity, Hopcraft recognized differences in how the nation was perceived, and this

⁹⁶ Hopcraft, Arthur, author. *The Football Man: People and Passions in Soccer*. London. Aurum, 2013. ©2006, 2013. Page 222

⁹⁷ Hopcraft also would write an adaptation of *Tinker Taylor, Soldier Spy* and spend most of his time as a journalist and scriptwriter who had an interest but was not focused on football.

small moment in a grand stage fits in with a divisive period for stadiums and society in the sixties.

In the wider discussion around the World Cup final, the quote from Hopcraft is notable in context of news coverage and other features of a match at Wembley. In the post-game report of *The Times*, the proceedings were described as follows:

And never has Wembley itself proved a more emotional setting. From early afternoon the atmosphere was electric. It fairly crackled. The terracing was a sea of waving flags, the standards of two nations; the noise was a wall of sound that drowned the flutterings of one's heart. High in the stands there came the beating of a drum, a deep, pulsating thud, almost tribal.⁹⁸

England's own hesitance to participate in international completions of both sporting and political nature features more attention elsewhere,⁹⁹ but this quote still did well to capture how Wembley served as a place of national pride in unifying around sport and in celebration of a historic day. This echoed more of Wembley's status as a project by the government to embrace a shared identity and this discourse that rings true in this moment. The author also took the time to mention a "tribal" nature of this match in the ringing that he heard, but also in noting the separation of the two nations' flags. The match itself deserved noting, but the emotional nature of a stadium built around putting England and Britain above all else added another dimension in which this World Cup match had less to do with football and made to do more with the success of the British people. Even if relating this match to more divisive aspects in this era can feel stretched, Wembley has always proved the greatest sign of social divisions that exist within the terraces, for the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh were in attendance, and the royal box still exists

⁹⁸ FROM OUR FOOTBALL CORRESPONDENT. "Ramsey Proved Right In World Cup." *The Times*, August 1, 1966. The Times Digital Archive.

⁹⁹ One could explore this issue from a number of lenses, including England's lack of participation in the first World Cups and in the early forms of European Club competition until Manchester United did so without approval in 1956, but also in Sir Stanley Rous, Secretary of the English FA and noted for his cumbersome tactics in managing the English FA and in FIFA throughout the middle of the 1900's. (WSC Book)

today.¹⁰⁰ Through this discussion in the news and literature, the hesitance to change stadiums made them reflective of the fifties while the divisions seen in identity fit well into a decade of societal change.

In adding to Hopcraft's excellent representation of this era, consider his treatise on fans and fences: "The trouble here is that dividing a ground between the committed fan with a bit of temper and a gang member set fair for trouble is also their merging ground."¹⁰¹

A number of ideas warrant further exploration. First, the mentioning of "division" within the ground reflects on how impactful the situation had become. While seldom mentioned by the press, Hopcraft took the time to highlight what he witnessed and what could go wrong with the philosophy of using fences to separate different groups. Secondly, he mentioned the idea of a "merging ground". This served as a better prognosis for what had taken place and what would come, as the fenced-in terraces gave the chance for violently inclined spectators to gain new followers without supervision and to make generalizations that fans who watched from the terraces all sought trouble.

Hopcraft went on to state a number of troubling moments that had occurred in the sixties and certain inherent reasons for why they occurred. For example, those who are "hooligans" have "chosen football as an area tailor-made for their activities dating back to the football special trains that facilitated their transport."¹⁰²

Yet, more notable may be his description of the "posher parts of the ground, where the cigars and travelling rugs are, the abuse does not get beyond expletives".¹⁰³ In this, Hopcraft noted from his own interpretations that there are zones where the entire crowds behavior can change and a

¹⁰⁰ See 97

¹⁰¹ Hopcraft, 184

¹⁰² Hopcraft, 187

¹⁰³ Hopcraft, 182

complete change in culture exists between who receives coverage in the press and who pays the most money to watch matches. As a reminder of the role that increased transportation, increased fencing, and special seating impact stadiums, these points serve as excellent guides for how integral division had become to the themes of football and its stadiums in this period.

In considering the climate of the sixties and how the World Cup ended up more like an outlier than a turning point, a final sign of the divisions within football worth mentioning were visible in the rivalry between Tottenham and Chelsea. In his book *London's Fields*, Mark Waldon surveyed season ticket holders from all 12 clubs in London and asks them about a variety of topics, including each team's biggest rival and important moments to their identity as fans. Among his questions turned to this rivalry and the use of the phrase "Yid" The term, as he described, is a derogatory phrase towards Tottenham fans because of Spurs historical location in a neighborhood that has for generations served Jewish immigrants, specifically from Russia in the aftermath of World War II.¹⁰⁴

The match was also cited as the origin of a number of other derogatory chants that refer to the Holocaust. In this, Spurs' fans eventually took on the term "Yid" as a phrase of endearment, even though there was little attempt to sample the opinions of Jews, who though few still were present as fans of both clubs but are absent from surveys. From a different source, one supporter later recalled that he was insulted with the term "Yid" as early as the 1967 FA Cup Final.¹⁰⁵ It's also exceedingly difficult to find concern for this term until the 1980's, so one could consider that this form of division was not as important to this era in the perception of stadiums. Even with a brief mention of the growing divisions by identity, the overall structures of

¹⁰⁴ "Hackney: Judaism | British History Online." Accessed March 7, 2021. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/middx/vol10/pp145-148>.; Waldon, *London's Fields*, 60-78

¹⁰⁵ New Delhi Times. "Spurs Fans Chant 'Yid' 40 Minutes before Cardiff Match despite FA Warning - New Delhi Times - India's Only International Newspaper," September 23, 2013.

separation established in the sixties still exist to this day as Tottenham ran a survey as recently as 2019 to address its usage the usage of the Y-Word for its negative connotations instead of its applied positive connections to their supporters.¹⁰⁶

Following the growing tensions evident within the stadium and the desire to capitalize on growth after the World Cup, a new report, commissioned by the Department of Health and Science, investigated the state of football as a sport and profession.¹⁰⁷ Headed by Norman Chester, a professor at Nuffield College in Oxford, this would be the first government report on football not to come as the result of a stadium disaster. It offered guidance on the social issues evident in the growing animosity between supporters, including upgrading stadium amenities like bathrooms and concessions,¹⁰⁸ but like the Hughes Report over 20 years before, a lack of financial and political support made its guidance more impactful on later debates over hooliganism than in resolving the divisions within stadiums. Moreover, while it did discuss a growing indiscipline within professional football itself, it did not discuss rising social tensions within its stadiums.

Between 1958 and 1970, stadiums had evolved into spaces used to separate spectators along social and economic lines. Where they had begun as places used to unite around a local or national identity, a resistance to change made them more divisive than cohesive spaces. Through the installation of fences as a way to create divisions between the terraces, the field, and wealthier sections of the crowd, stadiums featured an element of division that existed through the history of stadiums – at the same time that they united around symbols of national identity. But, between fences and the executive boxes installed in 1965, this division became more important

¹⁰⁶ Tottenham Hotspur. “Y-Word Consultation Update.” Accessed March 7, 2021.

<https://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/news/2019/december/y-word-consultation-update/>.

¹⁰⁷ Committee on Football, and D. N. Chester. *Report of the Committee on Football*. HMSO, 1968.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, page 51

to the layout and meanings behind attending a match. Even though boxes for wealthier spectators were seen in the King's box at Wembley in 1923 and would become a strong point of emphasis by the 21st century, the use of separate seating first focused on division over income in the sixties. With the language between fans becoming more inflammatory as insults, this period represented a consistent use of stadiums as divisive spaces, while their dangers soon became evident through the repeated loss of life and new attempts at regulation.

1971-1985: The Stadium as Dangerous

While the issue of danger at football grounds earned coverage in most of the moments covered so far, it took the Ibrox disaster of 1971 to see the construction of stadiums, which often changed little since their construction before the First World War, make safety a primary concern. Whether the issue concerned the risk of getting caught in a crush due to stadium collapse or putting a club in bankruptcy to make needed renovations, stadiums embodied danger and risk. These attitudes mirrored wider societal pressures, as the industries that had driven England's economy and many of football's most successful cities now struggled to survive. Yet, these attitudes also stood in stark contrast to the fortunes of clubs themselves as Liverpool, Nottingham Forest and Aston Villa won seven of the ten European club championships from 1976 to 1985.¹⁰⁹

Throughout the 14 years covered in this period, the political struggles in the seventies resembled those in the fifties, but instead of declining to act in response to a disaster following a

¹⁰⁹ UEFA.com. "History | UEFA Champions League." UEFA.com. Accessed October 26, 2020. <https://www.uefa.com/uefachampionsleague/history/>.

major war, the government's response lacked the understanding needed to address increasingly common incidents at stadiums. A separate political transition would occur during the eighties under Margaret Thatcher when crisis demanded, but her government's attempts at policy achieved more success in crippling the labor unions than in grappling with fan violence in the stands. This contributed to an affirmation of danger across society, with stadiums increasingly becoming politicized spaces through the sensationalizing of hooliganism and the emergence of such neo-fascist movements as the National Front¹¹⁰ which recruited from the terraces.¹¹¹

England was not alone in its struggles. Heavy industry had suffered across Western Europe and Britain joined the continent in a period of "stagflation", in which prices rose alongside wages and slowly sapped the industrial cities of needed coal and steel commerce.¹¹² In these same cities where football had historically thrived, working-class citizens became disenfranchised with the government's role in their struggles, most famously in the "Winter of Discontent"¹¹³ of 1978-79 that culminated in the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party as the new government. By the end of the period in 1985, Thatcher would still contend with protests in the form of the Yorkshire miner's strikes, and two riots in 1981 relating to interracial relations in the economically depressed communities of Toxteth in Liverpool and Brixton in London.¹¹⁴ and the Brixton riots in London between police and the Afro-Caribbean

¹¹⁰ The National Front is a far-right, fascist political party that still exists today. Founded in 1967, it has always had more strength in voice than in their influence. By using the terraces at Chelsea and Manchester United as two notable examples, the National Front gained increasing prominence during the seventies in which Britain was shaken politically. By the 1980's, their views were the extreme end of the political party, often aligning with some of Margaret Thatcher's policies which emphasized England's need to feel and act superior. Through their presence within certain fan groups, stadiums took on an added social and political danger through the presence of racist and xenophobic chants and symbols emanating from the terraces. For more, see Buford, Bill. *Among The Thugs*. (1991)

¹¹¹ Dunning, 177

¹¹² Judt, Tony. *Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945*. New York: Penguin Books, 2006., 2006. 456-459

¹¹³ Black, 155

¹¹⁴ Echo, Liverpool. "Toxteth Riots 1981 Background - and How It All Began." Liverpool Echo, July 4, 2011. "Brixton Riots 1981: What Happened 40 Years Ago in London? - CBBC Newsround." Accessed April 21, 2021.

community that previously occurred in 1981. Through this period and the one that followed, Liverpool would place itself at the center of both football and British politics through their highest and lowest points of the seventies and eighties.¹¹⁵ Though the discontent of industrial cities and the media's acceptance of right-wing discourse created an exaggerated impression of the social dangers present in stadiums, legitimate economic and social problems created tensions in football that caused difficulty when either football's management or politicians attempted to resolve them.

The first moment in this period returns to Scotland as the "Ibrox Disaster" initiated new stadium legislation for the first time since the 1923 "White Horse Final". With a large but not overwhelming crowd¹¹⁶ packing the "Old Firm" game against Celtic at Rangers' Ibrox Stadium, 66 would eventually lose their lives in a crush. The key spot for this disaster was not the field or a terrace, but Staircase 13, notorious for its steep angle and tight entry; it served as the main access point to a Rangers-only section of the ground. Late in the contest, a fall by a departing fan at the top of the stairs caused a crush below, with many dying of asphyxiation or trauma. Despite the ensuing investigation, which revealed the cause above, popular theory still rumored that fans had rushed back into the stands after a goal was scored and initiated the crush.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, Staircase 13 had previously caused incidents in 1961, 1967, and 1969, which had resulted in nearly 50 total injuries but no fatalities. After each successive incident, Rangers attempted to make changes to prevent further injury, such as putting concrete on the stairs and making more passageways out of a key exit.¹¹⁸ These efforts demonstrated that

¹¹⁵ Liverpool F.C. won 17 major trophies between 1970 and 1984, while also appearing in the 1985 European Cup final discussed in the next section.

¹¹⁶ Walker, 169

¹¹⁷ Walker, 174

¹¹⁸ Walker, 171

Rangers were aware of safety issues at their home ground, however their failure to prevent their repetition signified how danger in stadiums had yet to receive the attention it demanded in the sixties and why the disaster of 1971 initiated a new period.

Several important issues merit consideration in examining Ibrox and other stadium disasters after 1971. First and most important, incidents had occurred on multiple occasions in the same spot, but no action had successfully rectified the cause of each incident. Second, the Rangers' board made efforts to pursue a safer stadium but had no guidance from a central authority. Finally, the nature of the event as an "Old Firm Derby," a rivalry envenomed by well-known sectarian conflicts, helped elevate the incident's prominence in Scotland and internationally. The combined effects of previous neglect as the cause of disasters and the inadequacy of preventative measures already taken by Rangers served to define the era that followed in terms of stadiums' danger, whether due to the crowd or structural decay. These attempts to prevent danger helped illustrate the maxim that disasters yield political results when the lights are brightest.

In reaction to Ibrox, a new investigative report commissioned by the Scottish Parliament sought to address what had taken place, though it would prove to worry more about mitigating damage than preventing it altogether. The Wheatley Report, as it came to be known, was tabled by Lord Wheatley¹¹⁹ in 1973 before the Parliament. It made a series of recommendations that became the basis for the Safety of Sports Grounds Act of 1975. This legislation set up a series of standards for the licensing of stadiums across Britain, and Wheatley did an excellent job in taking into account past reports on disasters and different accounts of stadiums across Britain

¹¹⁹ Lord Wheatley was a Scottish judge who first spent time as a politician before his appointment to a judicial position. Having played amateur football when he was younger and helping establish the right to public defense in Scotland, his commission on Ibrox combined an understanding of sport with a background in local regulation.

while making his recommendations. An early quote Wheatley's report comes from his commentary on the "existing arrangements" of regulation to control stadiums, and he concluded with this:

Under existing arrangements, when defects or deficiencies in structure or human behaviour create crowd problems or dangers, the part played by the police is a major contribution in keeping a situation under control or in preventing it from developing. How far their legal powers go may be a matter of doubt, but a judicious interpretation of their powers to preserve law and order can usually permit them to deal with most situations which arise. Under any system, because of the unpredictable turns of human nature and events, the role of the police officer in crowd control is always likely to be an important factor.¹²⁰

This statement may be more important than any other law or regulation to develop as a result of Ibrox. The reports on stadium safety in football, dating back to the Burnden Park disaster, more frequent and noteworthy in the years to come, all consider the crowd's role and control mechanisms to control it. But none stressed more clearly how policemen were uniquely suited to play an important role in crowd safety instead of crowd management. This difference explains some of the key reasons that responses to crowd troubles were poor before Ibrox and as will be seen, would not improve much more as policemen contributed to dangerous moments.

In continuing, much of Wheatley's work centered on the formation of a licensing authority and what it would look like. His next important suggestion simply came from the idea of limiting crowd sizes to prevent major problems.¹²¹

Faced with the proposition that in any other area of public entertainment a concern which cannot raise the money to meet the cost of the requirements which the law imposed would have to close down, the football authorities freely admitted the logic of it but naturally looked for a way to circumvent it; They predictably returned to the

¹²⁰ Wheatley, The Rt. Hon. Lord. "Report of the Inquiry Into Crowd Safety at Sports Grounds." UK Parliament Papers. Accessed October 26, 2020. <https://parlipapers-proquest-com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/parlipapers/result/pqdocumentview?accountid=465&groupid=126380&pgId=406aafed-9120-4900-bf7f-370818e71efc&rsId=174CD06BE65#0>. (page 5)

¹²¹ Ibid, page 7

proposals which they have made over the years for financial support from or through the Government.¹²²

This painted as clear an image of football's finances than any other statement over the preceding fifty years. Relying on old structures and an abundance of loyalty from their supporters, owners were able to largely ignore needed upgrades to their grounds and procedures that would mitigate disaster and fighting. This begins to introduce one key fallacies of the 1980's as serious issues occurred at an increasingly rapid pace. But first, that point on limitation as the simple solution to preventing problems serves as an important suggestion to keep in mind for the Green Guide laws to come up later on.

“Green Guide” is a euphemism for the Safety of Sports Grounds Act of 1975 and the green book of rules distributed to all clubs, which resulted directly from the 1971 Ibrox disaster, as well as the Wheatley Reports' recommendations in 1973.¹²³ Part of its shortcomings came from that continued issue of money, which Wheatley himself mentioned, but which still remained too meager for football clubs to adhere to the law. This resulted in a number of changes not being made, and could not be made for well over the next decade without seriously damaging the state of some clubs and even causing issues for Wembley Stadium.¹²⁴ There were attempts to generate money, and in fact the minister for sport, Denis Howell, set up an agreement with the betting pools to fund potential projects.¹²⁵ The football pools themselves were an early and long-standing form of betting on potential much outcomes, much like fantasy sports today,. The Trust was then established to take advantage of that money and invest it in the game itself,¹²⁶ but

¹²² Ibid, page 15

¹²³ Participation, Expert. “Safety of Sports Grounds Act 1975.” Text. Statute Law Database. Accessed October 15, 2020. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/52>.

¹²⁴ See Inglis, 1996, Wembley

¹²⁵ “Trust To Aid Clubs | Birmingham Daily Post | Wednesday 13 August 1975 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed October 28, 2020.

¹²⁶ When Saturday Comes, 2006, pages 151-152s

seldom were serious renovations attempted beyond piecemeal reconstruction coinciding with successful seasons. If danger was taken seriously in this period, then the legal guidelines established would have had a greater impact on a safer perception of stadiums than what persisted.

After understanding the Wheatley Reports language, looking at press coverage helps situate the tenuous situation at the time, which centered around football matches and their lack of safety. In an article describing the drop in attendance by 200,000 in the top four professional leagues, a commentator wrote: “If I had a 12-year-old son, would I let him stand on the terraces to watch league football?”¹²⁷ In an article that named many instances of trouble where the police were called to action, from riding horses into the stands to finding boxes of gravel to be thrown from the terraces at the pitch or others, the dangers of stadiums became more apparent and regularly discussed. This does not discount the presence of police before Ibrox, as there were many examples of officers attempting to mediate fights between hooligans and even the establishment of an onsite police station at Derby County’s stadium in 1969.¹²⁸ But, multiple moments in past periods had proved that police were seldom prepared or deemed suitable for action within stadiums. Through these myriad moments, the nature of stadiums had taken on a new purpose by examining the depravity of sport and its spaces.

While many grounds had shown signs of aging by the fifties, twenty further years of use and certain unwise renovations became more noticeable in the seventies. A perfect example

¹²⁷ “Arrests Gates Down and Hardaker Says ‘What Crisis?’ Verdict-By Jack Holman Football League Gates Are Nearly 200,000 Down Compared With | The People | Sunday 24 September 1972 | British Newspaper Archive.” n.d. Accessed October 27, 2020.

¹²⁸ “Football Ground Gets A Police Station To | Daily Mirror | Saturday 20 September 1969 | British Newspaper Archive.” n.d. Accessed October 27, 2020. Derby County is a club in the East Midlands region that has long occupied the second division, though they won two First Division championships in the seventies. They will pop up again in the conclusion.

came from Chelsea,¹²⁹ whose Stamford Bridge not only had a new, modern East Stand but also saw its attendance drop from 52,000 to 41,000 as a result of the Safety of Sports Grounds Act. The club also faced a cost of 600,000 pounds in needed renovation in 1977 in order for their promotion to the first division to be permitted.¹³⁰ Many of Chelsea's efforts focused on updating safety barriers on the terraces and installing fencing without even needing to upgrade their infrastructure. Famously, Chelsea's chairman had electric fences installed at their stadium in 1985 but never permitted their activation.¹³¹ Through this act, he emphasized the feeling of danger towards the crowd in this famous quote: "People may howl about it being dangerous, but it's been used in farming for a long time."¹³² With the leader of a club suggesting that supporters are no different than cattle, the sentiment of danger became so strong that people were no longer treated as humans capable of reason. This moment was the most noteworthy reaction to the wider sense of danger in this period, but it also reflected how the Safety of Sports Grounds Act did little to prevent drastic decisions such as this that could increase danger.

Also in London, Wembley stadium served as another excellent example of the wider circumstances of decaying stadiums in the 1970's and early eighties. The old Wembley Stadium,

¹²⁹ Chelsea F.C., a club in West London, holds a longer history as a club founded after its stadium was constructed. Unlike other major London clubs today, Chelsea struggled to stay in the top division for much of its history until the 1990's. A growing reputation for rowdy fans occupying one of the first grounds built in the 20th century contributed to the desire for new strategy, no matter how bad an electric fence could have turned out in practice. For much of football's modern history, new stands were constructed only when a club had acquired extra money by performing well on the pitch. Because this was hard to achieve consistently, there are still clubs today that occupy stadiums built in some form before World War II.

¹³⁰ Inglis, 1996, page 118. In English football, the end of each season sees the bottom three teams of one league and the top three teams of the league below switch places. This system of promotion and relegation allows clubs to climb divisions based on their performance and not be locked into specific tiers of competition when there are more professional clubs than slots available. As a part of a growing list of regulations on ground management, certain safety upgrades were required to play at certain tiers, and Chelsea's rise to the top division required upgrades to their ground.

¹³¹ "GLC Warns Chelsea to Abandon Electric Fence or Face Closure Threat." *The Times*, April 23, 1985. The Times Digital Archive.

¹³² "Electric Fence for Chelsea FC." *The Times*, April 20, 1985. The Times Digital Archive.

which would be replaced in 2007, began to be seen as old in the 1970's.¹³³ I, was the best-equipped ground for large neutral-site matches due to its size, but by this time was earning most of its revenues from greyhound racing, not football.¹³⁴ This established that Wembley, despite all it had done in establishing an English national identity grounded football, had its fair share of financial problems desperately needed to solve safety concerns.

Discussions on how to deal with Wembley began in earnest in 1977 and 1978 as spending had to commence to comply with recommendations from the Safety of Sports Grounds Act.¹³⁵ Those requirements for operation included 200,000 pounds in upkeep per year and 1.3 million pounds for repairing crush barriers and electrical wiring throughout the ground. Other expenses included reducing capacity to 72,000 all seated from the previous total of 100,000 with terracing. In order to pay for these costs, Wembley had met such a wall that it felt the need to attract a league club to play there,¹³⁶ a decision thought to diminish the allure of a ground where only major fixtures took place. With the national stadium, long the stage for the season's biggest games, having to endure the burden of a new law designed to prevent a major reputational disaster through tragedy, the new law's impact and power came into question because of the high costs it entailed. Despite the failure of laws put in place to prevent disaster in later years, ground capacities were still slashed across Britain and attendance dropped, but there was no easy way to fix the many problems at hand.

One can regard Liverpool as the champions of this era for continuing to win even their surroundings shrank. Anfield stadium, constructed in 1906, had already established a reputation

¹³³ See Inglis, Wembley

¹³⁴ When Saturday Comes, 2006, 427

¹³⁵ Harrow Observer, January 28, 1977

¹³⁶ "Reports and | Sunday Mirror | Sunday 19 February 1978 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed October 28, 2020.

for its chaotic terrace on the legendary Kop,¹³⁷ which was likely named after the original at Arsenal but a popular name for terraces across England.¹³⁸ In this context, the steady progression of construction that took place at Anfield contrasted to the lack of impact on the Kop, a mostly unchanged structure throughout its tenure until now. Additionally, success was no stranger to the club following the arrival of manager Bill Shankly, who led the club to their first FA cup success in 1964.¹³⁹

A major focus of the Kop was its connection to the social identity of Liverpool as a bastion of the left-wing Labour party. Through this and an intense sense of loyalty in the city, Liverpool's Anfield stadium had become an important emblem of the club's identity, but even the crowd's importance could not completely stave off the impending cuts to its attendance. By the end of the seventies and mid-eighties, Liverpool's successes as a club continued to contrast the restrictions imposed on the stadium and a city struggling without government support. As was later revealed, Geoffrey Howe, Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggested taking public money away from the city in order to cripple their political support often associated with the "militant tendency" a left-wing Labour faction active in protests against the Conservative party and in promotion of a socialist agenda.¹⁴⁰ For a government minister to try and limit funds for a city while stadiums were undergoing a variety of restrictions reflected the question of danger in football through not only its spaces, but also the people occupying them.

For Anfield's renovation costs were estimated at 400,000 pounds of work plus a reduction in capacity from 56,000 to 50,000, including a loss of 3,000 spectators on the Kop in

¹³⁷ The "Kop" was a common name for football terraces around England. The name was originally coopted by Arsenal following the second Boer War in 1900, in which the battle of "Spion Kop" was fought, before it was adopted at a number of other grounds. While Arsenal retired the name early in their history, Liverpool took on the most famous iteration of the name. For more, see Inglis, 1996, Arsenal.

¹³⁸ Inglis, 1996, page 219

¹³⁹ Inglis, 1996, page 220

¹⁴⁰ Black, 146

1977.¹⁴¹ The attendance contraction came between the first two of four European Cup wins in this period, and on the back of back-to-back League championships, again emphasizing how reacting to danger even took more precedence than events on the pitch.¹⁴² Fencing had also been constructed at Anfield in order to “protect” the club’s reputation against young fans who could not stay off the field, with the idea first threatened by chairman John Smith in 1976.¹⁴³ Especially at the biggest of clubs with the biggest of crowds, the need for fences persisted from the sixties, not for the sake of spectators’ safety, but as a financial measure of financial to maintain eligibility for lucrative European competitions. In the moments that would define the next period, it became unfortunate that these renovations to their ground were rendered moot, as Liverpool’s fans played a central role during incidents at the stadiums of other clubs.

While the Ibrox disaster had initiated awareness of danger and the Wheatley Report had moved perspectives in a better legal direction, a series of major incidents in the first half of 1985 proved that stadiums had yet to move past the danger that had marked them since long before this period. Such incidents included a fire in the home ground of Bradford, a team in the lower divisions who were in the process of replacing their wooden main stand. On May, 11 1985 this stand caught first, killing 56 and trapping many unable escape through the single locked door to leave the stand.¹⁴⁴ Very likely, if the rules had been followed sooner or had stadiums laws enjoyed more authority and financial backing, the fire and its fatalities might never have happened. Instead, Bradford had to deal with one of many generational tragedies at football grounds and this one was inherent to the era in an old ground with restrictive fencing.

¹⁴¹ “Fans Face The Big Lock-Out | Liverpool Echo | Wednesday 15 June 1977 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed October 28, 2020.

¹⁴² “Premier League » Champions.” Accessed October 28, 2020. <https://www.worldfootball.net/winner/eng-premier-league/>.

¹⁴³ “Reds Check On Fence Prices | Liverpool Echo | Monday 27 September 1976 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed October 28, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ WSC Book, 2005 page 50

On the same day, a teenager lost his life when a wall collapsed at Birmingham City's stadium due to a fight between crowds of hooligans.¹⁴⁵ Two months before, a riot broke out at Luton's ground in which Millwall fans stormed the pitch and destroyed much of the stadium, though no fatalities occurred.¹⁴⁶ While these three moments are noteworthy, the occurrence in rapid succession does more to explain how the danger of football grounds had grown from a sentiment to a regular occurrence in the time from Ibrox through the successes of Liverpool and to what would occur in the next period.

1985-1989: The Stadium as a Problem

Even with Margaret Thatcher now in power for half a decade and the series of incidents that occurred in the first months of 1985, the lowest point for stadiums would come between May of 1985 and 1989. The first major event took place at Heysel Stadium in Belgium and resulted in 66 fatalities, while the latter saw 98 supporters die in England, as the home field of Sheffield Wednesday. What linked the two was the presence of Liverpool F.C., which would go from the best team in both England and Europe to the center of all negative attention for football across the region. In between, English clubs had developed such a poor reputation during the seventies that in the aftermath of Heysel, English teams were banned from participating in European competition from 1985 to 1990, even though only one club's fans were at fault.

¹⁴⁵ Cole, Paul. "RIP Ian Hambridge: Reflecting on the 1985 Blues v Leeds Tragedy." BirminghamLive, May 11, 2017. <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/sport/football/football-news/birmingham-city-leeds-united-tragedy-13021258>.

¹⁴⁶ Ingle, Sean. "Luton Town v Millwall 1985 – the Night Football Died a Slow Death | Sean Ingle." the Guardian, February 15, 2013. <http://www.theguardian.com/football/blog/2013/feb/15/luton-millwall-1985-fa-cup>.

Additionally, the Conservative government would attempt to instill an identification card system for all supporters in all stadiums – a plan that represented yet another in a long line of ineffective government measurements, but nonetheless showed some effort to act. The ensuing public responses, to both ID card laws and after the aftermath of Hillsborough resulted in the government's inability to install this law in the face of public pressure. Finally, the Hillsborough disaster reflected the failure of past attempts to address the problems of stadiums. However, unlike prior moments, the Taylor Report of 1990, the latest government disaster investigation, resulted in mandatory changes, requiring stadiums to become all-seater and to improve their amenities for all fans. Throughout this period, instead of seeing stadiums as separate or dangerous, they were now perceived as an issue worth addressing politically, socially and economically.

Alongside the beginning of troubles within football, the miner's strikes that also took place in the middle of the 1980's place the ensuing reactions to football in a wider political context. The miners' unions, which led strikes at mines across the United Kingdom in 1984, which coincided with riots in areas of London and Liverpool, created a tense political situation that would not resolve peacefully

Those strikes, which lasted from March 1984-March 1985, featured a perfect storm for Thatcher to apply conservative social theories in her quest to change Britain, as there were also internal disputes by miners who were forced to stop work by the union.

What we have seen in this country is the emergence of an organized revolutionary minority who are prepared to exploit industrial disputes but whose real aim is the breakdown of democratic parliamentary government. We have seen the same sort of thugs and bullies at Grunwick, more recently against Eddy Shah (strike in newspaper

printing company) in Stockport, and now organized into flying squads around the country.¹⁴⁷

This came from her speech at the Annual Conference of the Conservative Party, which was nearly derailed by an IRA bombing at the hotel in the resort town of Brighton in 1984. Looking at her idea of a “revolutionary minority” that exploited a larger political movement to cause problems, the later statements from her and Conservatives would reveal an attempt to generalize the causes of trouble in football, when the situation entailed a different reality. The differences between the strikes and trouble on the terraces soon became obvious through Thatcher’s success at crippling unions in comparison to her dismissive knowledge of football.

Thatcher’s policies would undermine her political power due to her attempts to install a poll tax as a replacement for a property tax, which had long drawn criticism in Conservative constituencies.¹⁴⁸ She first presented her plan in 1986 following the previous year’s the civil unrest from the riots and strikes Her proposal called for replacing the property tax with a national business tax, in addition to a tax on all adults over the age of 18, a levy that many named the "Poll Tax". However, this proposal soon resulted in even more political unrest and ultimately helped unseat Thatcher from her party leadership and her post as prime minister.

While originally an effort to control government size at all levels and reduce high-cost social programs, its efforts to impose "accountability" in the electorate were undermined by poor choices in who to actually tax. In this, only the heads of household and landlords were charged, and businesses bore a greater share of cost.¹⁴⁹ It was an effort to nationalize the tax at a

¹⁴⁷ Reicher, Stephen, and Nicolas Hopkins. 1996. “Self-Category Constructions in Political Rhetoric; an Analysis of Thatcher’s and Kinnock’s Speeches Concerning the British Miners’ Strike (1984–5).” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 26 (3): 353–71. Page 361

¹⁴⁸ SMITH, PETER. “LESSONS FROM THE BRITISH POLL TAX DISASTER.” *National Tax Journal* 44, no. 4 (1991): 421–36. Page 421

¹⁴⁹ Smith, Page 424

consistent rate before re-distributing local money. In reality, the bill taxed houses with more adults and lowered the tax rate to a national average in areas with high property values that were typically Conservative support bases,¹⁵⁰ and the property tax was abolished much sooner than the expected slow rollout. Additionally, communities that stood to benefit from the tax through increased subsidies for low-income areas were still applied the same tax rate even if they could not pay. As a result, a riot took place in London and protests across the country that would unseat Thatcher from power.¹⁵¹

“Get Your Cards... or Else”

This was the title of a brief article on the Prime Minister’s declaration to the leaders of football in Heysel’s aftermath, declaring that “Mrs. Thatcher is ready to force soccer clubs to introduce membership cards for fans to step up the war against hooliganism”¹⁵². Given her reputation for steadfast statements, this fit her standards for behavior, but it would not take long for opposition to arise to identification cards in a similar time frame as the Poll Tax protests. One major voice within football’s administration came from FA secretary Croker, but he stressed the monetary cost, in this case the 50,000 pounds that Chelsea spent on updating safety barriers and fencing but did not solve all of their problems.¹⁵³ For the clubs and in wider management, money was still the primary consideration over why identity cards felt misguided, yet parliament still attempted to push through a law for membership cards in time for the 1985/86 season.¹⁵⁴ Additionally, Chelsea’s chairman Ken Bates cited how the cards were just a piece of plastic and

¹⁵⁰ Smith, Page 427

¹⁵¹ Smith, page 429

¹⁵² Grice, Andy. “Get Your Membership Cards... Or Else | Liverpool Echo | Wednesday 12 June 1985 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 10, 2020.

¹⁵³ “Liverpool Echo | Saturday 29 June 1985 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 10, 2020.

¹⁵⁴ “Home & Abroad | Newcastle Journal | Thursday 04 July 1985 | British Newspaper Archive.” Accessed November 10, 2020.

that there was nothing to stop members from passing their cards back through the crowd.¹⁵⁵

Through these moments, laws that affected football fans were apart of larger political changes directed at the working class. In this, Thatcher successfully in laid the groundwork for the changes to come by leading the general public toward coming to a solution, no matter how good the end result turned out to be.¹⁵⁶

While more important politically to Britain than the failed ID card scheme, the Poll Tax's story revealed just as much about the sentiment of mistreatment of the working class under Margaret Thatcher, and why stadiums were admonished for their problems instead of offered solutions. As a measure of her political goals, Thatcher sought to control the government at all levels by centralizing funding distribution from London and the national government. Instead, the Conservative government operated on an assumption that both the poll tax and ID card laws would be widely accepted when there was clear proof that it would do more to support specific sections of the public and hurt others. Even as one political scheme failed in the poll tax, the same issues led to the ID movement's failure, as it was made clear as an ineffective method when no other group participating in a leisure activity suffered the same level of surveillance. In both instances as well, ineffective rollout should have proved these plans were not ready or viable for enforced use.

Before examining the major tragedies of this period, a final point worth considering returns to the Bradford Fire, which Anthony King argues was the "conjectural moment in which football was recognized to be in crisis."¹⁵⁷ Ultimately, the Bradford Fire did more to close out the

¹⁵⁵ "Maggie's Dream Gets The Red Card | Aberdeen Evening Express | Saturday 06 July 1985 | British Newspaper Archive." Accessed November 10, 2020.

¹⁵⁶ The football Spectators Act of 1989 was the culmination of a drawn-out political process amidst its protests and failures to prove that ID cards would limit the abilities of hooligans. It would also spawn the Football Supporters Association as a pressure group that still exists to this day.

¹⁵⁷ See 59, Page 73

last period than open the new one, as it showed where the faults within football and stadiums had yet to be taken seriously. While there was an investigation that resulted in the Popplewell Report,¹⁵⁸ the press and political reaction was simply not strong enough for a third division club as it would be for a major club in Liverpool after Heysel, which was addressed legally in an updated version of Popplewell's work in January of 1986.

The slum game, shorn of its most belligerent and chaotic supporters, excluded by surveillance and cost, would by transmuted from social outcast to one of the central cultural experiences of the new millennium. What price football would subsequently pay with its soul was yet to be determined.¹⁵⁹

While the focus of exclusion in this quote could just as easily pop up in the 1990's or 21st century, its recognition of the now central position for problematic groups associated with football in ways that the Bradford Fire could not during an accidental disaster. As mentioned before, the first major moment of the period between 1985 and 1989 did not even take place in England and instead during the European Cup final between Liverpool and Juventus in Brussels, Belgium. On May 29, 1985, a scuffle between Liverpool and Italian fans of Juventus fans caused a wall to collapse, leading to the death of 39 Italian fans and injuries to 300 other spectators. The game was still played out even as bodies were ferried to the morgue, and Liverpool won 1-0.¹⁶⁰ From this moment, there were some glaring reasons that created widespread culpability for the disaster, beginning with the stadium's decrepit state and its safety features as well as the decision to appoint a police officer in charge of this final though he had never overseen a match before.¹⁶¹ In this situation, another major factor was not the increased segregation of fans behind fences,

¹⁵⁸Mr Justice Popplewell, Chairman. "Committee of Inquiry into Crowd Safety and Control at Sports Grounds, Final Report. Cmnd. 9710." Home Office (UK), January 1986.

¹⁵⁹ Miller, David, Clive White, and Stuart Jones. "Football: England Punished For Years Of Indiscipline." *The Times*, June 3, 1985. The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶⁰ Goldblatt, David. *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Soccer*. First Riverhead trade paperback edition. New York: Riverhead Books, 2008. ©2006, 2008. pages 548-551

¹⁶¹ Four years would change little, the same lack of experience for the police chief would re-occur in the Hillsborough disaster

but lax organizational management that resulted in Liverpool and Juventus fans intermixing throughout the ground. Given the often-organized violence proffered by the hooligans of the era, which featured intense ritual "charges" in England,¹⁶² separation was key to maintaining order. Even in this, a major shortcoming at this time remained how to get spectators into the ground safely and keep them that way. Instead, a drunken barrage of missiles and a haphazard charge at the neutral section by Liverpool fans resulted in the collapse of a barrier. This resulted into a panicked retreat, which forced fans up against a free-standing wall that collapsed on top of them.

Much of this history comes from writings far removed from the moment itself. For Liverpoolians, and many other domestic commentators in Heysel's immediate aftermath, closing England's football clubs off to outside interaction represented a positive solution after this crisis:

There is enough money going into the game as far as domestic games are concerned and if English clubs are allowed into Europe again similar things to what we saw in Brussels will occur again. Mr. F. Dacre, Skelmersdale¹⁶³ in submission to *Liverpool Echo*

This view perpetuated the opinion that lawless fans and European leadership were responsible for Heysel, thus removing any blame from the English themselves. As the paper of the local club whose fans played a huge role in the incident, the *Liverpool Echo* had some incentive to publish views defending its readers. But as it were, Heysel then became more of a reputational issue for the English than a reason to call for the structural changes demanded in the aftermath of Heysel, which resulted in a ban of English clubs in European competition from 1985-1990.¹⁶⁴ In press conference immediately following Heysel, Thatcher's stance suggested

¹⁶² Dunning et al, 169

¹⁶³ Liverpool Echo, 8 June 1985

¹⁶⁴ Burnton, Simon. 2020. "'Quarantine Our Sad, Sick Game': How Heysel Tragedy Changed English Football | Simon Burnton." *The Guardian*, June 2, 2020, sec. Football.

the willingness to pull England back from the international stage so that a solution could be reached.

And the safety against football hooliganism which as we have seen can be every bit as damaging in terms of life and don't forget there are a lot of people injured as well as those who've lost their lives. And I think there'll be certain common factors. But I think we must concentrate on this country and on cleaning up football. After all if we clean it up here and we come to identify the thugs and make certain that they can come neither to our football grounds nor to those overseas then we really will have got to the root of the problem.¹⁶⁵

Because Heysel occurred away from British soil, the choice to prevent English teams from competing in European competition reflected the role of this moment as less significant than Hillsborough, and the interim absence of English clubs from European competition until the Italia 90 World Cup creates a good framework for this period. Despite the lack of understanding shown by British authorities towards football throughout past stadium issues, it made some practical sense to try and fix their own problems before re-engaging the world around them.

Without serious measures to change the layout of stadiums until after Hillsborough, the Heysel disaster was a reputational blight on the record of the English at a time when Margaret Thatcher and leadership were seeking to improve and spread their global reputation – more than Bradford or the death of a young fan at Birmingham or a riot by Millwall supporters at Luton – which were all more hidden from a global eye.¹⁶⁶ As this period came to its climax, the projection of the Hillsborough disaster into the international discussion created a maelstrom of commentary that elaborated how poorly football and its stadiums were perceived at this time.

Hillsborough: The Final Straw for Britain's Stadiums

¹⁶⁵ “Press Conference after Heysel Stadium Disaster | Margaret Thatcher Foundation.” Accessed March 25, 2021. <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/106060>.

¹⁶⁶ For further investigation, a search of the Birmingham tragedy and the Luton riot in 1985 better tell the story. While equally worth investigation, much of the language around these moments is similar to that of Heysel and later of Hillsborough, though on much smaller stages. However, because there was no substantial impact until English clubs were banned from Europe after Heysel, the reaction was not as regretful so much as remorseful.

Despite futile attempts to prevent more casualties, disaster would force change faster than Thatcher when the Hillsborough disaster took place on 15 April, 1989 at an FA Cup semifinal between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. On this occasion, 96 Liverpool fans lost their lives in a crush at the front of a terrace at the Hillsborough Stadium, the home of Sheffield Wednesday. Until Hillsborough, the established practice for Cup ties at neutral venues entailed segregating the attendees by placing the most vocal supporters at opposite ends of the ground. For unknown reasons, Liverpool were given the Leppings Lane end, the stadium's smaller west end even though they were the club with a larger support base. Additionally, the Leppings Lane terrace only allowed crowd movement downward, while barring lateral traffic, thus limiting space in which to relieve pressure when the stand became too full. Combined with an antiquated stadium built before World War I, an inexperienced police chief, David Duckenfeld, was put in charge of the match in a similar circumstance to Heysel.

As a result, the game began with little police response to the growing panic and crush forming at the Liverpool's end of the ground. Fans were struggling to climb over a sharp fence designed to keep them in the stand and signs of suffocation were taking place, but the game did not stop immediately. Eventually, the match was suspended after a few minutes and fans used stretchers to help injured friends and other supporters as the police and medical services struggled to reach those who needed assistance.¹⁶⁷ In what many regular supporters considered the culmination of 20 years of incidents, there was now little choice but to acknowledge the problems that many stadiums presented to anyone associated with football in any way.

¹⁶⁷ Taylor, Lord Justice. "The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster, 15 April, 1989. Interim Report. Cm 765." UK Parliamentary Papers, August 1989. Pages 4-16. This is the first version of the Taylor Report that would be finalized in 1990. Initially commissioned by the Conservative Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, the first version went into further depth as to what transpired on the day of the event and why. The final report, which will feature heavily in the next section, provides more guidance and potential solutions to help football survive in the face of tremendous pressure following the loss of more lives.

The source of this information, the Taylor Report, was one of many investigations into the event in an effort to fully publish the facts – a sign of how important finding new approaches to more fatalities at football grounds had become. Two different coroner’s inquiries were performed, as well as an inquiry by Lord Justice Stewart-Smith in 1997, which contributed to a sentiment that the truth was not fully revealed, and that the government was not prepared to do so.¹⁶⁸ This would later prove to be true, as a final independent report, published in 2012, revealed that the police had made efforts to cover up the evidence by censoring their reports and embellishing their stories.¹⁶⁹ As a result, those who had lost loved ones in the disaster were able to prove their innocence in causing the loss of life.¹⁷⁰ Because reports on this singular disaster continued to grow in number and purpose, the reactions to Hillsborough mark it out as the most impactful moment on the perception of stadiums throughout their modern history.

Though it took over 20 years to reach the comprehensive independent report after Taylor’s original final draft, media members and fans revealed how Hillsborough became the tipping point for the mistreatment of football followers, the mismanagement of safety within stadiums, and the inability for politicians to stay ignorant of the situation in this period. Additionally, the need to investigate this moment well past its occurrence explained just as much about how problematic this moment was for a wider British public, as well as the government in their attempts to find legal solution or resolution, and in the efforts by fans to prove that they were not solely or at all to blame.

¹⁶⁸ Shennan, Paddy. “Andy Burnham: Stuart-Smith’s Hillsborough Inquiry Had Feel of Establishment Cover-Up.” Liverpool Echo, September 10, 2012.

¹⁶⁹ Hillsborough Independent Panel, Great Britain, Parliament, and House of Commons. *The Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel*. London: The Stationery Office, 2012.

¹⁷⁰ For a vivid depiction of the Hillsborough disaster, who it affected and how it came to a resolution in 2012, it’s worth watching the ESPN documentary, “Hillsborough”. Through the excellent investigative work of a professor based in Sheffield and the persistence of family members of the deceased, a better understanding came to light of the most significant in modern footballing history and how the truth was hidden for an extended period of time by the government.

While less emphatic in her statements, Thatcher reflected the tone of the period in her remarks on Hillsborough. "It is a disaster of enormous proportions, coming on top of many precautions which have already been taken and which clearly have not been enough."¹⁷¹ In this moment, she correctly acknowledged that past approaches had failed to make stadiums safer. Where this caused further issues came from her continued push to enact ID cards at football matches despite the issues in crowd safety mechanisms that resulted in the eventual fatalities, not the tracking of potential hooligans in attendance. As Thatcher pushed her way through political controversy attempting to prove her stance, she often went about achieving her goals in ways that fit norms or even the public's desires, and the continued desire ID cards throughout this period fit into this behavior. From her response in the House of Lords, the upper chamber of the British Parliament, to resistance towards ID cards, she continued to double down on her desires for social "accountability":

I answered some questions from this Dispatch Box last week pointing out that there had been nearly 300 deaths in the post-war period from crush and hooliganism in football, that unless we had a Bill we should be unable to take any action contained in the measure apart from the national membership scheme and that I believed that, against that number of deaths, for the House to wash its hands of such a Bill would be negligent in the extreme.¹⁷²

Much like the poll tax that would see her ousted from power, Thatcher continued to treat football as a problem that she had to deal with in whatever method she saw fit. Equally, her claims that the House of Lords attempted to absolve itself from blame were misguided as she tried to pin guilt on local constituents who had nothing to do with what took place. By missing the point but still recognizing what went wrong, the ID card scheme, the political discussions and the press reaction all pointed towards the treatment of stadiums as a problematic place.

¹⁷¹ Davenport, Peter. "Police in 'open Gate' Inquiry." *The Times*, April 17, 1989. The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁷² "Engagements - Tuesday 25 April 1989 - Hansard - UK Parliament." Accessed February 22, 2021.

Looking at the press reaction helps to situate a wider understanding of the problems affecting stadiums, and Hillsborough itself made it painfully clear where specific sections within the media pointed their focus. In the disaster's immediate aftermath, when much still had yet to be uncovered, *The Times* of London attempted to present more facts without embellishment while still considering echoes of similar moments from the past:

There were also claims that the death toll was increased by the inadequate response of rescue services and that the seeds of disaster were sown long before Saturday's game – by the intransigence of the FA and the endemic problem of soccer hooliganism.¹⁷³

There first existed an attempt to acknowledge the reasons for the disaster for taking place, but also an attempt to pin the tragedy on the fans, who had been at times been the cause at Heysel but were now the victim at Hillsborough. By discussing the problem of hooliganism even when it had nothing to do with the Hillsborough disaster, the equivocation of all problems in football for stadiums made this response representative of this period, as even the FA could not avoid mention for their inaction after Hillsborough and other past moments.

The *Daily Mirror* tabloid, which began its coverage of the disaster in surprisingly level tones, appeared much different when it allowed its chief soccer writer, Harry Harris, to pen his column. Describing the incident, he wrote “They rushed like lemmings into the Leppings Lane stand once the fateful decision of opening the gates had been taken.”¹⁷⁴

While much of the coverage was at first remorseful, taking the side of those who had suffered and attempting to detail with what had occurred, the primary writer chooses to highlight the fans who were eager to see an extremely important match and were given little guidance as to what was going on inside.

¹⁷³ “Hurd Pledges Action as Deaths Reach 94.” *The Times*, April 17, 1989. The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁷⁴ “Page 38 Daily Mirror 17, 1989.

The *Liverpool Echo* sought to highlight the victims instead of any potential role they may have played. In this moment, they call out an attack from UEFA president Jaques Georges, who was quoted as saying:

Liverpool's fans have been involved in two of the greatest tragedies in modern sport. This region seems to have a particularly aggressive mentality... One had the impression they were beasts waiting to charge into the arena. It was not far from hooliganism.¹⁷⁵

But where in the death of children, and parents and brothers and sisters did the media report that a forced push had resulted in this catastrophe? Instead of spotting the difference of Liverpool fans as victims in Hillsborough instead of perpetrators at Heysel, Georges heaped further blame onto them for their eagerness to see the match instead of finding fault with the facilities that led them to their deaths. While only alluding to hooliganism, he added further analysis fitting to this period in which fans were seen as the causes of danger at every turn. The editorial in the *Liverpool Echo* suggested an awareness more accurate of the changes about to take place:

Already it is clear that there are two separate issues to be examined - the general one of safety at soccer stadia and the particular events of Saturday. Our stadia are, in the main, a squalid disgrace. A game which spends millions on transfer fees and millions more on salaries for mediocre managers and players appears to begrudge every penny it spends on the fans who keep it alive.

This recognized the problematic nature of stadiums in this era. Through the continued lack of serious government action in the previous 15 years and beyond, the people inside football grounds were regarded poorly and managed for the problematic reputations of a select few. Without an event like Hillsborough, it may have taken another 10 years before disaster struck or even longer for stadiums to improve safety on their own. Instead, Hillsborough became the culmination of what needed to be done prevent tragedy from occurring without blaming those who are not responsible.

¹⁷⁵ Liverpool Echo | Monday 17 April 1989

In continuing from the *Echo*: "It is the sort of control that treats fans as animals to be caged. That, when people are dying, finds a way of getting Alsatians (police dogs) on the pitch, but cannot clear a path for ambulances."¹⁷⁶

Instead of trying to grab attention like a tabloid, the *Echo* as Liverpool's local paper clearly addressed the problems that contributed to Hillsborough and sought a solution by understanding what went wrong instead of pointing blame on those who simply wish to enjoy a football match.

The *Daily Express*, a more Conservative-leaning paper, went through a steady evolution, from first suggesting remorse but then presenting the attack of Tory MP Irvine Patrick, who backed police claims that they were being attacked, when this was later to be proven as a cover-up what to happened. He said:

I have kept quiet about this because I did not want to inflame a delicate situation. They had no reason to lie. I saw the bruising on their bodies... One important question that must be answered is what part alcohol played in this whole tragic business.¹⁷⁷

What part did alcohol play? Did they know? Most of those who died were not able to drink alcohol in the crush, let alone arrive at the match that early and drunk. To publish this statement appeared exceptionally inconsiderate of the truth and the victims and for as offensive as it was, it was indicative of trying to understand what was wrong by the same standards set by the Prime Minister.

In response to attempts by the press, Thatcher, and the Conservative party to generalized the poor behavior of football fans, as well as the attempts of hooliganism to derail public perception for football, an "explicitly non-violent" literary movement arose in England.¹⁷⁸ Primarily led by the publication *When Saturday Comes*, fans across the country took on an

¹⁷⁶ Liverpool Echo, April 17, 1989, page 2

¹⁷⁷ "Police Accuse Drunken Fans." *Daily Express*, April 19, 1989.

¹⁷⁸ See 149, Page 548

increasing role in the public sphere to fill perceived gaps left by the traditional press.¹⁷⁹ Where this can be seen from all angles is an article by *When Saturday Comes*, in June 1989. Two months after the Hillsborough disaster, more time had passed for all parties to analyze the situation and come to informed solutions. In this case, the lead article chose to examine the respective opinions and what may come of them. It accurately determined, as so many had done before, that what had led to the deaths of 96 people in April of that year was a pattern of inaction to deal with the situation at hand, that one could by then trace back to the White Horse Final and long before then to Hampden in 1903. Line by line, the stadium revealed itself as a place to pin people to their origins, to escape their work, and to keep making money.

The police see us as a mass entity, fueled by drink and a single-minded resolve to wreak havoc by destroying property and attacking one another with murderous intent. Containment and damage limitation is at the core of the police strategy.

The identity of the “football fan” as a scapegoat for society’s problems had been recognized on a number of occasions since the sixties through the installation of fencing and in each major disaster.¹⁸⁰ Through the same process that had begun in the sixties and transitioned to football fans by the eighties, members of Britain’s youth were represented as “threats” to society as a whole. The stadium then served as the easiest place to control this, and experiences were reinforced following the tragedy of Heysel four years before and routine incidents over the previous 80 years. As Hillsborough had revealed, trying to segment the problem resulted in an overflow of each respective issue into more serious problems.

Disasters are happening so regularly now that we have developed a meaningless set of pseudo-religious rituals to acknowledge them. As has been clear for a long time, no

¹⁷⁹ *When Saturday Comes*, March 1986

¹⁸⁰ For more, see Melnick, Merrill J. "The mythology of football hooliganism: A closer look at the British experience." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 21, no. 1 (1986): 1-21. This research provided a closer study of how the media promoted an image of the hooligan. Instead of degrading the idea of a rowdy fan, the media was shown to increase the desirable aspects of being a hooligan through raising the allure of regularly having your fights covered in the press.

disaster is worthy of the name until leading religious and political figures are officially informed and have given suitably trite quotes to the press. This immediate reaction is followed by The Visit. The seniority of the visitor is determined by media interest and death toll, and is, of course, performed primarily for the benefit of those clicking cameras. Survivors' stories are served up in tandem with chilling reminders of how easily death can take any of us.¹⁸¹

Much as the fifties saw stadiums become resistant to change and the sixties sought to compartmentalize the danger to other sections of the ground, it became clear by this period that the choice to discriminate against football fans was never about the game itself, but the consumption of it, and who did it. What then made this reaction to Hillsborough important resulted in who wrote this article: a fan and writer independent of a club or traditional newspaper. Though this new source of commentary from the fan highlighted the routine nature of disasters and the reaction, its presence in the larger conversation illustrated how this disaster provided a tipping point for more groups to offer explanations for what took place and why.

With Hillsborough and its disaster warranting reactions from entirely new voices in addition to the traditional commentators, considering the reasons why this stadium hosted important matches despite its faults provide more context to how danger became routine, but also to why the situation became intolerable for stadiums. First, Hillsborough earned the title of “probably the safest ground in the country” in August of 1986.¹⁸² But how warranted was that appreciation? At Hillsborough, metal walls corralled fans towards the turnstiles and towards the even tighter entrances to the terraces. For a number of years, police did little more than stand around. On the day of the disaster, entire stories detailed how a misguided police chief had no right to be responsible for this match at a notorious stadium for no other reason than its large capacity when in reality it presented immense dangers that had been narrowly avoided

¹⁸¹ When Saturday Comes, June 1989, page 3

¹⁸² Inglis, 1996, 329

previously.¹⁸³ In a situation where luck resulted in fans making it home safe more often than not, acknowledging how misguided previous safety practices had become served as a feature of why Hillsborough not only warranted further attention but resulted in a higher death total.

In the aftermath of Hillsborough, the government ordered the Taylor Report¹⁸⁴ to assess the damage, just as Hughes and Wheatley had done before. Unlike the previous two, Lord Justice Taylor's recommendations became mandatory and supported in order to enact all-seater stadiums in the Premier League by 1995. It also made many recommendations for improving relations between fans and club leadership as well as improving amenities at grounds.

As a result of the Hillsborough disaster and the string of incidents from previous years, the Taylor Report's presence signaled how this period treated the quality of life at football grounds as a political, social and economic problem. But, its placement in this chronology in the 1990's situates it as the answer to the problems posed by the troubles over the second half of the 1980s and for many years before. Heysel signaled a sharp break from the repeated incidents of the past by thrusting the poor behavior of English football fans onto a global stage. The striking similarities between the Belgian stadium and those across England made it easy to point where stadiums had gone wrong. The ensuing political and social reaction continued to reflect this period as the "peak" or, more precisely, the low point in the poor shape of stadiums through the recognition of what had so often gone wrong. Because the failures in finding solutions to these crises repeatedly took place until the 1990's, Hillsborough served as the peak of all peaks for the perception of stadiums and forcing a change in behavior to take place.

1990-1998: The Stadium as the Solution

The Premiership of the 1990's was being created in embryo. However, the final piece of the jigsaw remained unaddressed. The product had to be sanitized, the terraces removed

¹⁸³ Taylor, Lord Justice. "The Hillsborough Stadium Disaster: 15 April 1989." UK Parliament Papers, January 1990.

¹⁸⁴ Inglis, 1996, see Sheffield Wednesday

and replaced by seats. Indeed, the nation's stadiums as a whole needed to be rebuilt and that is precisely what the Taylor Report of the 1990's insisted upon. It would require the Hillsborough disaster to make it happen.¹⁸⁵

“We put up with all the privations, because it was the norm and football was cheap and one good result made it all worth it.”¹⁸⁶

From the perspective of management in football, the passage from the Hillsborough disaster to the Taylor Report's many recommendations raised the prospect of a thorough game's restructuring and spectators' stadium experience. As a result, stadiums from 1990-1998 fall into the period that regarded treating the stadium space as a “solution” to the many problems of the previous decade and century. What may have been even more important in this period than the Premier League's creation itself or the Taylor Report's guidelines, was the Football Association's “Blue Paper”,¹⁸⁷ known as “The Blueprint for the Future of Football,”¹⁸⁸ published in 1991. This document effectively spelled out how to change the demographic profile of football crowds by increasing price and amenities on offer as stadiums converted to all-seater.

Although mentioned less frequently than others referred to above, the Blue Paper represented the most concerted shift to adapt stadiums beyond the Taylor Report's obligations imposed on football clubs. To picture the changes that were now taking place and how the stadium became a "solution" to safety and reputational problems, the path from the Blueprint to the Premier League under the Taylor Report played out at Millwall FC's Den Stadium in East London. The Den's transformation, as the first effort by a club at any level to build an all-seater

¹⁸⁵ Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*. Pages 569-570

¹⁸⁶ Ezez. 2020. "The Den". *Millwall-history.org.uk*. http://www.millwall-history.org.uk/the_den.html.

¹⁸⁷ “White Papers” are documents commissioned by the government for research purposes. The Hughes, Wheatley, Chester, Popplewell, and Taylor Reports would all fall into this category. “Blue Papers” are technical documents designed to provide a guide for action, which is what the “Blueprint” intended to do.

¹⁸⁸ “The Football Association - The Blueprint for the Future of Football,” 1991

stadium, demonstrated how stadiums reached a turning point in their modern history and had to reconstruct their business models for the first time since many were built in the first place.¹⁸⁹

Before considering the Taylor Report's physical suggestions for stadiums or any resulting stories to detail the changes taking place, the "Blueprint for the Future of Football" begins this period by reflecting how clubs at the top level would treat their supporters. As has now become evident, few clubs showed concern for the conditions in stadiums, beyond those who could pay to sit in the growing number of executive boxes. By necessity and concentrated effort, this lack of concern reflected new commercial and social realities through the recommendations made in this initial guide, which the FA had commissioned even before the Taylor Report's final findings were publicized. In the aftermath of Hillsborough, the FA felt the need to come up with its own response to what had caused both the loss of life at football stadiums and the reasons why clubs were unable to respond to it. In that response, attempts were made to re-finance the highest levels of football in anticipation of the Taylor Report, and this resulted in the effort to form the Premier League as a "breakaway" organization.

A wide variety of actions can be traced to the suggestions provided in this work, which offered both a guide to what to do and foresight into what may take place as football expected to increase its income, but also the disparities that may arise between big and small clubs through the income derived from stadium size and the unequal sharing of broadcasting rights. With all of this to consider, the issues that received the most emphasis early in the guide concerned language relating to supporters: "As average spending power continues to increase in the future, it follows

¹⁸⁹ Though Scunthorpe United, a smaller club to the east of Manchester and Southeast of Hull, was the first to move to a completely new stadium, the mix of seating and terracing makes it different from Millwall's complete transition to an all-seater ground to combat their crowd troubles and stadium inadequacies. See Inglis, Scunthorpe United

that the range of options open to consumers, and hence the intensity of competition which football faces as a leisure pursuit, will continue to increase.”¹⁹⁰

Through their own research, which drew on a variety of data points and experts in different fields, the guide’s writers theorized that the 90’s would herald a new era in competition for the attention of consumers. This echoed logic similar to that in the 50s, when attendances dropped as the economy opened after the end of postwar austerity. While both the Blueprint and the advocates for floodlights in the 1950s treated football as a consumable commodity, this document sought change in the perception of football’s consumers in order to serve the economic problems that traditionally were offered as reasons not to make needed safety changes in grounds. While doubly important as a recurring theme, the Blueprint helps define this period with a greater emphasis on consumer awareness.

The research in the Blueprint research went on to say:

Although our analysis suggests that there will be a significant minority of consumers whose purchase and participation decisions continue to be driven primarily by price, the mass dynamic will be toward a more affluent consumer possessing more of what, historically, have been thought of as ‘middle class’ aspirations and values.¹⁹¹

Even if demand for live football was based on the desire to fit into a new class structure, embracing only those who had the money to spend ignored those who used their attendance to matches as more than just another activity, and in fact as a part of their experience and upbringing.¹⁹² In fact, the choice to move away from generational fans came as a result of further research, which determined that competing for the leisure time of the middle class to be more

¹⁹⁰ FA, 1991, page 7

¹⁹¹ FA, 1991, page 8

¹⁹² As previously mentioned in footnote #34, the book *Fever Pitch* by Nick Hornby (1991) was one of the most widely read books on football fandom in the nineties. Hornby, in the wider movement of fans sharing their stories in writing, traced his personal growth along with his memories of attending Arsenal matches and never feeling able to escape his fandom no matter how far away he moved from the club itself. It is not out of the question to think that many other fans could share similar stories to Hornby through lives guided by the football schedule and attending matches.

important than older fans who had built their social life around their support.¹⁹³ When later examining Millwall's Den stadium, the tension between existing fans and the transitional chairman's transitional desires would render this difference more important.

Before discussing the Den and what these suggestions looked like in action, the Blueprint took a moment to address historical stadium disasters and clearly define their desires for a changed future. "To modern eyes, however, it is astonishing that such tragedies did not occur more often."¹⁹⁴ This sought to clarify that the Blueprint looked at stadiums from a new perspective and would be more proactive in addressing the problems at hand across football, even if its focus ended up more commercial than sporting. A final line of note held more significance in addressing the evolving thought that emerged in the early 90s through more rigorous consumer research.

Because this information remained insufficient in professional football, the Blueprint suggested clubs should: "Routinely collect more information about, and views from, the customer- the football fan."¹⁹⁵ The impact comes from the use of the word "fan" instead of "supporter", as many would traditionally call themselves. For "supporters" which this paper has addressed spectators until now, their transition into "fans" incited a wider change from generational followers of a team to those whose allegiances were determined by how much money they spent. Though the Blueprint warned that exchanging "Supporters" for "customers"¹⁹⁶ would not provide long-term benefits, the awareness of this transition still resulted in lasting changes to how professional football and its stadiums were perceived.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ FA, 1991 page 10

¹⁹⁴ Ibid, page 19

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, page 24

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, page 27

¹⁹⁷ Chapter eight of the Blueprint (page 63) does discuss the historical "grassroots" or amateur football practices, but its recommendations came much later than the important benchmarks for what would change in professional stadiums. If looking at football as a sport, comparing the troubles to keep children involved in the sport in the early

While this information may seem standard in other industries, the management of football would take until the 21st century to widely include board members who understood consumer behavior.

As a result of the Blueprint and the now-emphasized desire to change the economics of top-level football, the attempted “breakaway” Premier League was formed in 1992. This league would introduce the focus of making the spaces of football more acceptable for commercial investment and a diverse international audience. Creating a new competition was made possible for a variety of reasons, but the English team’s success at the 1990 World Cup in Italy, widely heralded as a cultural phenomenon, featured larger and diverse viewing audiences, including 25.2 million for a semifinal match between England and West Germany, of which almost half were women.¹⁹⁸ Italy as hosts also presented a new template for what stadiums could look like through a greater variation in architectural design, which added to the tournament’s social successes.¹⁹⁹ What would have a greater impact on stadiums than the World Cup was the new league, which formed ahead of the renegotiation of television contracts in May of 1992. In those negotiations, an agreement between richer clubs managed to raise the television contract to a price of 304 million pounds between Sky and the BBC.²⁰⁰ Additionally, each club would get a vote on any league-wide decision and 50 per cent of the TV contract would be distributed

90’s and today are eerily similar and based around the same commercial motivations that prioritize levels competition over the wider athletic activities.

¹⁹⁸ King, 104. Taken from *The Times*, 14 July, 1994

¹⁹⁹ The 1990 World Cup in Italy helps to herald a shift in thought for other reasons as well, and a good example comes from Bill Buford’s famous book, *Among the Thugs*. Buford was an American studying in England and on a whim began to write a social study of hooligan culture by implanting himself on the terraces. He often found himself in the middle of fighting mobs and with men who were convicted criminals but also white-collar workers, and in the final section of the book, he goes to Italy for the tournament. While heading to the match, he comes across a march of England fans to the stadium and the attempt to charge the police and ground. But, this crowd mixed more people who were there for the experience of participating in a mob and less of the hooligans looking for a fight. Buford himself ended up getting beaten by the Italian police who had pushed him and many others into choke points and the crowd had lost on this occasion. Unlike the other stories of hooliganism that he captures throughout the book, Italia 90 was not emphasized as strongly by the popular press for the unsavory moments in the same way that other moments were.

²⁰⁰ King, page 110

equally to all clubs, and as the league pot traditionally distributed between all professional clubs in the top four divisions, this represented a favorable situation to mitigate concerns of growing inequality.²⁰¹ These changes concern more of the financial impact on all of football at the highest level, but Millwall would prove that making stadiums presentable for television would take time to address.

The third key to turning stadiums into the solution was the Taylor Report's final recommendations and guidelines.²⁰² In this, all teams in the top two divisions were required to convert their stadiums to an all-seated regime by 1994.²⁰³ A number of other recommendations sought to improve relations between clubs and fans by keeping ticket prices low as well as increasing the number of concessions to improve the experience, along with needed infrastructural changes to access points and the removal of fences, which had by now proven their inability keep spectators safe following nearly every major incident discussed so far.²⁰⁴ Although the Taylor Report was published before the Blueprint,²⁰⁵ because top clubs made their own efforts to redesign the finance of professional football in that document, financial recommendations made by the Taylor Report that encouraged steady ticket prices were left unheeded as from 1989-90 to 2011, the cheapest ticket at Arsenal's home stadium, from Highbury to the Emirates, rose from five pounds to 51.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Ibid, page 111

²⁰² Taylor, Lord Justice. 1990. Final Report

²⁰³ King, page 76

²⁰⁴ King, page 77

²⁰⁵ The final version of the Taylor Report was published in January of 1990; the Blueprint was made public in June of 1991

²⁰⁶ Conn, David. "The Premier League Has Priced out Fans, Young and Old." the Guardian, August 16, 2011.

In paragraph 53 of the first chapter in Part One of the Taylor, "Three somber lessons after Hillsborough," Taylor reflected on differing views of supporters between club boardrooms and the fans who pay to watch the matches:

As for the clubs, in some instances it is legitimate to wonder whether the directors are genuinely interested in the welfare of their grass-roots supporters. Boardroom struggles for power, wheeler-dealing in the buying and selling of shares and indeed of whole clubs sometimes suggest that those involved are more interested in the personal financial benefits or social status of being a director than of directing the club in the interests of its supporter customers. In most commercial enterprises, including the entertainment industry, knowledge of the customer's needs, his tastes and his dislikes is essential information in deciding policy and planning. But, until recently, very few clubs consulted to any significant extent with the supporters or their organisations.²⁰⁷

As a singular statement, this quote captured how for much of their history, the directors of football clubs showed little interest or expressed intolerance towards the match day environment of their stadiums. Until the sixties, spectators had greater control over their experience because little stood in the way of their attendance. However, from the sixties until the nineties, the use of boxes and fences exemplified further efforts to separate away problematic groups from the rich directors of clubs. By making this statement now, Taylor made it clear that these problems were contemporary issues still lingering when during the Hillsborough disaster that needed to change in its aftermath. This behavior by club leaders would reflect a long-targeted disinterest in *how* clubs made money as long as it kept coming in. The same antipathy from both national and club-level leadership plays heavily into how incidents at many grounds kept occurring even when numerous warnings had existed. With the Blueprint adapting the desires to improve the supporter-club relationship expressed by the Taylor Report to fit specific socio-economic goals, stadiums became emphasized in their role as a tool of change from the board level.

²⁰⁷ See 202, page 10

Both documents reflected an attempt to treat stadiums as a place to find a solution for football's problems, but one saw the chance to change the very demographic of who attends while the other merely sought more friendly terms between spectators that endured mistreatment for the past 30 years by club leaders. In Taylor's addressing of ticket prices, he did not make a specific legal recommendation for price ceilings and instead made a suggestion:

As to cost, clubs may well wish to charge somewhat more for seats than for standing but it should be possible to plan a price structure which suits the cheapest seats to the pockets of those presently paying to stand. At Ibrox, for example, seating is £6, standing £4 - not a prohibitive price or differential.²⁰⁸

This reflected different routes to the resolution of tension within stadiums. For Taylor, seating was seen as a necessary adjustment for safety and the goal can be achieved without drastically impacting those who could attend. For the Blueprint, the prices at top league grounds have all risen to exceptionally high degrees in order to take advantage of great desire for watching games in person. With the Taylor Report and the Blueprint as the precursors to the many changes that must come, using the stadiums as a solution for the problems of Heysel, Hillsborough and the many years before will play out in rapid time.

We put up with all the privations, because it was the norm and football was cheap and one good result made it all worth it.²⁰⁹

All of these implications for football spectators and the role of stadiums in the post-Blueprint era became clearly evident in the experience of Millwall FC's effort to rebuild their home ground, the Den, to the imperatives of the new era. More than perhaps any other experience, technical innovation or political ruling, that of Millwall represented the biggest promises and fears of changing how stadiums were used commercially and considered socially.

²⁰⁸ Taylor, Final Report, 1990, page 13

²⁰⁹ Ezez. 2020. "The Den". *Millwall-history.org.uk*. http://www.millwall-history.org.uk/the_den.html.

This quote, which came from a blog recapping a fan's experience of The Den before its demolition, encapsulated a club where the stadium was definitive in his memory and warrants repetition as a key idea during this period of transition.

Known as the "Dirty Den" to the tabloid press in the 1980's, The Den, home to Millwall F.C. in East London, was a hostile environment in a working-class part of the city with an extremely fervent following. The relative lack of change in the socio-economic status of the population as working-class painted a similar picture to other industrially-located grounds, but where The Den was how little change took place over the previous century and even after the New Den completed construction in 1993.

Aside from the additions of gas heating, new seats and a bathroom for women, not much changed about the stadium until the 1990's apart from the addition of floodlights in the 1950's and a new main stand, which was built after it burnt down from a cigarette and the stadium itself was bombed during World War II. The old Den also held the record for five forced closures of its stands from 1920-1978 due to crowd incidents. By the nineties, attendance dropped to under 5,000 as the problems grew of crowd trouble and a poor facility, and a cut in attendance to 18,900 from the original average of around 30,000. Changes slowly began under the leadership of Reg Burr, who became chairman in 1985. He instigated further actions after Millwall made it to Division One in 1988 and only lasted two seasons before being sent down. While spotlighting the top league as the goal, having only three executive boxes and 3,200 seats made the financial constraints of the club clear to see when television contracts were on the horizon in the early nineties and other clubs could host over 40,000 fans per match. Further issues arose after the failure of a bond issue and the loss of money through property deals with a PLC called Millwall Holdings, which was floated on the stock market. With crowd troubles, serious debt and the

Taylor Report on the horizon, it was time to start anew, even with existing shortfalls of money to properly build a new facility.²¹⁰

The new ground arose just as quickly as the old one fell after completion in 1993. A facility built almost to the letter of the Taylor Report's code, it was constructed with exemplary accommodations for disabled spectators and proper provisions for toilets spread throughout the ground. This could not be said for the Old Den, which was most notable for overflowing toilets and the clear sound of water rushing at the back of the stands in the 1980's, per the blog Millwall

History:

The seats made up around 10% of the grounds pre-GLC's restricted capacity and were often only half full. My rare visits to seats were confined to reserve team games, sitting towards the Ilderton Road with the soundtrack of running water from cisterns of the urinals at the back of the away section.... Visiting the toilets conferred membership of the swimming and diving club as the recessed floor channels overflowed. The Hamburger stand positioned in front disguised the aroma with fried onions.²¹¹

Though this allusion to a grander time for Millwall was unique in its lack of focus on famous teams, it was doubly emphasized by the desire to persist with this experience well after the changes of this period necessitated new features for stadiums. In this instance, a fan-writer acknowledged the often-horrid nature of sanitation but also the food's allure. With neither the good nor the bad hidden, they accompany the story of his experience as a supporter and to separate them would misrepresent the meaning of The Den as a place that resisted outside intrusion.

The *Sunday Tribune* gave a keenly observed description of the place following a late-season match against Manchester City in 1990: "In the workday surroundings of the Den (Manchester City) had to scrap for their life to wrestle a draw away from Millwall..." As a

²¹⁰ Inglis, Simon., 1996. *Football Grounds of Britain*. London: Collins Willow. P. 252-257 (See Millwall)

²¹¹ Ezez. 2020. "The Den". *Millwall-history.org.uk*.

result, even as the stadium changed shape and location, it was unable to escape the realities of how this stadium remained a valuable part of the experience to some spectators. On the final match day for the old ground, an invasion occurred which featured this sign:



Amidst the turmoil of a torn turf and seats thrown at executives running for cover, the most vocal portion of the fans made their voices clear. Throughout this moment, the press exacerbated the fears of portions of readers by entitling the protests as a “Shame” and the “eruption” of pitch invasions. Instead of mentioning that the invasions occurred in reaction to the debt-filled demise of The Den, the media exemplified the attempts to oust the bad from stadiums and make them a socially sanitized space. Another important voice of this moment came from the chairman, Reg Burr, who stated, “I don’t want to think there was any malice intended. If it was, it was directed at me.” In a clear statement of intent, Burr continued to attempt to shoulder the burden of Millwall’s generational fan issues by sweeping them under the rug.²¹² Just as Thatcher railed against in danger in the 1980’s, and the Blueprint suggested in 1990, Burr sought to expunge the worst of his spectator base when moving to the new ground, thus using it to change how football was perceived through its stadiums. Conversely, the fans who protested the

²¹² *Daily Mirror*, May 10, 1993

Old Den's final day showed how transitioning the purpose of stadiums away from its local identity would not prove a simple task.

After the new stadium completed construction, the "New" Den's environment played out probably as one would expect after considering the Taylor Report and Blueprint. Foremost among the changes, the atmosphere was dampened with distant stands open at the corners, ticket prices were higher.²¹³ Additionally, in a match in November of 1994, a pitch invasion occurred at the New Den to protest the sale of two players to Wimbledon and call for the resignation of Reg Burr. In an article entitled "Den of Despair,"²¹⁴ the press exemplified how the New Den still served as a place for Millwall's fans to protest. For incidents to occur both before and after the building of an all-seater stadium, Millwall served as a mirror to the usage of stadiums as a solution through their attempts to reverse a substantial social and economic debt.

From the Taylor Report and the Blueprint to Millwall, stadiums were used during the 1990's to change the wider perception of sport and its spaces. Trying to make more money from a stadium dated back to floodlights as a technology, but new grounds and increased prices became a more prominent feature by the nineties. Instead of separating spectators through physical barriers by erecting new fences, prices became the primary form of exclusion by turning supporters into fans and customers in order to solve the economic and social problems within stadiums. As this transition took place, Millwall placed themselves squarely at the center of developments while building the New Den. Through their story, it became clear that efforts to sanitize and re-imagine the stadium would receive pushback if abrupt changes were enacted. It also remains worth mentioning that Millwall served as an outlier for the reputation of their supporters at a small club, but their story still illustrated a specific use of stadiums in this period.

²¹³ See 205

²¹⁴ *Daily Mirror*, November 21, 1994

1998-2019: The Stadium as Income

Following the transition to television revenue and higher wealth base for football and answering the questions that Hillsborough necessitated, the only teams to build new stadiums – like Millwall, Bolton and Newcastle – were ones that set out in search of more money to compete with the biggest clubs. At the biggest clubs, the greater onus was on redeveloping existing facilities that had existed since before the wars in order to remain competitive, a more stable position from which to work. These shifts signal the transition into the modern period, which began in 1998 and has extended to the present day, as many recent changes to stadiums occurred at or shortly after the turn of the century, and can be defined by their seeing the stadium as a source of income. At a time when the crowd has changed and sources of income adapted to fit social and economic goals, the next step has been to make stadiums competitive as a leisure space for the middle and upper classes by offering amenities not available to the traditional working-class crowds.

In another story of rebuilding in London, Arsenal's move from their historic home at North London's Highbury to the Emirates Stadium emphasized the changing nature of both football management and its stadiums, which became increasingly corporatized spaces designed to sell ads and attract spectators, instead of social spaces. Led by boards built around business acumen instead of football, stadiums of the 21st century were more successful in shifting their attention to attracting wealthier crowds in ways not possible during the move of Millwall in the early 1990's. As a result, while the stadium made the transition to focus on revenue, it would trade the social experiences that made football an important part of the culture in exchange for

increased financial stability. Tottenham's new stadium, completed in 2019, rounds out the most recent period of development as the last top club to update their home ground.

Part of the pressures faced by club boardrooms were the increasingly poor surroundings that major stadiums occupied. Traditionally built amid the working-class communities that founded them, stadiums became subjects of further discussion as their target audience rose in cost while the surrounding area remained poor. According to the 2019 "English Indices of Deprivation", Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and various London neighborhoods are routinely present in multiple rankings.²¹⁵ These are also the cities with the biggest football clubs by support and history. Through the property developments discussed below, Arsenal was able to improve the socioeconomic standing of their Islington home in North London,²¹⁶ but the most deprived locations in England between 2004 and 2019 are still in cities.²¹⁷

Beginning in 1998, Arsenal made the decision to play Champions League matches at Wembley Stadium, on the other side of London, for two seasons.²¹⁸ When commercial obligations and other UEFA requirements reduced their potential attendance at Highbury to 35,500, the club sacrificed their natural home-field advantage in favor of trying to recoup the lost revenue from a shrinking ground.²¹⁹ However, the matches at Wembley also turned into a test if Arsenal was capable of filling a completely new, larger stadium. According to David Dein, the chairman at the time, "We are at a disadvantage [at Highbury]. You go to Old Trafford and

²¹⁵ "The English Indices of Deprivation 2019," n.d., 31. Page 11

²¹⁶ Indices of Deprivation, 2019, page 15

²¹⁷ Great Britain, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Great Britain, and Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. *The English Indices of Deprivation 2004*. London: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004.

²¹⁸ Riley, Catherine. "Moving Stadiums, with Ken Friar, Director of Arsenal." *The Times*, January 13, 2003. The Times Digital Archive.

²¹⁹ While Highbury was trapped in tight quarters, Manchester United expanded to become the largest club stadium in all of Great Britain when a second tier was added to the former terrace at the Stretford End in 2000. In 2005-2006, the stadium was expanded again to take the total capacity of just over 76,000 by 2007. For more, check out the Deloitte Football Money League | Deloitte UK." Accessed November 25, 2020.

<https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sports-business-group/articles/deloitte-football-money-league.html>.

they've got over 60,000 of their fans behind them. People want to see us. Now is the best time to act."²²⁰ When their North Bank stand was rebuilt earlier in the 1990's to meet the Taylor Report's requirements, Arsenal were already feeling the financial effects of a restrictive ground in comparison to other clubs. By playing at Wembley, they indicated strongly that moving to a new ground or finding any way to completely rebuild Highbury was a necessity. What next became important was the successful presentation by Antony Spencer, a man with knowledge of local real estate, who led the project to keep the club in its present neighborhood. This necessitated buying out properties at Ashburton Grove, a collection of buildings and housing a quarter of a mile away from Highbury, and raising their revenue streams to pay for the stadium.²²¹

Amidst this, the club slowly committed to this plan, and found themselves becoming the largest property owner in the area during a crippling economic downturn during the early 2000's. To help shore up their finances, Keith Edelman arrived on the board from Manchester United, bringing greater interest in the club's economics, as United were the first to install executive boxes in the sixties and became notable for their commercial practices in the early 90's. With the club's commercial interests now accounted for, the club's sporting success remained under Dein's purview, but even he recognized that Arsenal needed help to pull their stadium move off

²²⁰ Fynn, Alex, and Kevin Witcher. *Arsenal: The Making of a Modern Superclub*. Third Edition. Falkirk, Stirlingshire: Vision Sports Publishing, 2013. Pages 113-114. Something worth considering about why both Arsenal found itself in a poorer neighborhood and why so many fans flocked to Wembley is the Right to Buy housing scheme. Long since a plan for the British Right-Wing, Margaret Thatcher brought forth the Housing Act of 1980 to encourage further home ownership by permitting the purchasing of council homes at reduced loans. The original idea behind this was to encourage classes of lower economic status to have a greater role in politics by owning a physical property. The result was instead a generational loss of income as housing prices fluctuated, and reinforced social classes as the same people that escaped the cities by purchasing council homes found their neighborhoods filled by the same people. For Arsenal, the traditional support base that lived near their ground now lived in the counties on the edges of London, which moved the population further from its historic home in Islington. By the turn of the century, Islington was now filled with the same low-income population but with less local support for Arsenal. For more on the Housing Act, see the Guardian. "The Right to Buy: The Housing Crisis That Thatcher Built," August 26, 2015. To understand what Arsenal and North London looked like to a fan, see Nick Hornby's famous book, *Fever Pitch*.

²²¹ Ibid. pages 116-117

without collapsing financially in the process. “Maybe so, but contracts with builders and bankers rather than the football authorities were now the order of the day.”²²² This recognition showed the growing role of administrators like Edelman, who arrived after revamping the merchandising program at Manchester United – a task that Arsenal had yet to master as a new source of income. After football survived its period of transition in the nineties and gained support from television contracts, taking advantage of that money required different skillsets from club administrators by the 2000’s.

When the new stadium completed construction, its final cost reached 430 million pounds, a sum which bought up all of the old properties where the stadium would move to at Ashburton Grove, renovated much of the area, and built the new stadium.²²³ Even with a price that may seem cheap by today’s standards (Tottenham needed one billion US Dollars to construct a new home), building a new stadium would have immense financial consequences for Arsenal’s squad that were evident before, during and long after the completion of the Emirates.²²⁴ This resulted in team manager Arsene Wenger being the most important piece of funding Highbury through his ability to build the squad cheaply. While the trips to Wembley were the first sign that commercial interests became more important to the stadium, it was in 2004 when the stadium started to look and feel like something else entirely, with many more layers beyond the impressively modern feel during its unveiling.

Of the aspects of stadiums that were corporatized in the 2000’s, the selling of naming rights became an important trend, and when building their new ground, Arsenal signed a deal with Emirates Airlines.²²⁵ This deal superseded the club’s previous choices to call the project the

²²² Ibid, page 120

²²³ Fynn and Witcher, page 120

²²⁴ Fynn and Witcher, page 130-131

²²⁵ By comparison, selling naming rights became a trend for arenas in the United States in the 1980’s.

“stadium at Ashburton Grove”, which could have limited the value as tied to a place without significance outside of a local audience. Arsenal was not the first to sign away the naming rights of their stadium, as that title belongs to Scarborough FC, who re-named their Athletic Ground into McCain's Stadium, after a frozen food company from Canada, though that stadium has since been torn down. The first major stadium to earn a non-traditional name was Bolton, which christened their new ground as Reebok Stadium in 1997 when they moved from Burnden Park, the site of the 1946 disaster, and had met its demise without enough redevelopment. As mentioned before Arsenal had the benefit of a strong squad and a bigger support base – something that Bolton probably couldn't say since the 1950's. When considering the importance of changing the name of a stadium in the context of an English football club, balancing out historic support and financial goals served as Arsenal's primary strategy throughout the transition to their new stadium.

As ideas of football ownership changed, voices from further afield became more audible in the discourse around football's business and its identity. For example, an Emirati Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum, the billionaire chairman of Emirates Airlines, had this to say about their contract for the stadium's naming rights. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to sponsor such a major new stadium and club, and represents a win-win partnership for both Emirates and Arsenal."²²⁶ This quote detailed the kind of commercial ties that became more important in football, with the chairman of a sponsor being noted for his wealth and seeing football as a good point of investment. 10 years previously, when stadiums were still seen as dens of hooliganism, a man of this wealth and stature may never have shown a desire to invest in

²²⁶ Gibson, Owen. "Arsenal-Emirates Deal Worth £100m." the Guardian, October 5, 2004. <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/oct/05/business.marketingandpr>.

football without the television contracts established in the 90's.²²⁷ Another moment that riled up the fans was the refusal to pick out the word "Arsenal" in the seats precisely because it would limit potential for sponsorships of the space, as well as the simple inclusion of the club badge inside the ground.²²⁸ Where fans sought connection to their club and the space it occupied, leaving space open for advertisements to make sales instead of encouraging further support.

In this case, Arsenal were accused of manufacturing a "new personality" for themselves, a process that would determine how many of their decisions were driven by attracting sponsors, not fans. Both were needed, but with the lack of investment in the squad and rising prices for all fans, the signs were evident that the club would do whatever it took to make money first. For example, the club could have kept the name "Highbury" for the new stadium, when that title could have established a much longer identity of value well beyond the sponsorship by Emirates, whose contract will expire in 2021 and see another company pay millions to take up the name.²²⁹ These monetary considerations define what has changed in the mindset of Arsenal, but the physical changes caused by the ground and the behaviors that it changes create further levels of separation that define a new experience caused by how the place is intended to be used.

The transition of football's business practices became more solidified when David Dein, board member of Arsenal since 1992, was ousted from the board just as the Emirates stadium completed construction in 2007. A long-time fan devoted more to assisting manager Arsene Wenger with the playing squad than to the club's financial dealings, Dein engineered his own demise by recruiting Stan Kroenke to the board. Kroenke had married into the Walton family

²²⁷ "The Times-News - Google News Archive Search." Accessed February 18, 2021.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=Qmg1AAAAIBAJ&sjid=xCMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=3602%2C4272766>.

This article also makes good mention of the origins of this process in American stadiums, which had already been practicing the process of selling off naming rights for some time with owners of baseball teams naming their parks after themselves or their companies.

²²⁸ Fynn and Witcher, page 134-136

²²⁹ Fynn and Witcher, page 138-139

(founders of Wal-Mart and Sam's Club) and currently owns teams in Los Angeles, as well as most of Denver's sports franchises in the United States. Kroenke's arrival presented a clear indication of the kind of treatment football would receive from the wider business community and Arsenal. He first became involved by investing in Arsenal when ITV sold off their shares in the club, giving him entry point into a club seeking as much financial stability as possible throughout outside support.²³⁰ For its part, ITV's investment as a prominent television company also reflects the value that football held for the media in this era even though they decided to sell their shares. Dein had also introduced another businessman –the English Diamond seller Danny Fiszman –who would become chairman of the board and play a key role in many signage controversies within the Emirates Stadium. Through the tales of new money that influenced Arsenal's board the path towards a corporate stadium became clear as those who became invested in football were more interested in making money than supporting a social heritage or club identity.

While Arsenal were seeing the board's interests change, their behaviors were not in isolation during the 2000's in comparison to another London club in Chelsea. That London club has been owned since 2003 by the reclusive Russian oil billionaire Roman Abramovich, who made his money as a notorious "oligarch" with connections to Boris Yeltsin in the early years after the collapse of communism. Abramovich had acquired Chelsea from the controversial Ken Bates, an integral figure in the founding of the Premier League. It was believed that, as others would do, Abramovich had invested in football due in part to his fandom, but primarily to spread the risk of his investments and diversify their wealth beyond Russia.²³¹ While it remained

²³⁰ Fynn and Witcher, 176

²³¹ "Enter the New Tsar of Chelski ; Shy Russian Tycoon Roman Abramovich Is Now Firmly in the Spotlight with His Purchase of Chelsea FC." *Sunday Business*. July 6, 2003.

possible that he would have invested in real estate or elsewhere, the Premier League's exposure on television and its newly monetized stadiums made football a more attractive investment for owners with astronomical wealth.

But, with great wealth came greater attention to its sources. Abramovich endured plenty of investigations after purchasing Chelsea to prove that he would behave within legal guidelines.²³² If he was able to turn the club's fortunes around, then Abramovich could also use the club as a way to improve his reputation through association with a well-known club long notorious for its misshapen stadium and unfriendly supporters. Lastly, Abramovich used the early years of his reign to appoint Jose Mourinho as manager and become one of the best teams in the league, while selling off his oil and aluminum assets, thus shifting his investments away from what drew more suspicion.²³³

Additionally, Chelsea had gone through a long ordeal in the 90s when they had sold their stadium to Marler, an investment company that placed more attention to profiting off London's high property values than running football stadiums; they also owned Fulham's Craven Cottage and Queen's Park Rangers.²³⁴ This left the club in financial trouble with a company that tried to squeeze them dry and build more valuable housing on the land instead. In the end, Marler would themselves go bankrupt through their own debt issues. Chelsea would struggle to renovate their stadium throughout the 1990s and find themselves in need of further revenue. This resulted in the attempt by former chairman Ken Bates, who had taken over the club in the 1990's, to construct the "Chelsea Village", a group of office, hotel and apartment space around the ground.²³⁵ Instead

²³² Anonymous. "Chelsea Backer's Billions Probed." *Sunday Business Post*. November 9, 2003, sec. Other. <http://search.proquest.com/abicomplete/docview/759745097/abstract/14903A55FE1E4A79PQ/9>.

²³³ Aris, Ben. "Billionaire Oligarch Abramovich Admits Defeat in Russia's Aluminium War." *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*. October 24, 2004.

²³⁴ Inglis, 1996, see Chelsea and Fulham

²³⁵ Anonymous. "Bates Gets the Blues as Chelsea Probe Kicks Off." *Sunday Business Post*. July 27, 2003, sec. News Features. <http://search.proquest.com/abicomplete/docview/759744297/abstract/4CEA82D1D2794776PQ/6>.

of creating sustainable revenue, the Village project sank the club into debt to the point where Abramovich needed to invest in order to prevent the club from collapsing to an even more tenuous position than Arsenal's when Kroenke became involved.

To contribute further context for this period, while Arsenal was a rich club full of history and backed by a wealthy board, it resided in Islington, one of the most economically deprived areas in London at the turn of the twentieth century, and housing costs rose to unfavorable levels above local wages.²³⁶ As a result, the cost of building materials and buying out previous landowners rose even further for Arsenal's stadium construction during the growth of the economy from 2004-2007, just before the global recession set in, raising costs during a time of less revenue.²³⁷ While the Deloitte Money League showed how football as a sport was uniquely insulated from the recession's pressures, those who occupied the stadium's future site were under no such obligations and still demanded its value paid for in the agreed upon way. Because football clubs were now filled with board members in search of more money, their desires to keep costs low became more apparent through the challenges of building a stadium during an economic depression.

When looking at Arsenal's new stadium, the match day atmosphere it provided gave rise to a distinctly modern experience. For example, the views of empty seats had become a common sight, were the result of a lack of transportation options which made late arrivals and early leavers a regular occurrence.²³⁸ Empty seats were also common in the more expensive Club Level, which offered free drinks at halftime that caused a large-scale exodus from the most-

²³⁶ Lupton, Ruth, Vizard, Polly, Amanda Fitzgerald, Alex Fenton, Ludovica Gambaro, and Jack Cunliffe. Page "Prosperity, Poverty and Inequality in London 2000/01-2010/11." Center for Analysis of Social Exclusion at The London School of Economics and Political Science, July 2013. Page 11

²³⁷ Lupton et al. page 14

²³⁸ Fynn and Witcher, page 150-151

visible section of Emirates Stadium well past the 15-minute break from the match. “Certainly, due to the sheer numbers of thirsty punters involved service is understandably slow, but the thought of missing even a minute of habitually exhilarating football is a concept that mystifies many in the ‘cheap’ seats.”²³⁹ As another example of commercialization within the stadium, paying for a more expensive ticket attracted spectators who paid for a better view of the match but sacrificed viewing time game to get more drinks. In this process, preferential treatment served attendees who care less about the match, thus changing the event’s emphasis away from the action on the field.

But, as a result of Arsenal’s upgrades in their new stadium, approximately 55 million more pounds were generated per year in the Emirates than in Highbury. “In one fell swoop the Emirates went head-to-head with Old Trafford (Manchester United) and the Bernabeu (Real Madrid) as the biggest revenue-generating club football stadia in the world... Arsenal FC now earns a cool 3.5 million [pounds] every match day, a staggering 100 percent increase over Highbury,”²⁴⁰ In a clear sign of the club’s goals when they decided to play home matches at Wembley in 1998, Arsenal’s success typified this period in the effort to make stadiums into greater sources of income, both through increased seating and increased seat prices.

Even in Arsenal’s successes, certain reactions were more conciliatory than celebratory after the completion of the first modern ground. One such perspective came from a fan blog, which captured many sentiments at play in the stadiums of this period and specifically at Arsenal.

I would rather the stadium was not named after an airline and I wish that there was not a concrete ring around the perimeter of the arena, physically separating supporters in the more expensive confines of Club Level. I guess I have reluctantly accepted these things

²³⁹ Ibid, page 152

²⁴⁰ Ibid, page 153-154

as part of the relentless march of progress. The consequence of their absence would have competitive consequences for the team that I would prefer not to entertain.²⁴¹

In recalling his perception of the stadium 10 years after its construction, the reluctant acceptance of the Emirates and how it supports the team on the field exemplify how far even the fan who identified his club had come in his acceptance of a particular match day experience, it became impossible *not* to see how the stadium's primary goal was to generate income. With stadiums as a monetized space, each aspect, from the ground's name to the placement of the most expensive seats, took on an explicit financial purpose noticeable from all audiences.

Arsenal's movement to a new stadium and their role as the first to rebuild impacted how many other clubs made their next moves (e.g. Wembley, Manchester City and Manchester United). Each could earn its own case study in relation to both economic and social developments, and are worth mention even without deep analysis in this moment, but the corporate naming saga made Arsenal the best example to study within this time frame. First, the national stadium of Wembley, which was previously shown to need many repairs to comply with legal guidelines, had been engaged in a drawn-out discussion to keep a national home of football in London or build a newer ground in the North.²⁴² In the end, further construction delays resulted in the stadium's demolition in 2000 and re-opening in 2007 at a cost of 798 million pounds,²⁴³ with a large arch replacing the famous towers as the landmark sightline and a ring of boxes adorning the middle sections. Yet, the changes for Wembley were seen as exceptionally necessary because of the importance of television money and the loss of value in an aging ground.

²⁴¹ Stillman, Tim. "A Decade at Emirates Stadium: A Personal Reflection." *Arseblog ... an Arsenal Blog* (blog), July 21, 2016. <https://arseblog.com/2016/07/decadeatemirates/>.

²⁴² Inglis, 1996, 390

²⁴³ The Football Association. "The Stadium Facts and Features." *nhc-ws-cd.ncms-ase1.p.azurewebsites.net*. Accessed February 17, 2021.

"For the vast majority of people, Wembley Stadium was simply a television address, like Weatherfield or Albert Square."²⁴⁴ Danny Baker, a well-known football writer with a popular radio show in the early 2000s, had this comment as a Millwall fan. If Wembley had long served as a place seen only on television, and with its infrastructure was failing, it now became time to match Wembley's financial capabilities to its role as the national ground and thus prevent it from becoming just another stadium not worth attending in person. After the stadium was completed, food prices at Wembley rose to as much as seven pounds for fish and chips, but there were now wider options to eat. For a stadium that often served as the culmination of a long season with a memorable match, Wembley needed its appearance to match the quality of the memories it inspired, and monetizing these memories was evident in the stadium's cost and the concessions that it served.²⁴⁵

Among other notable grounds of this era, Manchester City received the newly built stadium for the Commonwealth Games of 2003 and, like Arsenal, built a new modern stadium in a deprived industrial area of East Manchester in order to compete financially.²⁴⁶ On the other side of town, Manchester United's rising ticket prices would drive out the leader of their independent supporters' group, who took many with him to found FC United of Manchester to protest the recent debt-ridden United's takeover by the Glazer family.²⁴⁷ The conversation around each took on a similar tone in which stadiums became focused on monetizing every aspect of the space, such to the point that fans felt neglected enough to start their own clubs.

²⁴⁴ Baker, Danny. "Time to Say Goodbye, Wembley, and Good Riddance." *The Times*, February 8, 2003. The Times Digital Archive.

²⁴⁵ "When Saturday Comes - May 2007." Accessed February 17, 2021. Page 14

²⁴⁶ Conn 2014, pages 332-333

²⁴⁷ James, Gary. *Manchester - A Football History*. Simon & Schuster, 2008. Page 337

Following construction at Wembley, Chelsea, and both Manchester clubs, there were few other major stadium developments after 2007, because many other clubs now had to catch up to the standard of the first to renovate or enlarge their grounds by generating more revenue on match day or finding wealthy owners. To this day, clubs at the lower levels are adding their own boxes and convention spaces to attract a wealthier clientele as the experience drives how going to football matches now emphasize the leisure experience above all else. Even with the Great Recession of 2008, clubs still worked towards becoming sustainable through television, which helped them survive in an industry insulated from the economic downturn.²⁴⁸ But, the image-driven processes based on rising income from television contracts and sponsorships dictated a future heavily reliant on maintaining high prices until a tipping point is reached. As the consumption of football through attendance, viewership and merchandise remains strong, clubs feel no reason to lower costs of tickets or merchandise through the perception of stadiums as financial instead of social settings that persists through this period. On a smaller scale, in 2011 Brighton moved into a new stadium²⁴⁹ that finally matched the city's greater wealth as a university and resort city. But like such other southern teams as Southampton, which moved to a new stadium in 2001, and Portsmouth, which remains in their current site and restricted by housing²⁵⁰ that limits their ability to install boxes and make more money on match days, Brighton met delays in construction that nearly left the club homeless at the turn of the 21st century.

Bookending this period and the modern history of football stadiums was the completion of Tottenham's new stadium. Built between 2016 and 2019 at a cost of 850 million pounds (1

²⁴⁸ "Deloitte Football Money League | Deloitte UK." Accessed November 25, 2020.

²⁴⁹ "Brighton & Hove Albion." Accessed February 17, 2021.

<https://www.brightonandhovealbion.com/club/stadiums/the-amex-stadium>.

²⁵⁰ Inglis, 1996, see Brighton and Hove Albion, Portsmouth and Southampton

billion US dollars),²⁵¹ the new ground raised their capacity by nearly 30,000 from their old home at White Hart Lane, which the club occupied from 1898-2017. While Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United and City had all renovated their stadiums in the 2000's, Tottenham had to wait until 2015 to get permission to rebuild due to legal disputes tied to buying out the land from nearby homeowners.²⁵² Given the costs associated with building a new ground and the struggles it took just to get started, Spurs were the last to upgrade to a new facility due to uncontrollable circumstances. Because most clubs have rebuilt their infrastructure around stadiums designed to make more money through the early 21st century, clubs can now re-focus on improving their teams and not worrying about forgoing matchday income due to cramped, older stadiums.

With the highest levels of football now funded by teams' ability to attract foreign and corporate investment (and driven by the expensive international market for playing talent), the stadium became a space defined by its focus on monetizing attendance between 1998 and 2019. Through the efforts of board members focused on finance, and prioritizing income from corporate boxes, the creation of sustainable year-round income resulted in a stadium focused on its finances. At Arsenal and most major clubs, this also meant creating islands of wealth in the poorest cities in England while their original support base spread further away as working-class citizens moved away from poorer neighborhoods through economic progression and political action.²⁵³ Because the Premier League and the Taylor Report successfully saved professional

²⁵¹ Garner-Purkis, Zak. "Why Tottenham Hotspur's \$1 Billion Stadium Will Be The Last Of Its Kind." Forbes. Accessed February 23, 2021. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zakgarnerpurkis/2020/06/05/why-tottenham-hotspurs-1bn-stadium-will-be-the-last-of-its-kind/>.

²⁵² "Tottenham Stadium: Spurs Win Legal Case and Can Start Building New 56,000 Capacity Stadium | The Independent | The Independent." Accessed March 20, 2021.

²⁵³ The "diaspora" of football's original fans first received mention in the 1950's as cars increased the ease of transportation. However, it would steadily increase and can be traced to the "Right to Own" Housing Act of 1980, in which Margaret Thatcher wanted the working-class to take more accountability in civic life through the ownership instead of renting of property. Much like the aforementioned Poll Tax, the financial consequences for the less-wealthy were more impactful than the political gains of ownership. Because the traditional working-class bases moved out of their original neighborhoods under encouragement to buy housing, the void left behind was filled by

football from its collapse after Hillsborough, the new, wealthier crowds that now attended football matches became the key market segment to serve. Those left behind at Millwall and other clubs had to settle for watching on television, sitting in the stands, or rebelling altogether with upstart clubs. But, the most important reality of the corporate stadium became the wider acceptance of the loss of social spaces in favor of higher costs because it resulted in long-term success on the field. By the time Tottenham finished their new stadium, all major clubs now occupied vastly improved or brand-new stadiums built around re-defining the stadium around generating income as integral to spectatorship.

Stadiums then, Stadiums now

"It's less about the architecture of the stadium and more about the people who fill it."²⁵⁴

As the beginning and end of this thesis, this quote defines the underlying purpose of this argument: to demonstrate how the stadium has always served those who occupy its boxes, seats, and terraces. Each of these groups brought a different perspective on what purpose the stadium should serve simply based on where they sit. The sport of football, particularly in England, has long captured a collective imagination around major matches. At the center of this story are the stadiums: spaces often built by the end of the First World War, surviving depressions, bombings in the second World War, and neglect, as wider political institutions struggled to contend with social change. Thus, as they developed, these stadiums, central to their communities, absorbed many concurrent features during their transition to explicitly commercial practices.

Within England's borders there are no stadiums bigger than Wembley, a ground first built to celebrate national identity and empire; its original name was the Empire Stadium at Wembley.

gentrified London developments and immigrant populations; a subject that is mentioned in Waldon's *London's Fields* and can be found in outside research.

²⁵⁴ Waldon, Mark. *London's Fields: An Intimate History of London Football Fandom*. Page 147

Its opening day, later known as the White Horse final, where the King came and West Ham won, became a day of nationalistic fervor, organized chaos, and the mythologizing of a grey horse and its brighter appearance in the press. That discourse, of a Wembley at its best during the most important days of a season, would hold true through controversial losses to the Hungarians in 1953, a World Cup in 1966, and decades of old age by the 1990's. All along the way, stadiums were a seemingly steady presence, even while wider societal influences and tensions collected within them, culminating when the pressures bursting at Hillsborough in 1989, after the fences and fighting in the previous 20 years had made the margins of safety ever slimmer and perilous. With football and stadiums no longer able to neglect their faults in the nineties, the chance was taken to re-imagine the meaning of this space around commercially friendly criteria. Through all of this, many stadiums still occupy their original site and original goal, with local fans and support sustaining their teams through high and low points on the pitch, in the stands, and in their cities.

Where can stadiums go from here? What will be made most important, and by whom? In the time of COVID-19, when clubs both big and small were unable to host spectators, it appeared likely that a new emphasis could take place in how stadiums were used and perceived, as the economic base driving recent stadiums dried up without access to their primary source of revenue. As one such example, consider Tottenham's new stadium and its role as the final project of "Stadiums as sites of income". Because of the pandemic, the club instead expects to lose \$250 million from June 2020-2021,²⁵⁵ when it would likely have generated record crowds over the same span and came closer to paying off its price tag. Additionally, the club was one of many to ask players to take wage cuts and attempted to furlough many employees but was

²⁵⁵ Panja, Tariq. "Tottenham Returns With a Tie, but Its Losses Are Mounting." *The New York Times*, June 19, 2020, sec. Sports. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/sports/soccer/tottenham-manchester-united.html>.

shamed into paying most of them.²⁵⁶ While the pandemic's timing did not help a club paying off its billion-dollar stadium, the outsized revenue streams from television and the always-increasing player wages instantly put Tottenham and many other clubs in fragile financial positions without playing in front of full crowds.

This fragility, long inherent to professional football, may now shift from the commercial incentives that received the most emphasis over the last 30 years to the social economy from which clubs long built their original support bases, which became suddenly jeopardized in the brief and dramatic history of the abortive European Super League, which played out in late April 2021. As some have noted, the crowds have noticeably aged as ticket prices have risen, but the sport's proliferation on television has not seen the same economic benefits on the lowest levels, which still struggle to attract acceptable crowd sizes.²⁵⁷ Additionally, as clubs tried to profess their social standing through work in the community, their focus on money moved past what was originally under their control – within the stadium – to what surrounds it, as Tottenham attempt to change the name Tube station's name:

It is not unprecedented — Arsenal has had its own tube stop, dating to the 1930s — but nor is it universally popular. The objection is based on the idea that erasing the station's name wipes clean a century or so of history; that it needlessly, ham-fistedly conflates the identities of Tottenham the area and Tottenham the team; that it creates the impression, deep down, below the fresh coats of paint, that the place exists to serve the club, rather than the club existing to reflect the place.²⁵⁸

When examining the sentiments neighbors nearby to Tottenham's new ground, modern stadiums find themselves in the midst of less-wealthy populations that do not feel as welcoming

²⁵⁶ Moore, Kevin. "Football Is Not 'a Matter of Life and Death'. It Is Far Less Important than That. Football and the COVID-19 Pandemic in England." *Soccer & Society* 22, no. 1–2 (February 17, 2021): 43–57. Moore was once the director of the National Football Museum when it was still based in Preston and in its move to Manchester in 2012.

²⁵⁷ Conn, David. "The Premier League Has Priced out Fans, Young and Old." *the Guardian*, 2011

²⁵⁸ Smith, Rory. "Tottenham Hotspur Stadium Opens: Is There Room for Everyone? - The New York Times." Accessed March 22, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/03/sports/tottenham-hotspur-stadium.html>.

to the behemoth now sitting next to them. When comparing this to Arsenal's complete socio-economic makeover of the area surrounding their ground, the same sentiments resulted in Tottenham's attempt to re-model their neighborhood in a similar pattern to what occurred a decade before.

The European Super League, of which Tottenham, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool all agreed to join, received protests by fans of every club. While commercialization of the stadium may near its end with Tottenham, generating revenue from football itself created continued costs to the sport's social origins.²⁵⁹ This begs the question, who is responsible for upholding the social connections within football, and how should it be done?

When examining the sentiments of neighbors near Tottenham's new ground, modern stadiums find themselves in the midst of less-wealthy populations that do not feel as welcoming to the behemoth now sitting next to them. When comparing this to Arsenal's complete socio-economic makeover of the area surrounding their ground, the same sentiments resulted in Tottenham's attempt to re-model their neighborhood in a similar pattern to what occurred a decade before.

The European Super League, which Tottenham, Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool all agreed to join, received protests by fans of every club. While commercialization of the stadium may near its end with Tottenham, generating revenue from football itself created continued costs to the sport's social origins.²⁶⁰ This begs the question, who is responsible for upholding the social connections within football, and how should it be done?

²⁶⁰ Brewin, John. "Pérez Says Super League Clubs 'Cannot Leave' as Manchester United Fans Protest." the Guardian, April 24, 2021. <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/apr/24/perez-says-super-league-clubs-cannot-leave-as-manchester-united-fans-protest>.

One solution comes below, with fans of Derby County, a team in the EFL Championship (modern second tier) as of 2020, and a primarily Indian/immigrant supporters' group called the Punjabi Rams, founded in 2013 in the city of Derby. Their story took root in the Punjabi population working and living near the Baseball Ground since the seventies,²⁶¹ but it took much longer before they felt comfortable standing on the terraces and attending matches. Now, the group welcomes members of any race to their group and encourage younger fans to attend matches normally out of their price range.²⁶² That price exclusion, by which fans aged 16-20 once averaged 22% of a crowd in the top division in 1989, dropped as low as 9% in 2007 before rebounding to 19% by 2011.²⁶³ By reviving interest from lower income groups in the areas that still surround most stadiums, reaching out to them could assist in restoring the social capital lost in the pursuit of corporate revenue, which could help maintain the local connection that's just as important to a club's identity as its commercial and international support. But the Punjabi Rams were not started by the club, they were started by supporters, and this showed how a wide variety of approaches can affect how the stadium is seen: as places representative of their surrounding communities instead of solely catering to the commercial interest of club boards, television companies, and foreign sponsors as the Super League attempted to do.

An alternative to the corporate stadium presented by clubs turned to the use of "safe-standing" sections in a ground. Long outlawed since the Hillsborough disaster, standing at a football match was seen as a legacy of times when supporting a club tended towards social over commercial links to a club. Of those to do install "safe-standing zones", Celtic were first in their

²⁶¹ The Baseball Ground was the former home of Derby County FC, a club in central England to the south of Manchester. While long known as the home of a football club, this ground took its name from an ambitious owner who tried to import baseball to England after witnessing games played in the United States. For more on the ground, see Inglis, 1996, Derby County

²⁶² "Home | Punjabi Rams." Accessed March 24, 2021. <https://www.punjabirams.co.uk>.

²⁶³ Conn, David. "The Premier League Has Priced out Fans, Young and Old." the Guardian, 2011

installation, as Scotland is not beholden to the same safety laws as English grounds. More recently, Manchester City announced their intention in March of 2021 to install a safe-standing zone in their ground in areas where standing persistently occurs. According to Danny Wilson, a director at Manchester City, the choice to install safe-standing zones came as an attempt to embrace the fan's behavior even when the club may not have felt comfortable acting against the law; "Whilst we will continue to remind supporters that they should remain seated during matches, we are also pleased to inform them that the installation of a rail seating area means the Etihad Stadium will be ready and prepared should the government bring forward legislation to introduce safe standing in the Premier League."²⁶⁴ Where the club once would ignore or admonish fans for standing, cheering or booing at games, they now support them in ways that encourage safer attendance at matches. If clubs begin to act towards the benefit of fans as a step towards benefitting their income, then it could be a sign of how stadiums will change in use – mirroring the goals of the Punjabi Rams from a different angle.

It also remains important to remember that stadiums and football clubs are no longer simply representative of a specific local community. The connections of television have extended the tendrils that tie spectators on a global level, with tourists of all nations flocking to England in order to see Premier League matches in person. In fact, I had a flight scheduled to see Manchester City play Burnley at the Etihad Stadium (named after a UAE-based airline) on March 13, 2020. Instead, I was on a plane home to the United States due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In and out of the stadiums, it is the people that occupy the stands that make a match happen. In their absence, matches are subdued. In their presence, a team could roar back

²⁶⁴ the Guardian. "Manchester City to Install 5,620 Rail Seats in Preparation for Safe Standing," March 24, 2021. <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/mar/24/manchester-city-to-install-5620-rail-seats-in-preparation-for-safe-standing>.

to life. By understanding how these stadiums feature many overlapping features overlaid with communal identities, the match day experience becomes much more than the game taking place.

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