
Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Kendomacaronbar - 2008/05/15 18:41

I was fortunate enough to secure a ticket for the Uefa Cup Final in Manchester and travelled with my son and his pal on what was a glorious outing. Most of the motorway overpasses were festooned with banners declaring ' now is our time' and 'good luck Rangers'. Although we spent the night in Leeds we travelled over to Manchester to find the place awash with jovial Rangers and Zenit fans enjoying each others company. It truly was a carnival atmosphere, and the Manchester police and security deployed a very low key profile, such was the good spirits being shown by all. Of course there was lots of drinking and singing, but much of the activities were focused on the dedicated fanzones and some side streets. It was self evident that the 100,000 fans guesstimated to be in Manchester was very much an underestimation as Piccadilly was claustrophobic to say the least.

I remained in Manchester city centre until 6 pm then travelled by free courtesy bus to the Manchester stadium. The journey was very noisy and the occasional idiot would stamp their feet, but in general the mood was upbeat.

On arrival at the stadium we presented our tickets only to be told that there was a ticketing error and we had to go to another booth for 'instructions'. Apparently, UEFA had received 3,500 tickets returned from Zenit which were then indiscriminately sold on. On the day of the match it dawned on them that Rangers fans (I was that soldier !) had tickets for the Zenit Area. The deal was this... you cannot get in and you cannot get a refund, even though you have legally purchased tickets. There was a young lady and daughter who had forked out 900 quid for tickets. We were told to make our way to Piccadilly to watch the match on the large screen. therein lies a problem.

There were many people who could not gain access, who had paid a huge amount of money for tickets, only to be told that on the day of arrival they would not gain access. These people moved on to Piccadilly which was already crowded with over 20,000 people, and had the capacity for only 9,000. We had heard that the screens were disabled for ' health and safety reasons' that there were concerns of crushing in the crowd and that they needed the crowd to disperse to other areas.. and this was all done 5 minutes before kick off.

Now, I do not condone for one minute the mindless thuggery of the cretinous individuals that haunt the club that I love, however

I do wonder why in all the trips in Europe to the away games the fans have behaved impeccably, and even up until kick off of yesterday's final the behaviour of the crowd was still good humoured.

Were the police over reacting, who knows, but all evidence I saw during the day would suggest otherwise.

I feel ashamed that this scum should tarnish The Real Fans of Rangers FC, The club itself and the nation of Scotland. I have no answers on how to combat this feral underclass that blights our society today.. but I do know its getting worse and I truly despair for the future.

Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Clare - 2008/05/15 19:36

Hi Kendo

I heard about the ticket debacle today. A girl I work with was still recovering from the shock of her husband paying £750 for a ticket when she had a call from him to say it was for the wrong end and he hadn't been allowed in to the match.

All things considered there are two things I can't understand. Why were something like tens of thousands of fans allowed to travel without tickets in the first place? It should never have happened and it was mad to even consider allowing it. Secondly why were they allowed to buy booze from ten in the morning? Again, crazy decision.

I was horrified watching footage from the clashes and I know one couple who were caught up in it, both Rangers supporters, who were doing nothing wrong but ended up having to flee and try and get to safety when the clashes were happening. They said it was terrifying.

Rangers organised screens at Ibrox for the match and surely Glasgow could have done that too in the city centre instead of Manchester having to cope with such scenes. I actually think if they'd made those without tickets stay home to watch it we wouldn't have seen a similar outcome.

Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Kendomacaroonbar - 2008/05/15 20:24

Clare, There is a considerable element who turned up on the offchance that they might just get a ticket, and there were those who frankly just 'had to be there'. It would be nigh on impossible for the authorities to ban these people from travelling. As for the alcohol situation, I saw lengthy queues outside off licences and grocery stores, with fans buying slabs of beer at noon time. I genuinely did not see any people who were blind drunk other than a few Zenit fans, but that's not to say there were none. However the carnival description was quite appropriate up until the flashpoint.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/05/15 21:10

Hi

It seems that Rangers played 18 matches without a hitch. I noted a suggestion that some of the troublemakers were not Rangers fans. I watched the BBC cctv film and you can see Rangers shirts but not that many, that made me wonder.

It does seem a shame that in general Scotland has a good reputation for away games and mindless thugs ruin this.

I can understand your fears for the future for Rangers and football in general.

From a Hearts supporter I hope you were a little heartened by the Rangers supporters who turned up to show respect for Tommy Burns today.

I hope in some way his death, sad as it is will be used to highlight the work he did to rid football of the sectarian problems it still faces. He seemed to be well respected.

My sympathies over your tickets especially if you had your son with you. Very disappointing after travelling all that way, but you did not go chasing policemen down the street and will try to deal with this in a sensible way, I really don't think this can be used as an excuse for the people who did.

I know it must have been frustrating not to be able to see the game on the big screen but that cannot be used as an excuse either.

I noted on another BBC blog that the police in Manchester were blamed and a lot agreed with that but the cctv did not look like that.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Clare - 2008/05/15 22:41

Kendo

I hear what you're saying and understand the sentiments but its just that usually people are warned not to travel without tickets. I just wondered why this situation turned into one where more were there with no tickets than with tickets. Given the impact on Manchester itself it really does seem insane. Especially when the club suffers ultimately in the backlash. Its a shame.

I too was touched by tributes paid by Ally McCoist and Walter Smith to Tommy Burns earlier today. The Herald had a wonderful picture tribute today too which included a fabulous pic of Burns and Smith together when they were looking after Scotland.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by seven - 2008/05/15 23:58

I cant believe your cah cahing about this!
you do know what happened to Scotland name in manchester?

years of effort down the plug hole
and it wasn't just a few bad apples there were thousands of them and no they weren't interlopers. I've seen a Ranger supporter hitting another. I've seen a policeman being brought to ground by a stick-wielding mob and stamped on, I've read accounts from Rangers fans who had been in the stadium of an almost 2.5 mile road of broken bottles all the way back to town, police cars rushing by with sirens blaring, mobs attacking young women's cars.
Have a look it's all on the BBC and Sky, don't try to brush it under the carpet, it needs to be dealt with

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Martin - 2008/05/16 04:26

Seven, I realise this is your first post, but you really should moderate your comments. You did not see thousands rioting, you saw the pictures released by the police and edited by the media the same as the rest of us, unless you were there.

If "thousands" were rioting, why were only 24 Rangers fans arrested? (Yes, I know the figure is 30, but 6 of them were inside the ground and connected with the stabbing). Are the Manchester police so inept that they only managed to lift 24 from thousands? I don't think so!

These pictures were very cleverly edited together to make things seem much more dramatic and worse than they actually were.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not condoning what happened, but, likewise, let's not blow this out of proportion. Yes, the MINORITY of fans who caused this must shoulder the bulk of the responsibility, but the organisers and the police must stand up and accept their share of the responsibility. It really was a shambles, brought about by lack of advance planning and last minute, knee-jerk organisation. I believe that no one had planned for this influx of supporters. This is evidenced by the fact that, initially, fans were advised not to travel without a ticket. Then the pound signs flashed up in Manchester Council's eyes and they saw the potential revenue available from the Rangers fans and they threw this together. I don't see how they were surprised by the numbers as the media had been reporting it for a week. Yet, they did not have adequate crowd control measures in place. When the screen went down conflicting messages were given to the crowd and tempers snapped when they realised they were not going to see the game. Again, no defense of their actions, but they are not solely to blame.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Clare - 2008/05/16 09:15

Martin I'm kind of concerned about the number of comments coming from Scots and even the Scottish First Minister and media along the lines of "It isn't our fault." It IS our fault and the part drink always plays when stuff like this happens can't be ignored. I don't care about the numbers either. I saw a policeman being tripped and a mob on top of him as soon as he fell. What if they'd killed him? And it is also true that there were incidents all over Manchester where damage was being done to property too and people were scared. Imagine being in Glasgow City Centre with supporters from a team from elsewhere mauling about like that. How would we feel? Yet even Salmond seems set to blame the Police for "over-reacting"? This was sheer violence. Yes something went wrong with a screen but that doesn't justify public riot. The minority involved doesn't matter either. A small minority of 100,000 - 150,000 is still enough people to do a lot of damage and create a lot of danger.

I still say they shouldn't have been allowed to travel without tickets and that they shouldn't have been selling them booze from 10 in the morning. It was madness.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Levenax - 2008/05/16 09:52

I'm very annoyed that some Rangers soccer supporters disgraced themselves in Manchester because it harms the reputation of our country. Sadly though this sort of behaviour is quite common amongst the rabble who follow soccer. Before the contest the TV news showed pictures of rowdy supporters in central Manchester drinking on the street and singing those vile sectarian chants they're so fond of. Quite what sodomising the Pope had to do with a contest with a Russian team I can't imagine.

The stupidity of those who travelled to Manchester without a ticket or anywhere to stay is quite striking but it seems that moronic behaviour is innate in many soccer supporters.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Kendomacaroonbar - 2008/05/16 13:21

Lev,

Check out many of the UK main street around closing time on a weekend and you will see similar behaviour without any connection to football. The symptom is direct result of the liberal society that we live in today. We either have to tolerate it or do something about it. What's the odd's on those arrested in Manchester getting nothing more than a slapped wrist and a 50 quid fine ?

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Kendomacaroonbar - 2008/05/16 13:38

Clare wrote:
Kendo

I hear what you're saying and understand the sentiments but its just that usually people are warned not to travel without tickets. I just wondered why this situation turned into one where more were there with no tickets than with tickets. Given the impact on Manchester itself it really does seem insane. Especially when the club suffers ultimately in the backlash. Its a shame.

I too was touched by tributes paid by Ally McCoist and Walter Smith to Tommy Burns earlier today. The Herald had a wonderful picture tribute today too which included a fabulous pic of Burns and Smith together when they were looking after Scotland.

There were only 13 thousand tickets offered to the Rangers support when the stadium held over 40 thousand, so there was never going to be enough to satisfy the bona fide Rangers travel club. Ibrox holds 50 thousand, so given that there were 200,000 in Manchester there were a lot of people who must have bought into the 'hype' of the occasion. Sadly a few of them were the pond life that have caused this trouble.

My heart goes out to the good people of Manchester as well as the Family and Friends of Tommy. If at tomorrows game there is any 'noise' during the minutes silence for Tommy, I may well just consider football in this country a lost cause for me. It's just not worth it.

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Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/05/16 16:02

Levanax and Kendo both have good points.

We have a generation of people who are shut out of the social scene if they do not drink to excess. These people have nothing to do with football.

I wonder if we are ever going to find a solution to the behaviour of these young people.

The local police round here have youth clubs set up and in general we have problems but I suppose compared to other districts we have fewer children miss behaving. The police know the local hot spots where the young people get drink by paying drug addicts to go into the shops and get it for them. That seems to me an impossible problem to police.

it must be tackled in some other way but I am a bit lost with that one. I think it should be the job of parents to know where their children are and then check occasionally. In some families I hear the parents allowing quite young teenagers allowed a small drink with the view that this will teach responsible drinking.

Surely the parents of the young that drink outside especially on summer evenings must know their young come home drunk. Why do they not attempt to control this. Then looking at the practicalities where do they get the money from, drinking to excess seems to happen from age twelve up.

More Questions than answers.

Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/05/16 16:09

Levenax wrote:

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The stupidity of those who travelled to Manchester without a ticket or anywhere to stay is quite striking but it seems that moronic behaviour is innate in many soccer supporters.

This mindless behaviour is common to all football fans. We all sung football songs but, not like now. If it is not the pope that is whatever it is the queen, I cannot imagine her having much to do with football.

The horrendous part of that is I have actually heard our group of twelve year old singing songs like that I suppose the only saving grace was I don't think they understood all of it and they sang it together not at each other but again adults are teaching our young this mindless bigotry.

Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by LYDIA REID - 2008/05/17 08:14

Clare wrote:

Martin I'm kind of concerned about the number of comments coming from Scots and even the Scottish First Minister and media along the lines of "It isn't our fault." It IS our fault and the part drink always plays when stuff like this happens can't be ignored. I don't care about the numbers either. I saw a policeman being tripped and a mob on top of him as soon as he fell. What if they'd killed him? And it is also true that there were incidents all over Manchester where damage was being done to property too and people were scared. Imagine being in Glasgow City Centre with supporters from a team from elsewhere mauling about like that. How would we feel? Yet even Salmond seems set to blame the Police for "over-reacting"? This was sheer violence. Yes something went wrong with a screen but that doesn't justify public riot. The minority involved doesn't matter either. A small minority of 100,000 - 150,000 is still enough people to do a lot of damage and create a lot of danger.

I still say they shouldn't have been allowed to travel without tickets and that they shouldn't have been selling them booze from 10 in the morning. It was madness.

Claire I watched that footage and they were like wild animals that policeman could have been killed. He will most likely have nightmares for a while to come.

I watched FMQ I don't think Salmond made excuses I think he wanted the truth. He also made the point about Scotland's reputation and how this has now been damaged.

Re:Time for True Fans to Police Themselves ?

Posted by Levenax - 2008/05/18 16:55

It's hard to see how "fans" will ever see any sense. Today I drove past the Rangers training ground near Milngavie and outside the gates was the usual gaggle of fans dressed up in their expensive Rangers tat waiting for a glimpse of their "heroes". Who in their right mind would waste a sunny afternoon standing outside a gate on a wee country road just for a glimpse some overpaid foreigner peering out from behind a Bentley or a Range Rover window? I understand from the news that the boys had another poor day yesterday in a more local soccer contest than last Wednesday's. Still, no doubt

even more lessons will have been learned etc etc. Come on the 'Gers I say! Aye right.

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