

FOOTBALL

INCIDENT ON THE HARWICH-HOOK FERRY : THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 1986

Background

Over the last month or so the Football Association (FA) have kept the Minister for Sport, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the police (including British Transport Police) informed of the pre-season friendly matches arranged by a number of English clubs against Continental teams. The FA have to agree these fixtures; about 50 were arranged in all. Most have now been played; about 10-15 remain to be played.

The UEFA (European Union) ban on English club teams taking part in the cup competitions held under their auspices remains. However, these "friendly" matches are held under the auspices of FIFA (the world body) whose original ban on English clubs no longer applies.

The pre-season "friendly" fixture list was discussed at Mr Tracey's Working Group meeting on 5 August, following the incidents during the Rangers v Tottenham "friendly" on 2 August. The possibility of banning the remaining friendly matches was discussed, but it was recognised that most of the programme had by then been completed (and without incident).

In line with the requirements of the European Convention. (which applies for all matches, whether "friendly" or otherwise), the individual clubs involved, FCO and BTP have been liaising with the appropriate authorities abroad for each match. All of the clubs have discouraged supporters from travelling to the games; none have official parties of supporters travelling.

The Incident

British Transport Police (BTP) had been alerted that the matches involving Manchester United, West Ham and Everton in Holland could attract trouble because of incidents involving Manchester

United supporters in previous years. BTP contacted the Utrecht police, who had intelligence to suggest that 300 West Ham supporters could be travelling for the matches to be held 8-12 August. Despite extensive enquiries, BTP could not confirm these reports. On 17 July BTP officers travelled to Utrecht for discussions with police.

On 7 August BTP received information that 50 fans, identified as West Ham and Manchester United supporters, were at Liverpool Street Station on their way to the Harwich boat-train and the ferry to the Hook of Holland. They told the Dutch authorities.

Subsequent information received suggested that more supporters would be travelling - apparently 150 from West Ham, Manchester United, Everton and Liverpool, going on the Koenigen Beatrix (a Dutch vessel). Once again, the Dutch authorities were informed.

BTP supervised these supporters en route to Harwich. There was no sign of trouble. On arrival at Harwich, BTP and the Captain of the Vessel discussed whether or not they should be allowed to board. The Captain expressed himself satisfied that they should. At about 1.30am on 8 August fighting broke out between particular gangs of rival supporters in the ship's bars. Eventually the crew quelled the disturbance and the Captain decided to return to Harwich where the ship was met by the police. BTP arrested 14 people; 5 people were injured and 3 needed urgent medical attention. The ship sailed again for the Hook at 5.55am with BTP officers on board to take statements from the crew and passengers. Those supporters not involved in the trouble were allowed back on the ship. On its delayed arrival at the Hook of Holland this afternoon, 16 supporters were refused entry into Holland.

Action Since

We have asked the Dutch authorities, under the European Convention (which they have signed, but not yet ratified), to consider further special measures for the remaining matches. Our

consul in Holland will attend the games in question. Any football supporters who try to enter Holland this weekend will be turned back by the Dutch police and port authorities. Additionally, British and Dutch ferry operators have said they will refuse to take any supporters on board here. Clearly there will be problems of identification; but BTP will assist informally and it seems likely that the operation will be thorough.

We have suggested to the FA a ban on the remaining matches in Europe and a recall of the clubs. However, the FA feel that to recall the teams now abroad might precipitate further trouble among the supporters already there, but the question remains open for the future.

Comment

Ferry operators have the right to refuse passage to supporters and, of course, to close bars. In this case they took a positive decision to do neither. With the Department of Transport and Home Office, we are already reviewing the policing of ferries. The law and jurisdiction are complex. BTP have a contract with Sealink to police their vessels, but have no clear locus on other UK ships or on foreign vessels (as in this case).

This incident illustrates the need to improve policing and surveillance of ferries. It certainly underlines the dangers of any complacency in the Government and football authorities' joint campaign against football violence.

SPORTS AND RECREATION DIVISION

8 August 1986

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nature of the
material.**

**Image quality is
best available.**

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probably another season of consistent good behaviour but the spotlight was very much on them."

The minister added: "This sort of behaviour is the kind of thing which could set us back for years. It is certainly not going to impress UEFA in the slightest.

"It is something I feel very sad about because we have been working very hard with our football authorities and through them with UEFA to build-up a good relationship again.

"It is a tragedy that this sort of thing should be happening with these so-called friendlies."

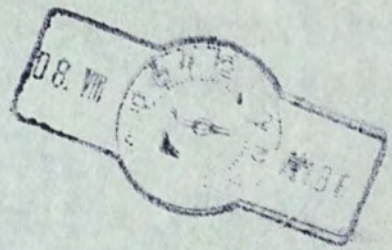
Mr Tracey said the trouble between Glasgow Rangers and Tottenham Hotspur fans in London last Saturday was highlighted at a meeting he chaired this week.

"It seemed to me that these friendlies had to be looked at very closely by the FA and that some instant action should be taken, possibly stopping them.

"I was shattered when I heard this news this morning. These were idiots, absolute idiots, and they had no thought for football at all.

"They must realise that this kind of behaviour is going to break football, certainly in an international sphere."

mfl aga



UK FILE

08-08-86 at 10:38

CRIME Ferry Minister
SPORTS MINISTER 'SHATTERED' BY FERRY
BRAWL

By Chris Moncrieff, PA Chief
Political Correspondent
Sports Minister, Mr Richard Tracey,
said today he was "shattered" by
news of the battle among rival first
division football fans on a Dutch
ferry taking them to continental
pre-season friendly matches.
Mr Tracey said he feared these
"absolute idiots" had probably set
back for years the resumption of full
scale competitive football by English
clubs in Europe.

And he believed the Football
Association should now review the
whole question of pre-season
"friendlies" with the possibility of
stopping them altogether, especially
where they involve travel to Europe.

"This is very serious news and it
could be a tragedy for British
football generally," said Mr Tracey.

"Over the last domestic season we
have seen a very good improvement in
crowd behaviour. There has been a
reduction of about 50% in
arrests and ejections from grounds.

"We also saw an improvement in the
behaviour of the fans at the World Cup
in Mexico. We all hoped, therefore,
that we were set fair for a good
season with a lasting improvement.

"But this behaviour by what I take
to be an irresponsible minority of
supporters, could well set us back
really very considerably."

Mr Tracey said FIFA, the
international football authority
which controls pre-season friendlies,
had earlier lifted the ban on English
clubs in Europe purely for friendlies.

"The clubs were now hoping that some
time in the future UEFA, the European
governing body, would lift the ban for
English clubs in European
competitions.

"I always felt it would take

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PA(c)1986

Copies to - Ted Croker (FA)
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