

PRIME MINISTER

SOCCER - MEMBERSHIP CARDS

It seems clear from all I hear that the football industry is not doctrinally opposed to membership/identity cards. After all, some clubs are to introduce them.

The problem is a combination of a sheer lack of imagination and enterprise and a fear that any card system is bound to cost them money either in terms of outlay or revenue denied.

I fear that the only effect of talking to clubs in terms of new technology will be to put them off even more. They see new technology as expensive and beyond their capacity - 70 year old gatemens etc - to operate.

If we are to break down resistance, and get something moving quickly, we need to come up with a cheap system which copes with the problem of the casual spectator, gives the authorities a sanction over troublemakers and offers the clubs a new source of revenue.

The system which I propose below is not absolutely watertight; none can ever be. But it does meet the criteria set out above.

First, we should persuade the authorities to introduce a national system based upon the individual 92 League clubs.

Second, the FA/FL would then tell all people who intended or even hoped to visit a football match during the coming season to write to their club, or nearest club, applying for a membership card, enclosing a fee of, say, £1 (I am assured the card would cost no more than 50p), plus a passport photograph giving full name, age and address. They would emphasise there would be no way of getting into a match without such a membership card.

The photo, name, age and address, club code and the applicant's club membership number would then be incorporated into the hologram. The club would then have a detailed record of each person.



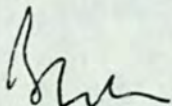
These membership cards, which would be recognised nationally, would be the sole means of admission, subject to random checking and, of course, liable to withdrawal by the club. It would be assumed that the police would hand it over to the club for cancellation if a person were arrested or ejected from the ground. In this way there would be the makings of control and sanction against unruly elements.

It is assumed that misrepresentation - ie use of someone else's card - would also be grounds for cancellation - cancellation which would, of course, prevent admission to any ground.

All this might, of course, be viewed in a negative light by many clubs. But there is a positive side. The smaller clubs might well attract more rather than less "gate" money by a membership card system. Speaking for myself, I would be inclined to support home industries and so apply to Halifax Town (which does well to get 1500 to home gates). And the incorporation of the club number in the hologram could be used as a basis for lotteries, winning numbers etc - you pay your membership fee and you qualify for club lotteries.

I have examples of holograms which help to demonstrate the viability of the sort of scheme I have outlined.

What I think is important is not to aim for the moon first time round; or to assume that nothing is worth doing unless it is absolutely rogue proof. We need to get clubs to first base; once there we can build better systems as the seasons go by.



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