

PRIME MINISTER

THE APPROACH TO THE NEXT FOOTBALL SEASON

1. I promised you a note on the public relations/presentational aspects of the approach to the coming football season which opens on August 17.

2. I think that we have avoided raising expectations that ground improvements will be completed by then. Similarly, we have not held out the prospect of an immediate end to violence and hooliganism. So far as I can see my clients recognise that what the Government is seeking is a progressive improvement in both ground safety and spectator behaviour. It will, however, be necessary to reiterate the concept of steady improvement the closer we get to the opening of the season. For many football fans nothing much will appear to have happened, though they may be denied entry to certain parts of their home ground.

3. Against this background, I have two major public relations concerns:

- the first, the Government's - and your personal - need to demonstrate that you have done everything reasonable in the time available to bring about progressive changes in fabric, equipment and attitudes
- the second concerns attitudes and the need to implant in the public's mind the idea that the 1984-85 season was the low water mark for British soccer; enough is enough; an entirely new attitude and approach by Government, police, football authorities, clubs and players - and we hope the mass of decent fans - governs the new season. 1985-86 must mark the return to decency in British soccer.

4. You have so far tended to downgrade the contribution which public relations can make to your objective. In

2  
We must discuss  
mt

practice the Government is already able to point to an impressive action programme. But that programme will be less effective - and have less impact - if the clubs (the key) are either lukewarm, sullen or half-hearted.

5. You know what the Government is doing to gear up for next season. Similarly, you know what the police are trying to do. But, even after Bradford, you need to be sure that the local authorities are as serious as you are. When you are sure of this, you can exploit the offices of Mayor or council chairman to help bring about a change in attitudes. But the (key) elements you cannot rely on are the football authorities and the clubs.

6. What follows is a suggested programme of Government/Prime Ministerial action based upon this analysis.

7. First, if it is accepted that the clubs are the key, then each of the 92 League clubs must be required at the first few home games of next season (and regularly thereafter, if necessary) to:

- print a message from the chairman in the programme containing the points in the draft message at Annex I; you will see these cover the club's attitudes to hooligans and spectator and player (very important) behaviour and to what clubs expect of the police, courts and spectators; successive messages will need to be tailored to experience of the ground, and if necessary Government will have to provide alternative drafts;
- ensure that a spokesman for the club, who is the most articulate and persuasive, summarises this programme message over the tannoy and makes the following point:
  - anyone who steps on to the pitch without authority will be liable to arrest by the police and prosecution; it is now not a case of asking people to keep off the pitch - we are telling you that if you don't you can expect to end up in court;

*It is not an offence*

- demonstrate in various ways - weight of police, stewards, Mayor or chairman speaking from the pitch - that things are being taken seriously;
- ensure that at club annual meetings held August-October resolutions on the lines of Annex I are passed, preferably unanimously, and given publicity.

8. Second, we should ensure that the chairmen of clubs call in the various editors of press, radio and television before the first home game to explain the new attitude. They should be flanked by the Chief Constable or his representative who makes quite clear to press, radio and television how, with the backing of the Government and club, he is going to discharge his responsibilities.

9. Third, we should get official supporters clubs to issue statements to the media condemning hooliganism and violence; demanding an end to it; and emphasising their support for tough club, police and court action.

10. Fourth, we need to gear up the media, and especially commentators, to put over as strongly as possible on radio and especially television the Government's determination that 1985-86 will mark the return to sanity and safety; what you have asked the clubs and police to do and what they have undertaken to do; and what you hope the courts will do. In this context there is much to be said for your holding a briefing of top football writers and commentators and specifically asking people like Jimmy Hill and Bobby Charlton to be as firm as they can be in supporting authority and condemning hooliganism on and off the field of play.

11. A variant of, or added to, this is to try to organise the more articulate goalkeepers, who are often first in line of hooligan fire, to launch a campaign - "Goalies against Hoolies". We are proposing you should give an interview to Gary Bailey, Manchester United and England goalkeeper, from Piccadilly Radio, Manchester - an interview which we should get networked. Bailey is an articulate graduate.

12. Elton John, chairman of Watford, has suggested an interview with Bailey. But all the glamorous pop names in soccer have a role to play in getting the right approach to next season, and we should consider organising the main radio and television sports programmes to get as many of them on the air as possible immediately before the season to spread the word.

13. Fifth, David Davies, a curious animal in that he is both a political and football correspondent, has asked you to give a pre-season interview to BBC Grandstand on a Saturday lunchtime. I think you should do this early in August before you go on holiday, and also give one to ITV's World of Sport.

14. Sixth - and this depends on the outcome of Mr Macfarlane's current talks with the FA/FL - we need to tie in these two authorities in any publicity exercise. They must be required to make the right noises, too; otherwise the impact will be reduced.

#### Arguments

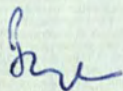
15. It may well be objected that this gives you a very high profile and that when there are further outbreaks of hooliganism next season you will be seen to have failed. This argument has some force, but not all that much since the objective of the programme I outline is to put the clubs in the front line of responsibility. In any case, it should be clear to most people now that if there is serious trouble next season clubs are going to find their grounds closed. We are not simply talking about exhortation; you have a lot of measures and sanctions backing that up.

16. You are not in a position to let go of this issue now. You have so grasped the nettle that football must next season progressively become safer and more ruly. We have to put everything behind that effort.

Conclusions

17. I have discussed the ideas set out above informally with John Smith, Chairman of Liverpool, and Neil Macfarlane is aware of them and I believe generally supports them.

18. You may care to discuss.



BERNARD INGHAM

20 JUNE 1985

ANNEX I

Last season was a disaster for English football - and tragic for many innocent fans who died attending their favourite sport.

Last season must be the last of its kind. English soccer simply cannot go through another season like it if it is to survive as a sport.

Soccer must make itself safe and rid itself of the minority who have brought violence, hooliganism, intimidation and disgrace to far too many matches.

This 1985-86 season must mark the return to sanity in our sport and, with it, our eventual return to free competition with clubs abroad.

Accordingly, I and my fellow directors, want to serve notice on all who would cause trouble on or around our ground. This club has resolutely set its face against hooligans. We are determined to stamp them out.

To this end we have taken the following measures:

- safety ]
- ] [give list]
- public order ]

But in addition we have informed the Chief Constable/Chief Officer of Police that they have our full backing in taking firm action against anyone who steps out of line. We give due notice that we shall fully support a determined and thorough policy of prosecution, and if those tried are found guilty, we hope the courts will hand out heavy punishments.

As one single illustration of this we have asked the police to eject from the ground anyone who goes on to the pitch without specific authority.

No hooligan can expect any quarter on or around this ground from the club, the police and, I hope, the vast mass of decent fans who want to enjoy the game in peace, comfort and security. That is what we aim to provide our fans. They deserve no less.

We shall, of course, expect the highest standards of conduct from our players so that they set a good example, on behalf of the club, to all on the terraces.

So to summarise: the game we all love has got to be cleaned up. We have got to give every family who would like to come and enjoy themselves watching their favourite team the confidence to do so. If we don't, it is no exaggeration to say that soccer will simply go down the drain and cease to exist as a serious sport.

The clean up starts now.