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WHAT HAPPENED TO OUR GOOD OLD SOCCER?



Hooliganism amongst British Soccer supporters is well known throughout the world. But, sad to say, this dark side of soccer has also crept into Switzerland.

That tempers can flare in big National League matches, where big money and players' careers are at stake, is understandable to a point. But what is far more worrying and disconcerting is that hooliganism, fights, pitched battles and physical assaults on referees now occur in matches right down to the 5th division where soccer matches are supposed to be played just for the fun of it. There is no money at stake, no multi-million career in danger, just a couple of village soccer teams having a friendly game on a Sunday afternoon watched by a few friends and relatives. That's the way it used to be. Of course, everyone was critical of the result, especially if your team lost, and everyone agreed that the referee was a nitwit. But soon the matter was forgotten over a game of cards and a Kaffi Schnaps.

Today even the small village soccer match seems to become a world shattering event, in the eyes of the participants at least, where even the slightest disagreement must be put right immediately by means of a free for all brawl pitching one team with its supporters against the other side and everybody together against the poor referee who, after all, only gets a mere \$50.00 for his

trouble of wasting a whole Sunday afternoon.

Sundays used to be quiet days for the Swiss police force. But no longer. Once quiet country police stations report that their usual Sunday activity is now to break up fights at some obscure little soccer matches where, invariably, they have to escort the referee off the field and take him away in an armoured car for his own protection.

Who cares if Hinterhundswil was beaten by Unterkatzenwangen, the result would probably not even appear in the local rag, but for the participants and their supporters, this match seems to become a matter of life and death. What happened to the good old Swiss sense of proportion, of fair play and sense of humour?

According to the insurance companies, soccer in Switzerland accounts now for more accidents and injuries than skiing for instance. In 1994, soccer produced some 48,000 casualties against 35,000 from skiing and 9,000 from tennis, squash and badminton combined. The insurance companies paid out 127 million SFR for soccer injuries against 23 million SFR for all other ball sports put together. In one year alone, over 60 referees had been physically assaulted.

All this can only be another result of the violent society which we are forced to live in.

FEDERAL COUNCILLORS ON THE MOVE

In 1994 the seven Federal Councillors have clogged up 71 visits to 33 foreign countries lasting a total of 158 days. Champion traveller amongst them was Jean-Pascal Delamuraz (Minister for the Economy) who totalled up 15 trips just by himself. The least travelled Councillor was Kaspar Villiger with only 2 trips to his name.

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