

Hönig Michael

# The Hillsborough Disaster - blame it on who?



I declare that I wrote this Fachbereichsarbeit all by myself and that I only used the literature that is listed at the end of this paper.

## **PREFACE**

*„Beside the Hillsborough flame,  
I heard a Kopite<sup>1</sup> mourning.  
Why so many taken on that day?  
Justice has never been done,  
but their memory will carry on.  
There'll be glory, round the fields of Anfield Road!“<sup>2</sup>*

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1: Kopite is one of the many collective names given to supporters of Liverpool FC

2: Third stanza of „Fields of Anfield Road“, written by John Power and „The La‘s“, included 2009

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1) General Introduction**

#### **April 15<sup>th</sup> 1989, Hillsborough Stadium**

An FA Cup semi-final is something very special. It is an event that excites the fans of the football clubs that play in it days before and after the game. Everytime. Usually that excitement turns into joy or disappointment, depending on whether your team makes it to the FA Cup final, or takes the last exit on the road to one of the most important and prestigious cup titles that are played out in professional football.

This excitement also filled the supporters of Liverpool FC in 1989, as Liverpool was set to play Nottingham Forest FC in Sheffield, where the Hillsborough Stadium of Sheffield Wednesday was chosen as neutral venue for this semi-final clash. But this time the excitement did not turn into joy or disappointment. It turned into sheer shock, speechlessness and grief. Something went terribly wrong and 96 supporters of Liverpool Football Club had to pay for it with their lives. Sadly the Sheffield police was not able to cope with the crowd of fans that wanted to get into the stadium. They made some dreadful mistakes that ultimately lead to a massive human crush. The Liverpool Fans were pressed against each other with almost no chance to escape. Some of them literally suffocated while standing still, held on by the people around them who were not able to move either. It was a tragedy, a tragedy that did not only affect the lives of thousands of people who had travelled to Sheffield just to watch a game of football and families that lost beloved members at Hillsborough, but also the whole community of football fans in the United Kingdom and eventually throughout the world, because its aftermath changed the way football fans are treated all over the globe. All in all the FA Cup semi final on April 15<sup>th</sup> in 1989 was probably the most crucial cupmatch ever played in the history of football - sadly not because of the world class football players that met that day, but because of the tragedy that happended inches away from the sidelines of the pitch.

#### **No escaping Hillsborough**

If you are a fan of football and English football and the Barclays Premier League in particular it is almost impossible not to get in touch with the Hillsborough catastrophe or at least its aftermath. Of course there are obvious events like the yearly service for the victims at Anfield Road, but actually you can feel the effects of the crush at every single match played in an English football league. In other words you can hear it or, to be more specific, you cannot. Shortly after the disaster standing terraces were banned from English football stadiums - an action that hugely affected the English fan culture. If you compare the atmosphere in British stadiums now and then you have to admit that it seems to be from different worlds and the banishment of standing terraces was a huge part of this "revolution" in the English fan culture. I actually came to witness this "cut back" atmosphere myself sometimes, most recently when I travelled to Birmingham in the summer of 2010 to support my club, the SK Rapid Wien, against Aston Villa in the Europa League Play Off and a couple of months later in London, at the Emirates Stadium of Arsenal Football Club. Both matches were absolutely stunning, concerning the atmosphere in the stadiums because it was almost not existent, if you compare it with the atmosphere of German or certain Austrian stadiums, for example. Every now and then somebody rose to shout for a minute, but all in all it was unbelievably quiet. Thanks to the match at the Emirates I finally understood why Arsenal's former stadium, Highbury, was often mocked and called "Highbury the library".

But of course all this is just a side effect of the disaster at Hillsborough Stadium, where 96 „Reds“<sup>3</sup> lost their lives. And even though the disaster is not as present today as it was some years ago, it still comes up every once in a while. And at one point, after I came across the disaster once again, I started to gather some knowledge about what happened at Sheffield and at the beginning I was just shocked by the tragedy that had taken place there. Of course it was easy for me to bond with everyone affected by this tragedy, because I am a fan who, if possible, travels to every possible match of Rapid, just like most of the people who died or suffered at Hillsborough were or, if they were "lucky", still are travelling to every match of Liverpool FC. I know this may sound strange, but I started feeling connected to the victims of Hillsborough, although the club that I love plays in Austria and I am a diehard fan of Arsenal FC, a Barclays Premier League rival of Liverpool. I was not able to stop thinking about this disaster for a while, because I am, in a way, in the same situation as the Liverpool Fans that travelled to Sheffield in 1989. They merely wanted to see a football match, support their team and, if things had worked out, celebrate a

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3: „The Reds“ is probably the most common nickname for Liverpool's supporters and players

victory afterwards. But all of this was taken away from them, because terrible and unnecessary mistakes were made.

As I became more and more interested in the topic and my knowledge grew I started developing the idea of writing this paper about the incidents at the Hillsborough Stadium. But I did not put much effort in it, because it was just some mind game so far, until I read the autobiography of Steven Gerrard. Gerrard is the current captain of Liverpool Football Club, serving this duty since 2003. He is already a living legend at the club he loves and descends from a family in which love to Liverpool Football Club runs deep. He is one of the most faithful players and captains in the world of football today, sadly one of the few remaining players who things like loyalty do still matter to. He has also won numerous trophies with the club, the most prestigious one being of course the UEFA Champions League trophy. Of course he is also one of the best midfielders in the world of football today, and all those things combined make him one of the best known soccer players in the world and a great skipper for LFC. But what really caught my attention was the "Dedication" chapter of his biography, in which he writes about Jon-Paul Gilhooley. Although most people do not know him by name and would just look puzzled if you threw that name at them, he was probably the most popular victim of the tragedy at Hillsborough Stadium. Furthermore he was also the youngest Liverpool supporter who lost his life at Sheffield - he was only ten years old when he got crushed to death at Hillsborough Stadium. Little Jon-Paul was Steven Gerrard's cousin. According to Gerrard the club had meant the world to Jon-Paul.<sup>4</sup> In his "Dedication" he explains the passing of Jon-Paul inspired him on his way to becoming a professional football player. The skipper of Liverpool tells the story of a boy who adored Liverpool FC and who was delighted to have the chance to go to the FA Cup semi-final, from which he never returned. At the end of this short "Dedication" Gerrard admits what seems to be quite obvious: *"I've never let anyone know this before, but it's true: I play for Jon-Paul."*<sup>5</sup>

Jon-Paul was the impulse for me to write this paper, but there is still something else that is always on my mind when I think about the Hillsborough disaster. Although there was an official inquiry into the events at Hillsborough, which became known as the "Taylor Report", a lot of documents remained unseen for the public eye and were not shown to Taylor either. The documents were kept safe by organizations like the police and the ambulance for a long time, leaving some parts

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4: Gerrard, 2006 ,2<sup>nd</sup> page of the Dedication

5: Gerrard, 2006, Last page of the Dedication

of the disaster in the dark. As a result a lot of accusations were exchanged and no justice was done to the victims of Hillsborough. The most shameful accusation was made by "The Sun", the largest daily newspaper in the United Kingdom when it comes to its circulation, which accused the Liverpool Fans of terrible actions, such as looting of their fallen comrades and urination on the cops at the stadium. Since a lot of documents were not released for a long time, nobody was able to prove "The Sun" and everyone else, who falsely blamed the Liverpool Fans for this catastrophe, wrong. All those allegations lead to the birth of one of the best known chants in English football stadiums, that is still sung by the supporters of Liverpool Football Club: "Justice for the 96". This cry for justice remained unanswered for decades, until finally after 20 years the Hillsborough Independent Panel was formed to have another look at the disaster, which finally lead to a statement that clearly testified that no Liverpool supporter was to blame for this terrible tragedy. The report was released just recently, on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2012, and lead to a flood of apologies. Still, they were too few and too late, and we have to be aware of the things that were said and done after the tragedy forever. Justice for the 96 - in a way this was my final reason, my final impulse to write this paper.

*"But they will never be forgotten, and we will never let them be.*

*And for those who are to blame: Hang your heads in shame!*

*Only then, will their spirits be free." <sup>6</sup>*

## **1.2) Introduction to fan culture**

### **Burning passion**

I guess it is not always easy to understand even for keen observers why football clubs all over the world are able to draw that much attention and make a mass of people go crazy for them. Football appears to be a power that fascinates billions of people all over the world and that can unleash an unlimited number of emotions, from boundless joy to pure desperation and, sadly, sheer hatred and violence. The actions of active supporters serve a wide range of different purposes: Marvellous choreographies that show the attachment to the club, continuous support over 90 minutes to let out all the passion that connects fans and clubs, pitch invasions to react upon difficult times and bad results and ultimately arranged meetings outside the stadiums to

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6: First refrain of the "Hillsborough anthem", by Lee Roy Jones

rampage against opposing hooligan firms. Certainly the last one must not be considered as "normal and typical" fan behaviour, but still it is, unfortunately, part of the potpourri of different types of fans and club supporters that belong to every football club around the world. But why are football clubs so popular and why do some people even consider them as their religion?

Actually that is a question almost unanswerable, because it is just so hard to get a grasp on this whole subject. You can ask around and interview fifty fans, from active supporters to "quiet" observers and you will definitely hear fifty different answers to this question. There are so many different reasons. It is, like I said, impossible to explain why football fans, some more than others, develop such a strong bond to their respective club. I am a devoted fan of my club and I am not able to give you a proper answer either, there are just too many factors that form this passion and love and you have to witness so much of those factors yourself to really understand it. The only thing that is understandable is that this passion does truly exist. A lot of supporters would claim that they love their club and that it gives meaning to their lives. To some it even is their religion and to understand some later parts of this paper one has to accept and understand that those words are not just empty phrases for, in fact, a lot of football fans. It is not important why that is the case, especially because it is not possible to explain it properly, but it is vital to know that this passion, love and attachment to football clubs is as a matter of fact not merely a marketing strategy of football clubs, but rather the true attitude of some football fans towards their clubs.

### **English and Italian support**

There are lots and lots of reasons for football fans to support their club and many different "stages" of commitment as well. As a result there is also quite a number of different types of support, that are "performed" by organized fans. In general there are two main types of support, which divide the whole fan scene in world football in two groups. Both types of support are well known and almost equally common and furthermore both have quite a similar number of positive and negative aspects. These types are known as "English support" and "Italian support".

English support is often described as "game related support" and, obviously, mainly found in English stadiums. This way of supporting football clubs has of course been influenced by the banishment of standing terraces from the stadiums in the United Kingdom and so it does not involve a lot of material, such as flags and two pole banners, which are very common with the

Italian style of support. The term "game related" refers to the fact that English style supporters, mostly, do not support their team with chants throughout the whole game, but rather "react" to specific situations during the game. Such situations may include send-offs, penalty kicks, missed chances, top performances of certain players and, of course, goals. This habit has also led to the establishment of the term "only sing when you are winning", because obviously this type of support is much louder and much more dominant during games that are spectacular and that include a strong home team. If you "just" sing and chant after and during specific situations, which are of course mostly situations that are characterized by success, there are a lot of games that will close out very quietly. This style is of course hugely influenced by the fact that standing is generally forbidden in English stadiums, so this occasional support is easier to keep up during a game. Naturally this rule is not guarded that strictly, although there is, for example, an SMS service in most English stadium to call a steward if you see someone acting anti-socially, and this includes in fact standing. I almost experienced this myself at the Wembley Stadium, at the NFL International Series<sup>7</sup>, as the man behind me threatened me that he would use the service if I did not sit down - I just jumped up because there almost was a "pick 6".<sup>8</sup>

The Italian style on the other hand differs from the English one in some respects, the most important one certainly being the fact that "Italian style supporters" usually do not slow down during a game. While the the English style supporters just get loud when something special happens, Italian style supporters sing and chant for their team throughout the whole game, at least the ones who take it seriously. Beside the fact that they support their team for 90 minutes there are two further major aspects: Italian style supporters stand the whole game, usually on standing terraces, and "supporting materials" as the flags and two pole banners already mentioned are much more common and an important part of the support. This style and type of support is very widely spread in Europe, especially in the Balkans and eastern Europe in general, Germany, France and Austria. Interestingly enough it is not as common in Italy than in these parts of Europe, although it is named after and largely influenced by the fans of this Country. The decreasing interest in football, where most of the stadiums are really ugly and the quality is going down as well, has caused this less dominant role of the football fans from this historically important country, when it comes to soccer and its fan culture. Even though the "aim"

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7: Every year the National Football League sends two teams to the Wembley Stadium in London to play a Regular Season game, this is called NFL International Series

8: Pick 6 is an American football term, describing an intercepted pass of the Quarterback that is returned into the opponents end zone, resulting in a touchdown

of Italian style supporters is to encourage their team throughout the whole game, no matter what happens, there are only a few fan scenes that can truly claim that for themselves. Another quite remarkable idiosyncrasy of Italian style scenes is the high frequency of choreographies. The English style supporters perform choreographies before the kick off, too, but they are much less frequent compared to the Italian type and additionally often organized by the clubs and not by the respective fan clubs. Most of the Italian style scenes are financed by some collections and extra money that is given by the members themselves, which shows that being an "active" fan of a football club can be a very expensive hobby, especially if you consider that you have to pay for tickets and travelling as well.

It is needless to say that there is no way of saying which style is better. While the Italian style is definitely more fanatic and spectacular the English style is calm and plays more by the given rules, so both have their pros and cons. England does probably prefer the English style not just because the other one is not really possible there, thanks to very strict rules in the stadiums, but also because of one of the darkest chapters in the history of football fandom, that had its most dominant and infamous phase in England. The dominance of football hooligans.

### **The dark side of fandom - football violence**

Nowadays it is very common to name any act of violence that happens in the atmosphere of football games hooliganism, but the true heyday of the hooligans is, thank god, already over and we should not call every small thing that happens in stadiums and that is not completely compatible with the clubs' ideas hooliganism. Yes of course, there is still too much football related violence in and around the stadiums all over the world, but you cannot compare it to the warlike situations that took place in the heyday of hooliganism.

Originally football hooliganism just describes destructive behaviour at or in connection to football games. The most common and fierce "battles" are of course fought between followers of rivaling football teams and their respective firms. Football or hooligan firms are groups that are specifically formed to act out physical violence, mainly against the supporters of rivaling clubs. Their only true and important goal is the fighting and violence itself and most of them have no real attachment to football, which in fact means absolutely nothing to them. Being aware of that is something that is very important, but that is also often forgotten: Hooligans are no real

football fans! They just use football as an excuse to fight with each other, but in fact they do not have any bond to football clubs at all. Although newspapers and other media have the tendency to throw them into one pot with all the fans that do really love and support their club we have to keep in mind that these two groups have absolutely nothing to do with each other. In the phase where hooliganism flourished, especially in England and the rest of the United Kingdom, lots of hooligan firms existed and most of them were founded in the 1970ies. The most famous one is probably the Inter City Firm of the London football club West Ham United, which was also part of the story in some movies about hooligans. Other famous hooligan firms in England include West Ham's arch rivals from Millwall Football Club, the Bushwackers and the Headhunters of Chelsea football club. And of course there is the very infamous Red Army of Manchester United, which became known and feared after the relegation of the club, as they rioted at football stadiums all over England.

This huge hooligan campaign of Manchester United's Red Army and the stabbing of a Blackpool fan marked the dark lowpoints of the 70ies. Hooliganism continued to flourish and established itself as a dark part of football, but the absolute lowlight was still to come and it turned out to be one of the saddest days in the history of football on May 29<sup>th</sup> 1985 at the Heysel Stadium in Brussels, at the European Cup Final between Juventus and Liverpool Football Club. A huge number of Liverpool supporters broke through a fence that separated their area of the stadium from the rest an hour before the kick-off and started chasing down the supporters of Juventus. As they ran away from the Reds, they suddenly faced a wall, which they tried to climb. Some fans were already crushed to death there and moments later it turned out that the wall was not able to withstand the pressure of the climbing fans - it collapsed. The whole disaster caused the death of 39 fans of Juventus and injuries for approximately 600 other football fans. Unlike the game at Hillsborough this match was actually played and Juventus won one to nothing, thanks to a penalty converted by the current president of the UEFA, Michel Platini. The disaster led to some changes concerning the way stadiums are built in Europe and furthermore all English teams were banned from UEFA competition until the 1990-1991 season.

It was actually the "Iron Lady", Margaret Thatcher, who decided to have a tighter grasp on hooligans in England. She threatened to punish them with prison sentences and finally the Football Spectators Act was enacted in 1989 and thanks to this, a lot of new rules to English football were introduced and the hooliganism finally decreased. Originally an ID card system was

intended, too, but that was actually overthrown by the Taylor Report after the Hillsborough disaster. Some further changes in English football, like all-seater stadiums and the fact that the prices for football tickets in England and the United Kingdom are very high, have led to the current status quo: Hooligans and their firms still exist, but they are at least almost completely banned from the top divisions and it is much easier to control them. Nowadays violence of course still exists in football, but it has different origins than the hooliganism that haunted this great sport for a long time. Hooliganism also became kind of a casual subculture, in which it is standard to dress like the Hooligans did in their heyday, but no violence is intended. So as I have said before: Violence is still a problem but thankfully it differs in many ways from hooliganism and it is actually brutally oversold by media coverage all over Europe, especially in Austria and Germany.

## **2.) The disaster in Sheffield**

### **2.1) "prologue" to the disaster**

#### **One of many ...**

One of too many sad truths about the disaster at Hillsborough Stadium is that there were lots of warning signs and human crushes were quite common in English stadiums that time. As football was affected by hooligans in the seventies, it was normal that the pitches of almost all stadiums in England were separated from the terraces by high and solid steel fences, mainly to prevent pitch invasions. Especially with the installment of these fences the number of crushes in stadiums rose and some of them became popular as well as the one at Hillsborough. A very well known crush (which actually happened 3 years before most of those fences were put in place) took place at Ibrox Park, the home field of the Scottish record champion Glasgow Rangers. In the closing minutes of the Old Firm<sup>9</sup>, Celtic Glasgow, the arch-rival of the Rangers, scored the first goal in the game and went up front by one. Thousands of Rangers supporters did not believe that their team would be able to equalise and so they started to leave the stadium, but eventually Rangers striker Colin Stein fired home the equaliser for the home side. As the leaving supporters heard the roar of the crowd they tried to get back and pushed back up the stairwell. One person fell and caused a massive chain reaction that led to the death of 66 people, including children, and lots of injuries. The disaster ultimately led to the "Safety of Sports Grounds Act" in 1975, a licensing system for stadiums that introduced stricter rules to designated grounds.

The crush at Ibrox so far marked the disaster with the highest count of victims and there were many more, including two relatively "minor" crushes, that undeniably still drip with bitter and cutting irony, because they took place at Hillsborough Stadium. The first one occurred during an FA Cup semi-final in 1981, between Tottenham Hotspur from London and the Wolverhampton Wanderers. The organizer allowed too many fans into Leppings Lane, the same stand where the tragedy of 1989 happened, and as a large congestion developed in front of the turnstiles an additional gate was opened. The fans approached the already filled stand and got pressed against each other. The pressure built up as Tottenham scored early in the game and the fans at

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9: The Old Firm is the name for the rivalry and the derbies between Celtic and the Rangers. It is the most frequently played derby in European club football.

the back wanted to get onto the terrace, and so an even severer crush developed. It "merely" resulted in injuries, but it was a first warning signal. After this event the Leppings Lane stand was adjusted and lateral fences were installed, that then parted it into three pens. Three years later, after the promotion of Sheffield United, the terrace was divided again and five pens were formed on it. (More on the stadium itself will follow in the next section of this paper.) Furthermore Hillsborough Stadium, a typical venue for FA Cup semi-finals, did not host an FA Cup game for six years. In 1988 Liverpool Football Club and Nottingham Forest played their semi-final at Hillsborough and, just one year before *the* tragedy should take place at the very same stadium with the very same teams, fans observed and were part of "small" crushes. The Liverpool supporters were packed together and not able to move for a while, which also lead to injuries. This and overcrowding in the quarter- and semi-finals a year before can be considered as "teasers" of the tragedy in 1989, where an ultimate price for the poor safety standards at Hillsborough stadium was paid by 96 Liverpool fans.

### **Often changed, never improved?**

Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, originally opened in 1899, is in fact a very old stadium. Throughout its history there have been some structural changes and the most significant ones were made prior to the World Cup in 1966, when the stadium was one of the venues, and after the "Safety of Sports Grounds" Act in 1975. All in all it was considered as one of Britain's premier football stadiums and as a result it hosted many FA Cup semi-final matches. The most famous stand of the stadium is the West Stand or Leppings Lane. On this terrace the tragedy of 1989, as well as the other crushes at Hillsborough, took place and some structural changes were particularly made on this stand. As described earlier, the stand (at the time of the disaster) was separated from the pitch by a steel fence, which included narrow and locked gates for each pen. The stand itself was divided by lateral fences that splitted the terrace into five pens. The two central pens, which were always the first to fill, were approachable through a tunnel beneath the West Stand, after which the fans were able to turn left or right and choose one of the two pens. The architecture of Leppings Lane can be examined in Figure A.

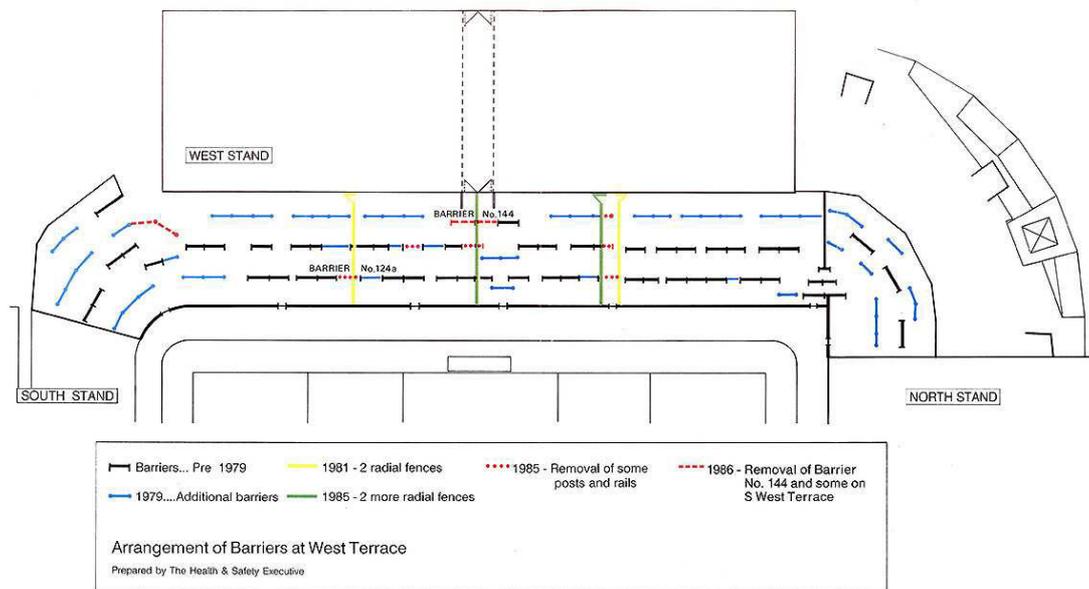


Image A: The West Stand (Leppings Lane) of Hillsborough Stadium

You can also examine that the usual barriers were placed on the stand, much like in almost every other standing terrace around the world. These barriers split and loosen up the crowd of people, so that they are not that tightly pressed together. The "Safety of Sports Grounds" Act introduced a licensing system into English football and its stadiums and so Hillsborough Stadium had to be rated. In 1978 a safety certificate was given to the football ground, that stated that the stadium was satisfactory over all, although some minor weak points were noted. All in all it turned out that corraling supporters into pens is not the brightest idea, which was highlighted by a report made after a fire at Valley Parade Stadium<sup>10</sup>. The main recommendation made by this report was that the gates of the pens that faced the pitch should be able to be opened at all times and at best be manned, too. Of course this was only a recommendation and so it was not established in a lot of British stadiums.

Another big issue was the number and positioning of the turnstiles entering Leppings Lane, through which the visitors also entered to the North Stand. A total of 23 turnstiles led to these two stands in big matches, because the ones opening to the North Stand from the east were not used, compared to the total of 60 turnstiles that fed the South and East stands of the stadium.

Image A: <http://hillsborough.independent.gov.uk/images/west-terrace.jpg> (23.11.2012)

10: It was actually the worst fire based disaster in English football, costing a total of 56 lives during the match between Bradford City and Lincoln City in 1985

The West and North Stand's capacity made up a combined amount of 24 256 persons, including the 4500 seaters above the Leppings Lane standing terrace (with a capacity of 10 100), which all had to enter through these 23 turnstiles, which were placed in a small concourse in front of the West Stand. Furthermore this concourse was divided, so that Leppings Lane's standing terrace was actually approached through just seven turnstiles. The other approximately fourteen thousand entered through the nearby other fourteen turnstiles. Although some concerns were uttered and changes to the turnstile situation were suggested, just one small change was made and it has to be considered as "cosmetical". It has to be added that turnstiles in English stadiums are often very narrow and absolutey not comfortable, so that some heavier persons often have problems to enter through these turnstiles.

It is a sad truth and based on hard facts that the warning signs were clearly there, as Liverpool Football Club and Nottingham Forrest prepared to face off in their FA Cup battle at Hillsborough Stadium. Liverpool actually filed a complaint against Hillsborough Stadium as a venue, which had no active safety certificate that time (it was not given after the addition of 3 lateral fences in 1981 and 1985), but it was ignored and the ground confirmed. Another chance to avoid this terrible disaster was missed and everything was prepared for the horror that happened on April 15<sup>th</sup> in Sheffield. At the end of this section I just want to quote a fan, who attended the 1988 FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool Football Club and Nottingham Forest. The fan wrote to the English Football Association after he had witnessed and experienced crushing that actually started in the tunnel beneath the West Stand. In this letter he describes his experiences in the tunnel and mentions that he was forced to constantly withstand the pressure of the other Reds who were pushing forward. There were also some fans who fainted and collapsed. At the end of his letter he sort of predicts the disaster, without knowing that it would truly happen and that it would even happen to his own club in the very same match-up.

*"During the whole of this game we were very concerned for the safety of our youngsters but the police were only allowing injured fans through the gate. After the match finished we all vowed never to enter the Leppings Lane end ever again.*

*As far as I am concerned, when there is a large crowd entering this part of the ground, it will always be a death trap." <sup>11</sup>*

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11: The HIP report, page 83, from a "Letter to the Football Association" (source 125)

## 2.2) The shaping of a tragedy

### **Blindfolded?**

The fans who were present at the 1988 "edition" of the semi-final between the Reds and the Tricky Trees<sup>12</sup> knew that the stadium and especially Leppings Lane were, as quoted, a "death trap". The officials and those responsible sadly did not learn as much from the game in 1988 and interestingly enough it was considered as a success. As the game was discussed afterwards there was no reference to crushing of people or injuries of any spectators. In fact the opinions by the officials were completely contrary and the officials stated that everything had gone splendidly and there had not been any overcrowding at all. The only negative thing that was said during the debriefing of the match was that some reports stated that there had been a minor pitch invasion, which shows that the officials were deluded and read the situation completely wrong. They mistook the attempts of spectators and supporters to open the gates towards the pitch and to climb over the fence for a pitch invasion, instead of realizing the desperate attempts to get some air and space that they truly were. This mistake had no severe consequences, but in fact the officials at the 1989 semi-final made exactly the same mistake at first: Instead of understanding that the supporters were helpless and desperate they interpreted their attempts to get onto the track as a pitch invasion and the first officers and policemen to get there pushed the climbing fans back on the terrace. If the 1988 match-up had been properly observed and debriefed, at least that mistake could have been avoided. Sadly the officers and others responsible for safety and security were not even close to this enlightenment and in fact most of them denied, or really did not realize, the crushed situation. A superintendent admitted that he did not know anything about injuries and, interestingly enough, pointed out that there was the possibility that injured people had gone off themselves and gone to hospital."<sup>13</sup> An absolutely deluded and side-stepping argument, that, in my opinion, shows that only few officers and inspectors took the safety issues very seriously. The sad fact is that the 1988 game was considered as a success and therefore it was the foundation for the safety planning for 1989. Yet the only true changes made compared to 1988 were removals, as some officers were withdrawn from the concourse at Leppings Lane and air cover was removed, too.

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12: A common nickname of Nottingham Forest Football Club, based on the club's emblem

13: Taken from section 2.1.114 of the HIP report

## Preperations for a disaster

So the operational order for the police was basically the same as the one issued in 1988, except for these two minor changes. The main points and aims were the segregation of the opposing fan factions, the protection of public order and the protection of public property. It also included an approval from the police that they would manage the crowd at this semi-final. Furthermore the order included the "usual" rules and instructions, such as searching the fans before the game, checking their tickets and segregating the fans of Liverpool Football Club and Nottingham Forest Football Club, for example by escorting them from the train station to the stadium. Unfortunately the order lacked some important information and instructions, the most important one being a comment about the area in front of the turnstiles at Leppings Lane, which was known to be a bottleneck. Congestions there were common, but there were no suggestions made in the order concerning this vital zone outside Leppings Lane. There were also orders regarding the officers at the perimeter track, which were encouraged to keep off the fans from the track and to "*pay particular attention to prevent every person climbing the fence to gain access to the ground*".<sup>14</sup> The total of twenty-one officers at the track were also told not to let anyone through the gates, unless it was allowed by a superior officer. The gates should only be opened, if a message was announced through the public address system and the officers did not anticipate, and were not expected, to act on their own arbitrary. All in all there were no warnings about potential crushings during or before the match, probably leaving some of the constables and officers in the dark, if even anyone of the officials knew about this deadly risk.

Prior to the match it was decided that the East and South Stands of Hillsborough Stadium would be given to the supporters of Nottingham Forrest, while Liverpool was given the North and West Stands. An interesting decision, because Liverpool is a large club, which usually brings along more fans, but still Nottingham received the bigger section in the stadium. This was explained as necessity, because it was easier to keep the opposing fan sections away from each other as they approached the stadium. Chief Superintendent Duckenfield, the match commander of the South Yorkshire Police, mentioned in his pre-match briefing that complete segreagtion of the opposing fans would be achieved that day. He also stated that safety was very important that day, but there were no mentions of the events at the FA Cup semi-final in 1988. Another briefing was done bei Superintendent Roger Marshall, the Ground Commander outside Leppings Lane, who mainly

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14: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 36, section 1.71

focused on public order. Sadly he was influenced by events in 1988 and his focus was on the bad behaviour of a small number of Liverpool Fans, who he, quite obviously, had prejudice against. He literally described their actions in 1988 as "*disturbing and distasteful*" <sup>15</sup>. So, judgmental as he was, his briefing lacked safety issues as he focused on alcohol abuse issues and bad behaviour of the supporters of Liverpool Football Club. In the contrary to that, Duckenfield clearly emphasised this important issue: "*I cannot stress too highly the word safety.*" <sup>16</sup>

Still, although some of the briefings did at least mention safety as an important aspect, there was absolutely no reference to the possibility of crushings on the Leppings Lane Terrace - not in the operational order and not during the various pre-match briefings. Consequently, as crushings were not an issue, the role of the gates in the perimeter fencing as release and outlet in case of occurring crushings was not mentioned in the operational order, as the order stressed the possibility of pitch invasions through these gates.

Another serious problem that was already carved in stone by the pre-match preparations was the focus on the Spion Kop, the East Stand of Hillsborough Stadium that was originally given to the supporters of the Tricky Trees. Experiences from other games at Hillsborough suggested that there might be problems with Liverpool fans who bought tickets to the Spion Kop and who would try to gain entry at their opponents stand. That is why the focus of the officers was on Spion Kop and on Liverpool fans who could cause problems there, while the Leppings Lane End was not so strongly observed. Even as the crush was already unfolding the police never wanted to lose their control and grasp on the Spion Kop. Unfortunately they totally lost control at the Leppings Lane End.

### **2.3) A disaster unfolds (and the first big mistake)**

April 15<sup>th</sup> came and the fans were travelling to Sheffield, where they wanted to see the FA Cup semi-final. Reds and supporters of Nottingham Forrest arrived and the city was full of football fans. As it was planned and required by the operational order, fans who drove to Sheffield by train or coach were immediately put under supervision as they arrived in the city and escorted to

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15: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 90, section 2.2.27 (important source for whole paragraph)

16: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 89, section 2.2.19 (important source for whole paragraph)

Hillsborough Stadium. Others, mainly the ones that did not come with organized groups but travelled on their own, spent some time in the city and were in absolutely no rush to get to the stadium. While all this was going on, as usual, the police forces at the stadium were slowly taking their respective places and at 1.50pm, David Duckenfield arrived at the Police Control Box. The Box itself was situated inside the stadium and above the Leppings Lane Terrace, where it was the centre of all police operations. The number of fans who wanted to get into the stadium at Leppings Lane End increased and the bottleneck in front of the the turnstiles started to get packed up. As this large group of supporters approached the West Stand the streets in front of it were closed to traffic, so that more space was provided for the fans. As the officers noticed that there were more fans of Nottingham Forrest already in the stadium, the pressure in front of Leppings Lane Terrace built up even more, especially between 2.30pm und 2.40pm. Though all this was happening, Superintendent Marshall had no concerns about the large number of fans and estimated that they would get into the stadium early enough. During this time the bottleneck was already congested, and there was only one way out of it - backwards, because all other sides were blocked by fences, walls and, of course, the turnstiles in front of them. Kick-off was already near and obviously the fans wanted to get into the ground on time and pushed forward, while some people, who wanted to escape this packed situation or who had simply approached the wrong turnstiles, tried to get out of this congestion. In its centre there were some police officers on horseback, who were already trapped. Some of the officers positioned at this bottleneck testified at later inquiries that the crowd was acting violently and unruly under pressure, but this was declined by people who had actually been inside. Furthermore those people added that they had not had the feeling the officers tried to contain und supervise the crowd.<sup>17</sup>

At the end the official forces of the police lost control of the crowd that wanted to get inside Hillsborough Stadium and the crush worsened and worsend even more when the situation in the Control Box went out of control. As those masses of fans outside pushed against each other they heard cheers and screams inside the stadium, as the teams of Liverpool and Nottingham Forrest Football Club came out onto the pitch about ten minutes before kick-off and thanks to that, the crush outside became worse once again. While it got harder to breathe for the people inside the congestion a delay of the kick-off was possible and at 2.54pm an official request to delay the game was made by a constable. The request arrived at the Control Box, but the Sergeant responsible for the radio, Sergeant Goddard, responded that it was already too late to delay the

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17: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 37, section 1.78

kick-off. He did so for two reasons: first of all the teams were, at that particular time, already on the pitch and he assumed that any delay had to be decided before the teams were actually out. Furthermore he had the impression that Duckenfield wanted a "*particular reason*" to delay the game and that he did not want to delay it because people were too late.<sup>18</sup> The FA officials present at this game were also discussing the situation and were aware that a lot of fans needed to get inside the ground, but they found out the police did not request a delayed kick-off.

The crush in the bottleneck and in front of the turnstiles was severe, and so Superintendent Roger Marshall made a crucial suggestion via the radio. He uttered that he was really concerned and that he was afraid that there would be serious injuries and even possible deaths, if there were no efforts made to deal with the crowd and loosen it up. His suggestion was to open the exit gates of the stadium (there were three of them, named A, B and C), which were situated nearby the turnstiles, but regrettably he was not aware about the situation inside the stadium and assumed that there were only few Reds already on the terrace. The police forces did not try to redirect the fans, and a statement of Marshall shows why they did not and in addition what his prejudiced mind was thinking:

*[The fans]"wouldn't have gone ... this is the problem that people seem to so desperately to fail [sic] to appreciate that there were thousands and thousands of people, many of whom had far too much to drink ... elements of people who hadn't got tickets ... that it's eight minutes away from kick-off and I'm gonna be in that ground come hell or high water ..."*<sup>19</sup>

Chief Superintendent Duckenfield received the suggestion and request from Marshall and thought about it for a while in the Control Box, from which he by the way had a good overview over the terrace, which's central pens were already filled, and ultimately he authorized opening the gates. The gates were opened and the fans pushed through Gate C, the one next to the turnstiles, and further, directly to the tunnel opposite the gate that lead to the central pens. There was no effort and attempt to redirect the fans or loosen the pack up, now there was some space. They pushed forward and opening the gate became the first, big mistake made by the officials. A huge blunder, in fact.

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18: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 94, section 2.2.55 & 56

19: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 95, section 2.2.68, source 47

#### **2.4) Once they are opened ...**

The supporters of Liverpool Football Club, relieved to be out of the first crush, walked on through the tunnel, where they soon faced the splitting fence, where they had to decide whether to go into the left or right central pen. There was no regulation of the flow into these central pens, no guards and no other attempts to lead the fans into the other pens, which were quite empty at that particular moment. While the fans pushed forward relentlessly, Superintendent Murray, one of the senior officers placed in the Control Box, feared that the opening of Gate A might affect the North Stand badly and so he sent some officers to control the fans there. Gate B was actually just opened for one minute, because the stewards there refused to open it, and some more fans climbed over the wall near Gate B. The whole force of the police underestimated the results and implications of opening Gate C. As mentioned there was absolutely no attempt to guide the fans to the left or right of the terrace, where enough space could have been provided and instead the fans pressed towards the central pens. Again the supporters of Liverpool were trapped, as the central pens already contained twice their capacity. They were surrounded by fences once again and could not go back, because the tunnel was completely crowded. Pressure built up and this time there was no chance to relieve it, so especially the Liverpool Fans nearby the pitch, who were pressed against the fence, were absolutely desperate. Some of them fell down, fell unconscious or died and the fans next to the perimeter fencing started climbing up those fences. By this time the match had already started, while Chief Superintendent Duckenfield was watching the disaster unfold from his control box. Other fans, who tried to escape the crush, pushed open one of the gates in the perimeter fence, which, together with the climbing fans, led to his conclusion: It was a pitch invasion. The officers at the perimeter track responded accordingly to this assumption and pushed the supporters back into the crowd, while all policemen that ran to the important area at Leppings Lane Terrace were informed that they would have to deal with a pitch invasion. One of the few officers to recognize the severe situation was Superintendent Greenwood, who became aware of the fact that this crush would likely lead to injuries and even worse. He was also the officer who ran to the referee of the match, without asking his superiors, and who asked him to stop the match, which he did at 3.06pm.



*Image B: Liverpool Fans pulling others up to the West Stand*

Meanwhile the fans at the West Stand, above Leppings Lane's standing terrace, tried to help their fellow Reds by pulling them up at the stand and the officials started to realize the brutality and graveness of the situation, so that all officers were ordered to move inside the ground. The perimeter gates were opened and some fans were pulled out of the central pens, while others tried to destroy the fence to get some relief. The officials also realized that fatalities were highly possible and ambulances were called. The pressure on the Liverpool Fans still could not be eased and they were mainly helped by fellow Liverpool supporters, who already managed to get out of the terrace. Assistant Chief Constable Jackson of the South Yorkshire Police, the only superior to Duckenfield present at Hillsborough Stadium, also noticed the severe situation and went to the control box, where he asked Duckenfield about the situation, which led to a discussion about a possible pitch invasion. Later on he talked to Superintendent Greenwood, who told him about the severe crush and then went on to help and direct the emergency operations. Jackson then returned to the control box and met the FA Executive present at the stadium. More words were exchanged and Graham Kelly, the FA Executive, made the following statement about the conversation after the disaster:

*"The police in the Control Box were apparently under the impression that a gate or gates had been forced. They told me so and showed me a picture which purported to represent this. They said that the match would have to be abandoned because there had been fatalities."* <sup>20</sup>

This statement gives a glimpse into the mind of the officials and especially Chief Superintendent Duckenfield, who failed to provide proper emergency guidance because the gates were opened on order of the officials. The attempts to rescue the Reds in danger went on and ambulances arrived at the stadium, but only one (!) of the 44 ambulances that arrived was given way into the stadium. The public services were absolutely overwhelmed and most of the rescue work was actually done by Liverpool supporters themselves. They tried to help their colleagues to get out of the crush, which at the end was severe enough to break down the crush barriers on the terrace, and some of them even attempted a CPR (reanimation). The main thing the police did was building a cordon to prevent the Liverpool fans from getting to the Nottingham Forrest supporters and vice versa. This complicated the situation once again, because the fans had to cross the whole pitch to get to the ambulances outside the stadium. Some fans also destroyed the advertising boards in a desperate and successful attempt to provide stretchers. Sadly they were not able to break the cordon, and so their work was almost good for nothing. Areas were formed to cope with the slightly, severely and deadly injured and the gymnasium was used as a temporary mortuary.



*Image C: The crowded pitch of Hillsborough Stadium*

20: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 99, 2.2.91, source 67

Image C: <http://i3.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article1334513.ece/ALTERNATES/s615/Hillsborough+Football+Disaster>

Slowly the situation relaxed and relief was given to the Liverpool supporters. A small comfort for those already injured or dead, who had not been aided properly. The Reds were standing on the pitch and still tried to help their fellow Reds, while the most important officials met at the police control box. At this meeting Assistan Chief Constable Jackson first heard about the fact that the gates had not been forced open, but had rather been opened on purpose. He was surprised, but overall he was convinced that Duckenfield had done his job well in coping with the disaster. At about 4.45pm the situation was "under control" and the senior officers left Hillsborough Stadium to prepare a press conference. They left behind 766 injured fans and a disaster that ultimately killed 96 people. 14 of those 96 arrived at the hospital before they died and two of those 14 at least survived the day of the disaster and died later.

*"So many loved ones, who never came home,  
that friends will remember and families will mourn.  
Some grieve together and some grieve alone -  
It was a tragedy, a tragedy!"<sup>21</sup>*

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21: First lines of the "Hillsborough anthem" by Lee Roy Jones

### **3.)Coping with a disaster -**

#### **The effects of the Hillsborough Catastrophe**

The disaster at Hillsborough Stadium was (and still is) the largest disaster in the history of English football and as a result it has had a wide range of effects on many different fields. This section will shine a light on those effects and deal with the consequences on stadium safety, the inquiries and criminal prosecution and of course the effects on Liverpool Football Club and the families that suffered due to the lives lost at Hillsborough ground.

#### **3.1) The Taylor Report**

##### **The Inquiries of Taylor**

The British government was aware of the fact that research and inquiries about the disaster had to be done and so Lord Justice Taylor was assigned to perform an inquiry into the events by the Home Secretary. He was supported by officers of the West Midlands Police, whose assignment was to gather all the evidence that Taylor needed for his report. The Team of Lord Justice Taylor started to work by visiting Hillsborough Stadium, just like Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had done the day after the disaster, and shortly afterwards a provisional hearing was held. Taylor's personal goal was, as he made absolutely clear, not to portion out blame to everyone involved, but rather to find all facts available. This was at least a bit contrary to the Hillsborough Steering Committee, which made clear that it wanted to make sure all facts came out, especially those with effects on liability and crowd safety issues.<sup>22</sup>

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, exactly one month after the catastrophe, the official hearings started at the Town Hall of Sheffield. However, the hearings were not the only way how Taylor and his team gathered information. They also received a lot of letters about the disaster (1550) and a freephone number was opened, which could be called to pass on information about the incident. A total of 2666 calls was received. The combined amount of information was very high, it also included the 3776 registered statements, so it was essential to filter out the important and reliable statements and evidence. According to the South Yorkshire Police the time period, in which the information and

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22: A group of lawyers that represented the families of the victims, its official name was "Hillsborough Solicitors' Group Steering Committee",  
Their goals: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 41, section 1.111

facts were gathered and evaluated, was too short and the police criticized that Taylor made his conclusions at too early a point of the investigations.<sup>23</sup> The team did not take so much time, because Taylor wanted to write his report on the issues within four months and was assured that the time they took was adequate. All in all the Taylor Inquiry lasted 31 days.

### **The Taylor Report - the findings of Lord Justice Taylor**

Taylor took some time to evaluate his findings and write his report on the disaster, until he finished the first version of it (the Taylor Interim Report). This Interim Report was published on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1989. The report included his conclusions about the reasons for the disaster, as well as a total of 43 recommendations. His major findings (I already referred to some of those in the former section about the disaster itself) made it clear that the reason for the deaths of 96 football fans had been failure of the police:

As gates were opened the central pens were already packed and their capacity was reached, so it would have been necessary to close the tunnel and direct the fans into the other pens of Leppings Lane Terrace. He blamed the forces responsible for mismanaging the crowd and not recognizing the situation with the tightly filled central pens and not responding properly, if at all, to the dramatic situation. He also stated that the crush in front of the turnstiles should have been foreseen, and the Operational Order should have included a plan to cope with a congestion. As we already know there was not even a hint included, that would at least have warned the constables and superior officers.

Taylor also expressly underlined that Chief Superintendent Duckenfield had made severe mistakes and, concerning Gate C had lied about his own failures. Not only did he completely misread the situation and failed to order the closure of the overfilled central pens, but he also had stated, that the fans had forced open Gate C - the same gate he actually ordered to be opened - an order that had led to the deaths of 96 people. Duckenfield, who as a matter of fact lied disgracefully about the crucial event and order at Hillsborough Stadium, was treated with at least some softness by Lord Justice Taylor in his report. Taylor interpreted the contradictory statements of the Chief Superintendent at the match as a result of the overwhelming situation he had faced and stated that he had simply frozen.

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23: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 41, section 1.117

[He, Chief Superintendent Duckenfield]"*Simply could not face the enormity of the decision to open the gates and all that flowed therefrom.*"<sup>24</sup>

As we can see Taylor did not put too much guilt for the disaster on the shoulders of Duckenfield, all in all he somehow underestimated the role that the Chief Superintendent had played in Sheffield. Still, he did not go easy on the police forces and officers responsible at Hillsborough Stadium.

One of the standard "excuses" made by the active police officers present at this particular game was that they had been expecting and in fact dealing with drunken and unbehaved fans, especially supporters of Liverpool Football Club. Taylor clarified in his report that this had simply not been the case and that there was no evidence, that the critical situations (especially the congestion in front of the turnstiles) had been caused by drunken fans.

He extended that thought and argument and made it clear that this disaster had absolutely nothing to do with hooliganism or anything else of that kind. The lead investigator of the catastrophe at Hillsborough Stadium furthermore issued his concern about the statements made by the police officers interviewed, senior and minor (he also remarked, that the most helpful witnesses were the "small" officers), who tried to blame the fans of Liverpool Football Club. Sadly the accusation of being drunk and not well behaved was the weakest among many others. Incredibly enough, these included remarks that accused the Liverpool Fans of horrible things, such as looting their fallen comrades and urinating on the cops and on the corpses lying on the ground. Those allegations were expansively published by Britain's biggest newspaper, The Sun.

Taylor's criticism against Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, the true home team of Hillsborough Stadium, was not as severe as one might think. He merely mentioned that the known problem area, Leppings Lane Terrace, was not handled with enough vehemence. There were alterations to the terrace (see the section about Hillsborough Stadium), but neither the turnstile situation nor the terrace itself were truly improved upon. He also found out that the safety certificate from 1979 had not been updated and so lacked some important information that should have been considered, especially about the renovations of the stadium.

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24: The Hillsborough Independent Panel, 2012, page 42, section 1.127

As I have already mentioned earlier, the Taylor Report's most striking recommendation was all about the way stadiums in England (and additionally Wales, because the Premier League features Welsh teams as well) were and in fact are built. Taylor stated that he found non-ignorable evidence that totally spoke for not only a reduction of the given amount of standing terraces but a complete banishment. The clubs of the higher English leagues were given a sufficient period of time to rebuild their stadiums and so all stadiums in the home country of football became all-seater stadiums. The recommendation of Taylor was turned into a rule with the Football Spectators act in 1989, which cemented this new way stadiums had to be built. What still goes along with this new policy is that the rules about standing up in English stadiums are very severe. If you stand up, for example to have a closer look at what goes on on the pitch, it is not that unrealistic that somebody will use the (free) SMS service that exists in almost every English stadium to call a steward that will, more or less friendly, tell you to sit down immediately. Unbelievable and incredible as for Austrian football fans, but sometimes the (sad) truth. Because of this, and of course the fact that standing is quite a huge part of fan culture, there are a lot of initiatives in England that attempt to bring back standing terraces to stadiums in England, but so far they have all been unsuccessful and rejected by the British government. There has only been one easing of this rule, as the third (League One) and fourth (League Two) football leagues were excepted from it and it is now just a requirement for the two highest professional leagues in England. After all, Taylor also made it clear that the perimeter fencing was a part of the disaster and those, in the case of Hillsborough, deadly fences were removed in all English stadiums, as well as the lateral fences on the terraces.

### **3.2) Criminal prosecution and procedure**

Naturally, as the disaster in Sheffield ended the lives of 96 people, criminal prosecution and investigation were to follow the crush at Hillsborough Stadium. The question that was most widely discussed was obvious and very serious: Who is liable for this tragedy? The liability issue all in all included three different parts: the liability for the damages inside the stadium, the liability for those who were physically (and mortally) injured and the liability for those who suffered psychological harm. The last part mainly included police officers who had to stand or even be active near dying Liverpool fans.

The main quarreling of parties involved in the disaster took place after the publication of the Taylor Report, when both the South Yorkshire Police and the club (Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, as the club to which the football ground at Hillsborough belongs) blamed each other and wanted the other party to be responsible for the disaster. Although it tried to blame other parties for the disaster, the South Yorkshire Police Department worked out a settlement, without the involvement of any court, which should pay off some of the injured and grieving families. This settlement should compensate the families struck by the tragedy, but other parties involved rejected the invitation of the South Yorkshire Police and did not want to participate in this settlement offer. As a result, the case went to court, where the Police Department raised its voice and blamed both Sheffield Wednesday Football Club and Eastwood & Partners (the firm responsible for some of the safety systems at the ground) for the "unsafe system" at the stadium. But for all of that the quarreling parties came to terms, after private negotiations, and made a deal that ended the trial and no decision was made in court. Settlement payments were made, but the deal was private and no details came out for the public to overview and furthermore there was no distribution of liability. A decision that was, for obvious reasons, harshly criticized by the public and the affected families, because they naturally wanted someone to blame for this unimaginable tragedy. Another point of criticism was that not all affected persons received compensation, while almost all constables who were present and wanted compensation for being "psychologically struck" by the occurrences at the stadium received what they wanted. Other claims were made, for "secondary involvement" (the police officers mentioned and Liverpool fans, who did not suffer physically) and real injury, but all of them were ultimately rejected by the House of Lords.

All of those disputes merely featured whole parties and not particular persons, such as Chief Superintendent Duckenfield, for example. Due to the fact that it was decided not to investigate and prosecute any particular senior officer (the second large decision, after deciding that merely everything that happened before 3:15 can be taken as evidence against someone prosecuted), there actually was no public inquiry against any responsible officer. This decision not to prosecute senior officers was very controversial and heavily criticized by Liverpool fans and other affected parties, but the decision stood its case. It was just suggested that disciplinary investigations and actions against the involved police officers should be taken, which was achieved shortly afterwards. Chief Superintendent Duckenfield and Superintendent Murray were, as a result, investigated into for "neglect of duty" and faced a hearing about the incidents at Hillsborough Stadium. This disciplinary investigations and proceedings came to an early end as well, as

Duckenfield was off sick and retired early. This led to the proceedings being dropped, because they did not want to investigate against Superintendent Murray alone. Duckenfield's retirement for medical reasons assured him a full police pension. However, the same two officers faced a private prosecution as well. At the trial his disgraceful falsehood about the crucial and fatal order to open the gates was mentioned and pointed out and he later confessed that he had not spoken the truth at all times.

As found by Lord Justice Taylor as well and mentioned in his report, the police not only expected wrong behaviour of the fans but they also tried to blame the supporters of Liverpool Football Club for being responsible for the tragedy. To assure that this would fully come out a lot of statements from minor officers and constables had been falsified and "corrected" by the South Yorkshire Police. Some of those "corrections" led to another trial about the falsification of evidence, but the accused officers did not have to suffer any long term effects and some of them made a pretty nice career as well. One even became a Chief Constable in Liverpool.

### **3.3) Liverpool Football Club - A struck family**

#### **A suffering club . . .**

When a club travels to an FA Cup semi-final, with all its supporters and followers, and returns home with a reduced number of people that is something very special and of course very striking. Liverpool was struck by the loss of 96 of their supporters, and it was no help that the disaster at Hillsborough took place just four years after the tragedy at Heysel Stadium. A lot of memorials were erected, the most important ones at Hillsborough Stadium itself and also at Anfield Road, the home field of Liverpool Football Club. Further tribute was shown to the victims of the catastrophe by altering the club's well known emblem and adding two flames to it, remembering those who died in Sheffield and referencing the eternal flame that burns at the Hillsborough Memorial at Anfield. Naturally Liverpool has hosted a lot of memorial services for the victims, including larger ceremonies at the tenth and twentieth anniversary of the disaster. Those services take place every year, usually on the day of the disaster, at Anfield in Liverpool. But Liverpool is not the only club that pays its tribute to the victims and bereaved. The leader of a whole bunch of clubs that constantly show their respect towards the fallen Liverpool supporters is Everton Football Club, technically the arch rival of Liverpool in the quite famous Merseyside Derby.

Especially at the memorial services one can see that a lot of Everton fans respect their arch rivals enough, when it comes to this serious matter. There were also a lot of short ceremonies held in 2012, as the Hillsborough Independent Panel published its results, for example at the stadium of Everton Football Club, where the number 96 was depicted through two kids, one wearing the blue shirt of Everton with the back number nine, one wearing the red shirt of Liverpool with the back number 6.

### **. . . and suffering people**

A lot of Liverpool fans, especially those who were present at Hillsborough as well as families of now dead fans, do still suffer from the effects and the evil the disaster has brought onto them. Some of them even committed suicide and stated before they did so that it was mainly caused by the events at the sports ground at Hillsborough. Of course the bereaved families mainly suffered through their constant struggle for justice, as a lot of falsehoods and accusations were spread after the disaster and they wanted to clean the names of their family members and of course find out who truly was responsible for such a tragedy. One of the most prominent "justice fighters" is Anne Williams, who is also one of the most ill-fated persons linked with the catastrophe in Sheffield. She lost her then 15-year-old son Kevin at Hillsborough Stadium and since then she has been fighting for new inquests into his death, to finally bring justice to daylight and find her some peace. Her fight was very strong and she even took the case to reopen the inquiry to the European Court of Human Rights, where she failed too. But destiny is brutal and she additionally has to fight cancer - and even though: she is still fighting for justice, for her son and for the 96.

"Justice for the 96", as I mentioned a well known chant in England, is more alive than ever since the Hillsborough Independent Panel was formed in 2009. A lot of information about the disaster was still in the dark, even after the Taylor Report and similar reports, and so the cry for justice remained a loud, yet unheeded one over all those years. In 2009, at the 20th anniversary of the disaster, Andy Burnham called for the „dark“ documents to be revealed and shortly afterwards the government ordered this information to be made public. The Panel was formed and headed by the Bishop of Liverpool to finally bring closure to the families and to reveal all those "dark" documents. In september 2012 the Panel's conclusion was published, which included the statement that no Liverpool supporter whatsoever was responsible for the disaster. Furthermore it stated that better emergency care could have saved up to 41 further lives that day, while also

pointing out that police statements were altered and that lack of police control was the main cause for the disaster. Its report was the main source of information for the section about the disaster itself in this paper.

#### **4.) Shameful publications -** **The media reaction and „The Truth“ about The Sun**

##### **Misfortune seldom comes alone**

The Hillsborough disaster was a terrible event on its own and it caused unwanted and bad change, or even the end, to the lives of so many people. The disaster itself and its aftermath were bad enough, but the tragedy alone was not the only cruel and ferocious thing that should happen to the supporters of Liverpool Football Club and the city of Liverpool in general. The reaction of the media and the echo that followed this reaction to the disaster were terrible and in fact almost unbelievable lies, yet lies that were believed by the majority of people.

One of the main problems that went along with the media reaction was that the people of Liverpool had already been put in a badly rated shelf before the disaster occurred. Liverpool was "known" to be "*rebellious and anarchistic*"<sup>25</sup> and football fans were generally pegged as violent, unbehaved and militant and a lot of prejudice was held against supporters of any football club. Given this "infested" situation the media were ready to feast on this new event and a number of articles and headlines were written that were sheer agitation against Liverpool and football fans. However, much of it was believed by „ordinary“ people that had nothing to do with football and its fans whatsoever. I want to start this section by just quoting some of the newspapers and their articles written about the disaster, to show the wide variety of lies and false allegations that were spread by them:

The Evening Standard: *"How long will it take for it publicly to be acknowledged that fans themselves share the blame?... The catastrophe was caused first and foremost by violent enthusiasm for soccer, in this case the tribal passions of Liverpool supporters. They literally killed themselves and others to be at the game."* <sup>26</sup>

The Sheffield Star: *"Many supporters were still propping up the bars at 2.30pm. They raced to the stadium arriving at the Leppings Lane end at the height of the crush. Some of them were the*

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25: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

26: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

*worse for drink, others without tickets were hoping to sneak in. Hubble bubble toil and trouble.. drunkenness and ticketlessness were now added to the equation."* <sup>27</sup>

The Yorkshire Post: *"Thousands of fans began the fatal charge [...] thousands of latecomers tried to force their way into the ground ..."* <sup>28</sup>

The Liverpool Daily Post: *"So it was at Hillsborough that the yobs made enough nuisance of themselves to convince the police that so-called gates of Hell were opened... the gatecrashers wreaked their fatal havoc. At best it was unfettered zeal. At worst it was uncontrolled fanaticism and mass hysteria which literally squeezed the life out of men, women and children. This was yobbism at its most base. People without tickets who had no right to be there were crushing to death their fellow Scousers. When it comes to apportioning blame, the accusatory finger can also be pointed at Liverpool. Scouse killed Scouse for no better reason than 22 men were kicking a ball."* <sup>29</sup>

Cruel, gruesome and absolutely unbelievable. That is probably the best way to sum up these quotations from various newspapers, which were published shortly after the tragedy at Hillsborough Stadium. So after suffering directly at Hillsborough or due to the loss of loved ones at the football ground in Sheffield, Liverpool supporters were faced with these accusations, which were potentially read throughout the country. Of course all people who were present at Hillsborough or who had friends who were present knew that those allegations were all shameful lies and so nobody who was in touch with Liverpool Football Club, or had any idea about football fans, believed in those articles. The problem was rather that a lot of other people believed in those lies and as a result the survivors and the bereaved had to watch as the reputation and memory of their loved ones was publicly defiled and disgraced. Those believers were of course especially people with no connection to football whatsoever, and as a result the number of believing people was very high.

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27: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

28: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

29: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

But the public disgrace of innocent fans who had to die was just one effect those allegations had. Especially the Yorkshire Post and the Sheffield Star are newspapers with a large circulation number in the particular area where the disaster took place, so another problem assumed shape: How should it be possible to find an uninfluenced jury and investigation team for the events, both for the investigations and surveys as well as for the probable proceedings in court? The mindset of all people who were not directly affected by this tragedy or attached to Liverpool Football Club was deeply influenced through those articles and caused an even worse, but of course untrue, reputation of football fans. A reaction by John Williams, the author responsible for the quotation out of the Liverpool Daily Post, who stated that he stood by every word with no apology, shows that most of the writers were not aware of the damage they caused and, more significantly, were not ashamed of what they wrote.<sup>30</sup> This is even more stunning as an article in actually the same newspaper defended the fans of Liverpool Football Club and pointed out that they had had to pay an ultimate price for the prejudice that had been held against them. But all those articles are not even the worst that was written after the disaster. The most outrageous and disgusting article was published four days after the tragedy at Hillsborough, on April 19<sup>th</sup>, by one of the world's largest (and actually Britain's largest) newspapers by circulation: The Sun. Kelvin MacKenzie, the editor of the paper at that time and one of the mightiest persons in the company (it was said that only media-tycoon Rupert Murdoch, the owner of the company, could have overruled him), decided to use the headline "The Truth" on the front page of the paper that day. The sub-headlines and the article that followed left football fans, and especially the ones of Liverpool, stunned and filled with anger.

*"The truth: some fans picked pocket of victims; some fans urinated on the brave cops; some fans beat up PC giving kiss of life."*

This "information" was gathered by The Sun thanks to an unnamed police officer, who elaborated his statements to the paper, which used his statements for the written article. This article stated not only that Liverpool fans deliberately stopped rescue workers from helping and reviving the Reds in trouble, but furthermore attacked policemen and company by kicking and punching them. In addition the Liverpool supporters were accused of urinating on both police officers and their

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30: Hillsborough Justice Campaign, The immediate aftermath, the media reaction, <http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013)

already fallen comrades. And on top of all that an unnamed police officer told the paper that a dead girl had been abused by a Liverpool fan.<sup>31</sup>

The reaction in Liverpool, especially from bereaved and survivors, was one of complete disbelief and of course anger. A lot of copies were stolen and burnt that day and since that day The Sun's sales figures in Liverpool are incredibly low, thanks to a large boycott of the paper that is still "active" today. Many Reds still refuse to even call the Sun by name, often simply calling the paper "The Scum". The main outrage was naturally directed against the person who had written and published this article - Kelvin MacKenzie, who refused to apologize for his article. Kenny Dalglish, one of the brightest Liverpool legends of all the time, was the manager of the club at that time and received a phone call from MacKenzie after he published the article, who wanted to know what he should do. Dalglish suggested to replace "The Truth" with the headline "We lied", but MacKenzie refused to do that. Dalglish then hung up. It took until 2004 for The Sun to try to apologize for their article, but the Reds did not accept it and the hatred against the paper increased even more, because the apologize was really just halfhearted. MacKenzie himself "apologized" in 1993 and blamed the cops who misled him, but he later stated that he only apologized because he was ordered to do so by Rupert Murdoch. It was only in 2012, when the Hillsborough Independent Panel Report was published, that Kelvin MacKenzie finally issued a statement in which he pointed out that he was misled and sorry for believing in those lies. Most Reds did not accept this apology either and Trevor Hicks<sup>32</sup> made it clear why, by stating that it was "too little, too late". Not many arguments can be made against that.

All those articles show once again how committed the police was to blame the disaster on the "annoying circumstances" that football fans at that time were to some of them. At least some of the papers would have taken a softer approach if not for the lies that were spread by some officials to wash their own hands in innocence. This web of lies was helped by the common prejudice against football fans and enabled those absolutely shameful publications by so many papers, but of course mainly The Sun. It was another very dark chapter in the history of the disaster and a lot of Reds still cannot forgive and forget what The Sun did to their fellow Liverpool supporters. In my opinion it is easy to understand why.

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31: The information about the content of the article was taken from: no specific author, Hillsborough disaster, The Sun [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough_disaster) (2.1.2013)

32: Hicks is the head of the Hillsborough Family Support Group, his statement was found on: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough_disaster)

### **5.) What is left to say . . .**

The tragedy that took place on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1989 was the worst thing that could possibly happen to a football club and its fans, in fact it was one of the worst things that could happen to football. But it was not only the incredibly high death count of the disaster that shaped this tragedy. That 96 fans died in Sheffield because they merely wanted to visit a game of football was naturally bad and it showed that there were severe problems concerning the safety structure of English football stadiums and especially the mindset of those responsible at that time. After all the disaster could have probably been avoided or at least better controlled, if the facilities had been safer and the minds of the police had not been that full of prejudice. But it was not only the build up that led to this high number of deaths, the immediate response to the processes at Hillsborough Stadium by the responsible forces did its bit as well. Most outstanding about this response is of course the fact that only one (!) ambulance made it into the stadium and that the Liverpool fans had to treat some of their fellows themselves.

The aftermath of the catastrophe in fact hurt even more people, of course those "injuries" were only of psychological nature. The media reaction to the disaster was gruesome and unbelievable and sadly most of the papers did not get what mistakes they made by publishing articles like that. "The Truth" stood out, but it was not the only terrible article that was written. But the relatives of the dead had to watch how the reputation of their taken family members was publicly defiled even without the media coverage, because the police and other responsible forces did everything to "wash their hands in innocence". An attempt that went well at first. However, time went on and the lies of the police were revealed after all, although most of the officers had not had to explain themselves for their mistakes at the stadium. The question "Blame it on who?" is a question that is easy to answer, after one has taken a deeper look into the disaster: The unsafe situation at the stadium, the police that was responsible for controlling the crowd and all organizations that did not cope well with the disaster as it was already on going. But one has to blame the media too, at least partially, because they "infested" the minds of all "non-football fans" with prejudice. Their reactions were of course undeniably despicable. The history of the disaster is still developing and the most recent milestone, the report of The Hillsborough Independent Panel, was a huge step into the right direction, to finally erase the injustice that was done to the Liverpool fans that were present and eventually lost their lives at Hillsborough Stadium. But still, "Justice for the 96" is a valid call for something that is not completely achieved yet.

## **A.) Source Materials**

### **Books:**

- ) The Hillsborough Independent Panel (The Right Reverend James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool; Raju Bhatt; Christine Gifford; Katy Jones; Dr. Bill Kirkpu CBE; Paul Leighton CBE QPM; Professor Phil Scraton; Peter Sissons; Sarah Tyacke CBE): Hillsborough. The Report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel. London: The Stationery Office, 2012 (used for Chapters 1, 2, 3)
- ) Gerrard, Steven; Winter, Henry: Gerrard. My Autobiography. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Great Britain: Bantam Press (a division of Transworld Publishers), 2007 (used for Chapter 1)

### **Internet articles:**

- ) Anfield Road (no specific author mentioned): Don't buy The Sun.  
<http://www.anfieldroad.com/dont-buy-the-sun/> (28.12.2012) (used for Chapter 4)
- ) Hillsborough Football Disaster (no specific author mentioned, a website of the Hillsborough Justice Campaign): The Immediate Aftermath, The Media Reaction.  
<http://www.contrast.org/hillsborough/history/media.shtm> (2.1.2013) (used for Chapter 4)
- ) Traynor, Luke: Hillsborough campaigner vows to keep on fighting for justice for her son despite terminal cancer shock.  
<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/anne-williams-hillsborough-campaigner-vows-1402153>  
(30.12.2012) (used for Chapter 4)
- ) No specific author (Wikipedia): Hillsborough disaster.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hillsborough_disaster) (20.9.2012) (used for Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)
- ) No specific author (Wikipedia): Heysel Stadium disaster.  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heysel\\_Stadium\\_disaster](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heysel_Stadium_disaster) (17.10.2012) (used for Chapter 1)

-) No specific author (Wikipedia): Football hooliganism.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football\\_hooliganism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Football_hooliganism) (17.10.2012) (used for Chapter 1)

### **Videos:**

-) Hillsborough: 10 key questions.

<http://www.liverpoolfc.com/video/features/11465-hillsborough-questions-and-ans> (30.10.2012)

(used for Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4)

-) Hillsborough Anthem.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OK37Fjp95iQ> (29.9.2012) (used parts for Chapter 1,2)

-) Liverpool FC stars and musicians unite to record Hillsbo...

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1ADuaiFE0Q> (23.9.2012) (used part for Preface)

## **B.) List of images**

Title page: [http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/multimedia/archive/00224/97534544\\_lvpl\\_224402c.jpg](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/multimedia/archive/00224/97534544_lvpl_224402c.jpg)

(13.12.2012)

Image A: <http://hillsborough.independent.gov.uk/images/west-terrace.jpg> (23.11.2012)

Image B: <http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/09/10/>

[article-2201258-0017429E00000258-965\\_634x372.jpg](http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2012/09/10/article-2201258-0017429E00000258-965_634x372.jpg) (30.11.2012)

Image C: <http://i3.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article1334513.ece/ALTERNATES/s615/Hillsborough>

[+Football+Disaster](http://i3.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article1334513.ece/ALTERNATES/s615/Hillsborough+Football+Disaster) (30.11.2012)

### **C.) Working record**

June 2012: advance talks about the paper, first mentions of the topic. Determination to write the paper in English

2<sup>nd</sup> week of September 2012: Submission of the topic

September 24<sup>th</sup>: finished: Preface

October 6<sup>th</sup>: meeting (partition of the chapters)

October 15<sup>th</sup>: finished: Chapter 1.1

October 19<sup>th</sup>: meeting (Chapter 1.1)

October: 31<sup>st</sup>: finished: Chapter 1.2

November 9<sup>th</sup>: meeting (Chapter 1.2, advance talks about Chapter 2)

November 15<sup>th</sup>: finished: Chapter 2.1, 2.2

November 16<sup>th</sup>: meeting (Chapter 2.1, 2.2)

December 3<sup>rd</sup>: finished: Chapter 2.3, 2.4

December 11<sup>th</sup>: meeting (Chapter 2.3, 2.4)

December 14<sup>th</sup>: finished: Chapter 3.1

December 18<sup>th</sup>: meeting (Chapter 3.1, advance talks about the rest of the paper)

December 29<sup>th</sup>: finished: Chapter 3.2, 3.3

January 4<sup>th</sup>: finished Chapter 4

January 5<sup>th</sup>: finished Chapter 5

January 12<sup>th</sup>: finished Source Materials, List of Images, this Working record

### **D.) Expression of Thanks**

Most people start this section of their paper by telling everyone how hard it was to write it. They would explain that it was just exhausting and that they are glad it is finally over. I cannot really tell you that, because honestly I truly enjoyed writing this paper about the Hillsborough disaster. (yeah, I know that sounds kind of weird) Especially the writing itself was great and the research part was very interesting too, I guess I am able to say that I chose the right topic. It just fits, because it covers a lot of my fields of interests.

The only thing I needed was motivation, because although I really liked writing and researching it was hard to start every new section of this paper. In fact I had some very funny and unusual "experiences" that motivated me to continue with a new section of this paper. Those experiences include some (of the sadly few) victories of Rapid this season, long conversation with a Liverpool fan I know (okay, that one is quite obvious) and, interestingly enough, a longer conversation about the Fachbereichsarbeit of another student, who struggled with the paper. I want to thank everyone who motivated me, directly or indirectly, although most of the people who did it, did not even know what they did. Still, thank you, you provided the only thing I desperately needed to finish my work on this paper.

Of course I would have had more struggles with this paper, if not for my English teacher, Professor Grubmüller, who was a great help during the writing process. He also provided some encouragement concerning my capabilities, but after all some people would say that that is probably the last thing I need. It still was very nice.

Last but not least I want to, kind of pathetically, thank everyone who was involved in the process of creating the great game of football, because even though there are (and always will be) some tragedies, like the one at Hillsborough Stadium, it is and will forever be the greatest sport on earth.