

4 POLICE OR STEWARDS: POLICING INSIDE LONDON PREMIERSHIP FOOTBALL STADIA, IS IT TIME FOR A RETHINK?

JCSSM
1, 1

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23

Abstract

This study examines the need for policing inside stadia for Premier League football matches. A mixed interpretive-quantitative research methodology was adopted where data was collected from interviews with safety officers and police match commanders, and statistics obtained from police records and deployment plans for the 2005-6 season in six Premiership football grounds in London. The findings suggest that it was plausible to extract police from the stadia for games that were categorised as low public disorder risk, and although stewards' training and abilities were highly thought of, safety officers preferred the reassurance of police presence within the stadium. Analysis of statistical data showed no correlation between the number of officers employed and the number of arrests made, the risk category for an event and the numbers of arrests and ejections, and the number of away fans attending and the number of supporters arrested or ejected.

Introduction

Before the tragedy at Hillsborough in 1989, stewarding was in its infancy, with no nationally recognised structure or training. The police were then perceived as the only agency able to control and manage mass crowds, with large numbers of officers posted at every music concert, festival and sporting event. Frosdick (1994) suggested that Lord Taylor's report into the Hillsborough disaster changed the emphasis of the policing approach from one of preservation of public order to one focused on public safety. The police were thus seen as being responsible for crowd safety at public events but, as indicated by Beckley (1994), there was a move to hand over this responsibility, within football stadia, to the Club's Safety Officer. The move away from police responsibility is articulated in an entry in the 'Green Guide' (DCMS, 1997:12) which states: 'Responsibility for the safety of spectators lies at all times with the ground management', handing the mantle of Event Commander from the Police Match Commander to the Club Safety Officer. The issue of 'duty of care' to persons attending events has also shifted away from the police to the event organiser ('The Home Office, 2006, Good Practice Safety Guide' and 'UK Sports, 2005, Staging Major Sporting Events: The Guide').

As early as 1991, there was a suggestion that high profile policing should be replaced by high profile stewarding supported by low profile policing (Frosdick, 2001). Over the last decade, the role of the steward has been enhanced and training for stewards greatly developed. The quality of this training has been recognised by the Government to the extent that in-house football stewards became exempt from licensing by the Security Industry Authority (SIA) under the Private Security Industry Act 2001 (FLA et al, 2005).



Journal of Crowd
Safety and
Security
Management
An online journal

Stewards have thus taken on more responsibilities in the management of crowds including: searching those entering the ground, keeping gangways clear, managing licensed bar areas, providing initial responses to incidents, training in contingency and evacuation procedures, detaining persons for offences, and ejecting fans for breach of ground regulations. Meanwhile police appeared to move to a more traditional role of preventing crime and maintaining the peace. This is indicated by Home Office statistics for 2005-6 (Home Office press release, 2006) which shows that 43% of all games in England were police free. This fact, however, O'Neill (2005) pointed out, has escaped the attention of researchers in the field, who favour studies focusing on the interaction between police and fans, particularly the trouble makers inside football stadia.

Stott and Hoggett (2005) indicated that the cost of policing football in England and Wales was estimated at £30 million. There was thus a need to focus on reducing the cost of policing football matches and returning officers to their normal community based duties (Frosdick & Chambers, 2005). Whilst police and safety officers felt that the presence of officers inside a ground had a deterrent effect for those who may be intent on causing trouble, there is also evidence to suggest that as police presence inside stadia has been reduced, the incidents of disorder inside stadia has also reduced (O'Neill, 2005). Home Office statistics (2006) also indicate that arrests for football related offences have fallen for a third consecutive year, with total arrests being the lowest ever recorded.

This study will examine the need for policing at Premier League football stadia around London in the 2005 – 2006 season, focusing on the nineteen Premier League home fixtures each club played. There were six football clubs in the Premiership in London during that season: Arsenal, Charlton Athletic, Chelsea, Fulham, Tottenham Hotspur and West Ham United.

Study Method

A mixed methodological design was adopted, gathering and processing statistical data from Police and Home Office sources and conducting face-to-face interviews with police and club officials. A number of limiting factors, including time for project completion and occupational demands meant that there were limited opportunities to conduct a detailed study; as such, this study is only exploratory.

Each club employed a Safety Officer and a deputy, whilst the Police Match Commander came from a cadre of two or three people for each ground. This created a pool of around thirty people who would potentially supply the sought after information.

Telephone interviews were quickly disregarded as they were considered impersonal, difficult to record and impractical.

Questionnaires were inappropriate because of poor response rates



(Swetnam, 2000) and limited capacity to provide in-depth information. There was also a concern over the cost implications of sourcing the recording equipment and the time required to conduct, transcribe and analyse interviews. However, as assistance was offered to transcribe the material, interviewing was chosen as the main data collection method as it offered the opportunity to interact with the interviewees allowing ideas to emerge. To support the finding of the interviews, data was also gathered from the records kept by the Police and the Home Office. This methodological approach enabled triangulating qualitative and quantitative data, thus enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings.

JCSSM
1, 1

25

Four Police Match day Commanders and three Club Safety Officers were approached through existing contacts. The decision over the number of people to interview was dictated by the time available and workload. Aid memoirs were designed to assist with interviewing. Safety officers were interviewed at their respective clubs and police officers at their police stations. Before commencing the interview, the need for the interview to be recorded was explained, and each interviewee was assured that direct quotes would not be attributed to individuals; informed consent was thus obtained. Authority was also requested, and granted, from a senior police officer to gather information from police sources. Each police operational planning office was contacted and it became apparent that any information required needed to be manually retrieved from paper files, stored at the stations. The United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU) provided data relating to each match played.

The statistics on numbers of arrests and ejections, away fans and the risk category for each match was obtained from end of match reports submitted by the United Kingdom Football Policing Unit. It proved difficult to gather information on the number of officers deployed inside the stadia for each match. There were planned deployments inside the stadium for some officers whilst others were deployed after the match kicked off if there was a perceived threat of disorder during the match. This information was not generally recorded and had to be manually extracted from police match day files and central records.

The quantitative data was analysed to determine, whether the risk category set for each match had a discernable link to the number of persons arrested or ejected, whether the number of officers deployed inside the grounds led to an increase or decrease in the number of persons arrested, and whether there was a correlation between the number of away fans present and the number of arrests and ejections made.

Findings

On interviewing the Safety Officers and Police Match Commanders it soon became apparent that all clubs had actively participated in nationally recognised training schemes for their stewarding staff, investing time and money, in developing the match day stewards and supervisors. One Safety Officer stated that their club had invested



Journal of Crowd
Safety and
Security
Management
An online journal

£100,000 in this training. This tentative finding is in contrast to O'Neill's (2005) experiences in Scotland, where there appeared to be little or no formal training. All the interviewees agreed that training had improved the quality of stewarding. One police officer suggested that the wages paid for stewarding attracted lower calibre stewards. However, his view was not shared by the other interviewees, who stated that stewarding was 'very good', 'excellent', 'very very good', and one officer suggested that stewarding was, sometimes of a higher level than some policing. Chalmers (2005) argued that as stewarding numbers increased and stewards became more experienced and confident, police numbers were reduced. There is evidence to support this suggestion; for example, some of Charlton Athletic matches had no police officers inside and on occasions, at very low risk games, no policing at all. Charlton's stewarding number had also increased from 20 in the early 1970s to currently around 450, of which fifty percent were employed directly by the club. All of the clubs in this study had stewarding numbers of between 400 and 600, and with the exception of Arsenal it was common for a proportion of stewarding to be provided by agencies.

Interviewees indicated that there was an excellent relationship at operational level between the police and the clubs; regular meetings took place before games when intelligence was exchanged and operational decisions were jointly made. At some clubs, police operational commanders regularly attended the stewards' briefings. The police officers who were interviewed particularly stressed how well they got on with the safety officer taking the lead within the stadium. This observation is again in contrast to O'Neill's (2005) experiences in Scotland, where the Police Match Commander still has ultimate control, although some respondents have suggested: that the relationship between the police officers and stewards working in the stadium was not always as strong as portrayed, that the police were not always as proactive as the stewards, that stewards were seen as over zealous at times, and that on occasions police and stewards were not supportive of each other.

It was also found that within the stadium, most of the required functions were carried out by stewards, with the police being present to support stewarding and deal with any serious disorder or crime. Respondents generally agreed that the initial response to an incident was carried out by stewards and they were responsible for ejecting supporters who breached the ground regulations or misbehaved. Policing concentrated on preventing disorder in the space between home and away fans.

All respondents felt that it would be feasible for matches to be held without police presence in the stadium. Charlton and Fulham had already held such games. Interestingly, all the three safety officers stated that it was reassuring to have police in the stadium to support stewarding; such presence provided 'comfort value' and 'comfort blanket'. Two police respondents felt that police were brought inside during a match to give them something to do, as

their main role was to police the arrival and dispersal of fans. It was even hinted that, as clubs only pay for officers deployed inside stadia, this was an opportunity to recoup some of the costs of the policing operation. At most grounds police officers concentrated on the area between the home and away fans leaving the stewards to manage the rest of the stadium.

In analysing police statistics and records, the police match grading scheme was adopted, where each match was graded according to police intelligence on whether there was likely to be disorder: low risk (category 'A'), medium risk (category 'B') or high risk (category 'C'). Of the 114 games looked at, 55 were classed as low risk, 43 as medium risk, and 16 as high risk (see Table 1).

Table 1
Classification of risk at matches

Club	Low risk (A)	Medium risk (B)	High risk (C)
Arsenal	11	4	4
Charlton	8	11	0
Chelsea	6	10	3
Fulham	9	10	0
Tottenham	12	2	5
West Ham	9	6	4
	55	43	16

A total of 4,459 police officers were deployed inside the six stadia during the season (114 matches). A noticeable difference was shown in the number of police officers deployed at each ground, with Charlton averaging the fewest officers (none for a category 'A' game and 12 for category 'B' game), while West Ham averaged the highest. Although on examination, this figure was distorted by a single match, where 186 officers were deployed compared to 79 or 80 for each of the other matches (see Table 2)

Table 2
Average Police Deployment per Game per Category

Club	Low risk (A)	Medium risk (B)	High risk (C)
Arsenal	32	56	79.5
Charlton	0	12	Not Applicable
Chelsea	24.5	25.2	49
Fulham	6.2	10.5	Not Applicable
Tottenham	40.9	52	103.4
West Ham	79.1	79.3	106.5

241,650 away supporters attended the 114 games that season, an average of 2,120 per game. 115 people were arrested and 733 ejected from the six grounds during the season, see Table 3.



Table 3
Number of arrests and ejections during the season

Club	Low risk (A)		Medium risk (B)		High risk (C)	
	Arrest	Ejection	Arrest	Ejection	Arrest	Ejection
Arsenal	10	131	7	70	8	127
Charlton	1	53	9	141	-	-
Chelsea	7	27	18	67	11	30
Fulham	2	10	6	25	-	-
Tottenham	16	22	1	1	1	24
West Ham	3	3	5	0	10	2
	39	246	46	304	30	183

No arrests were made at 45% of all the games (see Appendix A) compared with the national figure of 68% (Home Office, 2006), and there were one or less arrests at 73% of the matches, compared with the national statistics of 80%.

The Mode average arrest per game was zero for matches in categories 'A' and 'B', one for category 'C', and zero overall; and the Mean average of arrests per game was 0.71 for Category 'A', 1.07 for Category 'B', 1.88 for Category 'C', and 1.01 overall (see Appendix B)

There was no correlation between the number of officers deployed inside the stadia and the number of arrests made (see appendix B), or the number of away supporters and the number of arrests and ejections recorded (see Appendix C).

Conclusion

This exploratory study into the policing of six Premiership football grounds in London has revealed little to justify the deployment of large numbers of police officers within football stadia. An examination of the statistical data revealed no correlation between the number of officers employed and the number of arrests made or between the number of away fans and the number of arrests or ejections.

All safety officers and police match commanders interviewed agreed that stewarding had improved with the introduction of the national training schemes. They also all agreed that stewards should be the first to respond to an incident within the stadium and should deal with all ejections.

Interestingly the police officers interviewed held the view that lowest category matches do not require policing. The driving force for police officers being deployed inside the stadium seemed to be, in part, due to the fact that the clubs did not pay for officers employed solely outside the ground, and in part, to give officers something to do during the game, as their main role was to ensure public safety and preserve order outside the ground before and after the match. As this exploratory study was carried out to a restricted timetable and with limited resources, further study is required and should include observations at matches and interviews with stewards and



lower ranked police officers, to gain a better and more reliable knowledge of the need for policing inside football stadia.

JCSSM
1, 1

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29

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Journal of Crowd
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JCSSM

1, 1

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30

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Journal of Crowd
Safety and Security
Management
An online journal

Number of games for a set number of arrests inside a stadium

No. Arrests	Number of Games			Overall
	A Category	B Category	C Category	
0 Arrests	32 (58.18%)	16 (37.21%)	4 (25%)	52 (45.61%)
1 Arrest	14 (25.45%)	13 (30.23%)	5 (31.25%)	32 (28.07%)
2 Arrests	6 (10.91%)	10 (23.26%)	4 (25%)	20 (17.54%)
3 Arrests	0	3 (6.98%)	1 (6.25%)	4 (3.51%)
4 Arrests	2 (3.64%)	1 (2.33%)	0	3 (2.63%)
5 Arrests	1 (1.82%)	0	0	1 (0.88%)
6 Arrests	0	0	1 (6.25%)	1 (0.88%)
7 Arrests	0	0	0	0
8 Arrests	0	0	1 (6.25%)	1 (0.88%)
Total	55 (100%)	43 (100%)	16 (100%)	114 (100%)
Correlation	-0.77	-0.90	-0.78	-0.85

Number of games for a set number of ejections, from a stadium

Ejections	No of Games			Overall
	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C	
0	16	11	2	29
1	11	4	3	18
2	3	0	1	4
3	2	0	0	2
4	5	1	2	8
5	2	3	0	5
6	2	3	0	5
7	2	5	0	7
8	2	3	2	7
9	0	2	0	2
10	1	1	1	3
11	0	2	0	2
12	2	0	0	2
13	1	0	1	2
14	3	2	1	6
15	1	2	0	3
17	0	2	0	2
20	1	0	0	1
27	1	0	0	1
28	0	1	1	2
34	0	1	1	2
55	0	0	1	1
Correlation	-0.48	-0.42	-0.15	-0.47



Appendix B

Correlation between Officers Deployed Inside Stadium and Arrests per Category (Extract)

32

Police Inside	Arrests	Police Inside	Arrests	Police Inside	Arrests
32	0	12	0	121	0
32	0	12	0	93	0
32	0	12	0	68	0
32	0	12	0	142	0
0	0	12	0	56	1
0	0	12	0	49	1
0	0	12	0	93	1
0	0	21	0	80	1
0	0	7	0	80	1
0	0	7	0	80	1
0	0	7	0	80	2
0	0	7	0	102	2
0	0	14	0	49	2
21	0	7	0	80	2
21	0	14	0	80	2
0	0	60	0	80	3
0	0	80	0	186	6
0	0	79	0	49	8
14	0	56	1	1408	30
14	0	56	1		
...		
...		
		21	3		
...	...	56	4		
...	...	1293	46		
37	4				
37	5				
1758	39				

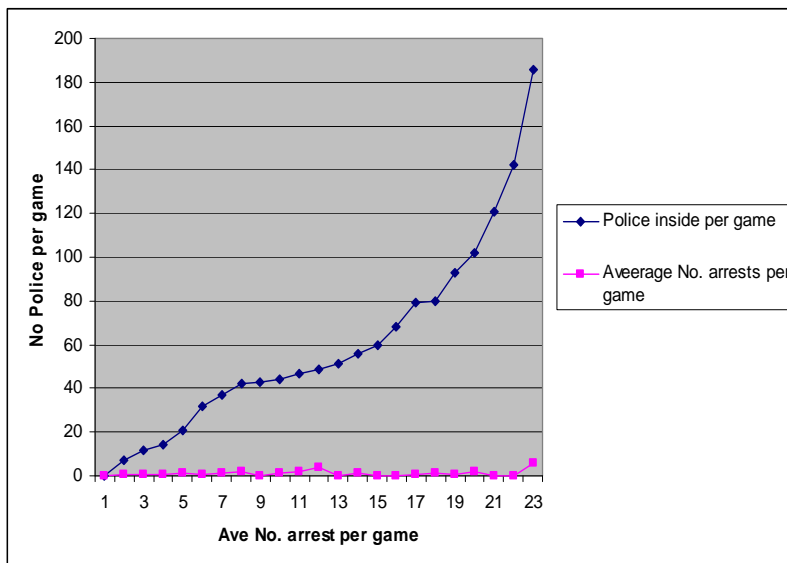
	Cat A	Cat B	Cat C	Overall
Correlation	0.10	0.06	0.07	0.21
Mode	0.00	0.00	1.00	0.00
Ave Mean	0.71	1.07	1.88	1.01



Average number of arrests per game Police inside the Ground

JCSSM
1, 1

Police Inside	No of Games	Total No Arrests	Av. No. Arrests per Game
0	12	1	0.1
7	7	4	0.6
12	11	9	0.8
14	8	4	0.5
21	13	20	1.5
32	11	10	0.9
37	7	11	1.6
42	3	5	1.7
43	1	0	0.0
44	2	2	1.0
47	2	4	2.0
49	3	11	3.7
51	1	0	0.0
56	5	8	1.6
60	1	0	0.0
68	1	0	0.0
79	12	7	0.6
80	8	10	1.3
93	2	1	0.5
102	1	2	2.0
121	1	0	0.0
142	1	0	0.0
186	1	6	6.0
Correlation			0.39



Appendix C

JCSSM
1, 1

Correlation between number of visiting fans and
number of ejections and arrests (Extract)

34

Visiting Fans	Ejections	Arrests
511	0	0
569	0	0
592	0	2
628	1	0
660	0	1
696	0	2
708	0	0
750	4	0
770	0	1
871	0	0
916	1	0
924	0	0
932	6	3
951	4	0
958	11	0
3137	6	2
...
...
3197	6	0
3203	7	0
3255	9	2
3335	9	1
3339	14	1
3339	7	2
3352	14	0
3371	15	2
3475	5	1
3566	0	1
3634	0	0
3635	0	0
3806	1	0
4139	1	0
4139	5	0
4500	5	2
5480	1	0
241650	733	115
Correlation	0.16	0.14

