



**Research Paper 26/01**

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# **SECTARIANISM AND SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

This paper provides a general overview of sectarianism and sport in Northern Ireland. It reviews current research and media reports relating to sectarianism. The paper also addresses how sectarianism has impacted upon sports both within and outside Northern Ireland and examines a selection of sporting initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of sectarianism in sport.

Library Research Papers are compiled for the benefit of Members of The Assembly and their personal staff. Authors are available to discuss the contents of these papers with Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

## **SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS**

This short paper provides an overview of the issue of sectarianism and sport in Northern Ireland. It provides a brief review of the current research and media reports relating to the issue of sectarianism and sport. It also examines the impact of sectarianism on various sports both within and outside Northern Ireland.

## CONTENTS

1. Research Relating to Sectarianism and Sport.....	1
2. How many sports have been researched?.....	3
Soccer .....	4
Gaelic sports .....	4
Hockey .....	4
Boxing .....	5
Rugby Union .....	5
Cycling.....	5
Cricket .....	6
Golf.....	6
3. Governing bodies views of sectarianism in sport .....	6
4. Has sport been used to counteract sectarianism? .....	6
5. Media reports relating to sectarianism and sport .....	7
6. Sectarianism and sport in other countries .....	9
Spain.....	9
Canada.....	10
South Africa.....	10
Belgium .....	11
Germany.....	11
India.....	11

## SECTARIANISM IN SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

### 1. RESEARCH RELATING TO SECTARIANISM AND SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND

1.1 A wealth of distinguished research exists regarding the issue of sectarianism and sport in Northern Ireland. The majority of this research concentrates upon how sport in Northern Ireland is used as an expression of cultural identity and emphasises in particular how sectarianism impacts upon two of Northern Ireland's largest sporting bodies, that is, the Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA).

1.2 Below is a brief review of some of the current research into sectarianism and sport in Northern Ireland:

*McGinley et al (1998) "Socio-cultural identity and attitudes to sport in Northern Ireland". The Irish Journal of Psychology, 1998, 19, 4, 464-471.*

This is a survey of 1007 adults in Northern Ireland which aimed to provide a broad view of popular opinion regarding sport and cultural identity. The survey results highlighted that religious belief and community affiliations effected decisions in relation to all aspects of sporting life in Northern Ireland. For example:

- in relation to sports funding, 73% of respondents were not opposed to funding sports facilities on an "all-Ireland" basis, however, Protestants were three times more likely than Catholics to state that the UK National Lottery Funds should not be invested in all-island facilities.
- in regards to which sporting events were important to them, Catholics were more likely to state Gaelic football or hurling finals, Protestants were more likely to choose sporting events such as the Rugby World Cup, the World Snooker Championships or Wimbledon.
- Protestants were more likely to support competitors and teams from Great Britain, Catholics were more likely to support competitors and teams from the Republic of Ireland.

The survey highlighted that the types of sports people participate in and the teams they support usually reflect their community background and perceived political and cultural allegiances. For example, Catholics are more likely to participate in sports which celebrate the Irish tradition (Gaelic football, hurling) whilst Protestants are more likely to engage in sports which celebrate the British tradition (hockey, cricket, rugby etc).

When asked to identify the ways in which sport has been effected by the troubles, 46% of respondents stated spectator violence and 36% stated that the troubles had effected travel to venues. 25% of respondents believed that soccer was influential in building bridges across the divide. Sport perceived as reinforcing divisions included Gaelic football (27% of respondents), hurling (15%) and soccer (14%).

*Alan Bairner (2000) "After the War? Soccer, Masculinity and Violence in Northern Ireland" pp176-194 in J. McKay; Michael. A. Messner & Don Sabo (eds). Masculinities, Gender Relations and Sport. California: Sage.*

Bairner (2000) explores the relationship between working class loyalist males and football in Northern Ireland. He argues, that instead of displacing aggression, spectator sports such as football can actually feed hegemonic masculinity which in turn can lead to patterned male violence in Northern Ireland (Bairner, 2000:176).

Football is dominated by the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. Catholic involvement in top-level soccer has declined, a factor in this being the withdrawal from the Irish League of clubs with a large Catholic following such as Belfast Celtic (1949) and Derry City (1971). However, Catholic support of Irish League has also declined because they often feel intimidated while attending matches because of loyalist chants and the display of support for loyalist paramilitaries (Bairner, 2000:182).

Football spectatorship is a means by which working class loyalist males can assert their hegemony. Bairner (2000:191) suggests that the increase in sectarian tension at football games could be associated with a "crisis" of masculinity within working class Protestant areas as a result of the peace process. That is, many loyalists may feel that their identity is being undermined and are using football spectatorship as a means of reasserting both their masculine and community identity.

*John Sugden (1995) "Sport, Community Relations and Community Conflict in Northern Ireland" pp199-214 in Seamus Dunn (ed) Facets of the Conflict in Northern Ireland. London: McMillan Press Ltd.*

Sugden (1995) examines, amongst other things, the role of the schools sports curriculum in perpetuating community conflict. He argues that the games curriculum in schools in Northern Ireland is highly dependent upon whether the school is Catholic or Protestant. For example, Gaelic Games predominate in Catholic schools whilst rugby, cricket and hockey are predominantly played in Protestant schools. This ensures that there is very little cross community contact between schools in regards to sport. When schools do participate in a common games such as football, Protestant and Catholic children rarely play in the same team, it is more common for them to play against each other which can lead to conflict both on and off the pitch. McLaughlin (1993) argues that whilst there have been a number of cross-community sports programmes in schools, many of these are simply 'one-off' events and that there still exists considerable resistance to any long term alteration of the school games curriculum in order to meet the objectives of community relations (Sugden, 1995:201).

Within this chapter Sugden (1995:202-212) also conducts a comprehensive examination of the historical development of the GAA, rugby union, boxing and association football and explores the role that these sports play in regards to community relations and community conflict.

*John Sugden & Scott Harvie (1995) Sport and Community Conflict in Northern Ireland. Belfast: Centre for the Study of Conflict.*

This study examined the views of 16 sports governing bodies in Northern Ireland examining how their structure, their attitudes to the use of flags, emblems and anthems, their opinion on how the conflict has effected their particular sports and their attitude to community relations programmes.

Surprisingly the study highlighted that very few sports governing bodies, particularly those which are dominated by one section of the community (e.g. rugby, GAA), admitted that community divisions impacted upon recruitment to their sport. Sugden & Harvie (1995:48) advocate that there may be a reluctance amongst sport governing bodies, particularly those dominated by one religion or the other, to admit that community divisions has effected recruitment to their sport for fear that this admission would be interpreted as an admission that their sport was in some way sectarian.

The survey also highlighted that sports governing bodies had a tendency to exaggerate the extent of contact between Catholics and Protestants in their sports, perhaps because they were eager to reinforce the image of their sport as anti-sectarian (Sugden & Harvie, 1995:59). The report noted that only three sports out of the sixteen examined had undertaken formal cross-community initiatives - basketball,

rugby, GAA. However, these initiatives were mostly directed at children, there were no formal efforts to increase cross-community contact in sport amongst adults. (Sugden & Harvie, 1995:69).

Evidence from the survey suggests that the majority of sports governing bodies do not include and have no desire to include community relations themes in their constitution or coaching programmes. Sugden and Harvie believe that, "at present, community relations themes appear to hold negative associations for a number of sports, related to fears that since their activity may be played largely by one community they may be identified as in some way sectarian or bigoted. This suggests that any effort to introduce community relations into their activity would be met with hostility."

*Mike Cronin (1999) Sport and Nationalism: Gaelic Games, Soccer and Irish Identity Since 1884. Dublin: Four Courts Press.*

Cronin (1999) examines the role of Gaelic sports in Irish nationalism and explores the origins and historical development of soccer and Gaelic games in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. In addition to this, Cronin also investigates the role of Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) in the Nationalist/Catholic community and examines the controversial Rule 21 which prohibits the security forces from membership of the GAA.

## **2. HOW MANY SPORTS HAVE BEEN RESEARCHED? ARE THERE ANY GAPS IN THE RESEARCH?**

2.1 Bairner (2000:180) suggests that sport in Northern Ireland falls into three general categories:

- Sports which arrived in Ireland as a result of British influence and which continue to be played in countries which have historic links with Britain, e.g. cricket, hockey and rugby. These sports are predominantly played by Protestants in Northern Ireland.
- Sports which originated from the Irish Gaelic tradition, e.g. hurling, Gaelic football, handball. Participation in Gaelic games declined in Ireland until the revival of Irish nationalism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. They have since become an important element of Irish nationalism and are predominantly played by Catholics in Northern Ireland.
- Sports which originated in Britain but are played universally and are no longer described as British sports, e.g. soccer, athletics, boxing and golf. There is cross-community participation of these sports in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Below is a review of selected research on the sports listed in the categories above. Whilst there has been quite a significant amount of research conducted into the sectarian nature of sport in Northern Ireland there has been a tendency for this research to concentrate upon two of Northern Ireland's most popular sports, that is, association football and Gaelic football to the detriment of sports which have a smaller participation and spectatorship (e.g. athletics, ice-hockey, basketball, netball, angling etc).

## **SOCCER**

2.3 According to Bairner (2000:181), football in Northern Ireland reflects the political divisions which were established by partition. Partition resulted in the establishment of the Irish Football Association in 1880 which still continues to oversee the game in Northern Ireland today.

2.4 Despite football's British origins, it is a popular game amongst both Catholics and Protestants. However, Catholic support for the Irish League has declined in recent years for a number of reasons. Firstly, the decline in support has been in part a result of the withdrawal from the Irish League of teams with a large Catholic following such as Belfast Celtic (1949) and Derry City (1971) (Bairner, 2000:182). Currently, only three of the Irish League teams, Cliftonville, Omagh Town and Newry Town have a large Catholic following, the remaining teams have a large Protestant following. The second factor in the decline of Catholic support for Northern Ireland soccer is because Catholic supporters often feel intimidated by the loyalist sectarian chants and the show of support for loyalist paramilitaries at matches.

2.5 Recently the Irish Football Association (IFA) has attempted to address the problem of sectarianism in football by appointing a Community Relations Officer whose role is to implement a football community relations strategy<sup>1</sup>.

## **Gaelic Sports**

2.6 The Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) was founded at a time when there was a revival in Irish political and cultural nationalism in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The GAA was viewed as an important opportunity to nurture the sense of an Irish national identity and additionally was an important vehicle to halt the popularity of British sports in Ireland (Sugden, 1995:202).

2.7 The GAA is perceived by the Unionist community as a sectarian organisation because of its ban of the security force personnel from membership and because of its past association with political issues such as the hunger strikers (Sugden, 1995:203). The Protestant community in Northern Ireland feel alienated from the GAA because of its nationalist aspirations and because of factors such as the flying of the Irish Tricolour at matches, the naming of GAA grounds and clubs after republican heroes (e.g. Casement Park) and also because of the discovery of arms caches on GAA property (Sugden, 1995:203).

2.8 However, the GAA has itself also suffered as a result of sectarianism. Many members have been killed and injured by loyalist paramilitaries (Bairner & Darby, 2000:57), security forces have constructed military installations on GAA grounds and GAA players and supporter have been searched on their way to and from matches (Sugden, 1995:204).

## **Hockey**

2.9 It is estimated that approximately 75% of all hockey players in Northern Ireland are middle-class and that around 90% are Protestant (Sugden & Harvie, 1995:30). The reason that hockey is predominantly played by Protestants is that it is associated as being a sport with British origins and is mainly played in middle-class Protestant grammar schools.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.irishfa.com/page56.html](http://www.irishfa.com/page56.html)

## **BOXING**

2.10 Boxing, despite being a violent sport, has a unifying impact upon Northern Ireland and appears to be the only working class sport which has avoided major sectarian divisions (Sugden, 1995:210). Sugden suggests that this is because the sport is not associated with one specific cultural tradition. Boxing is also by its very nature an individualistic sport, boxers usually train alone and therefore there is very little exchange of sectarian views or values which could lead to conflict in the sport (Sugden, 1995:210).

2.11 However, that is not to say that boxing is completely free of sectarianism. For example, the family of Wayne McCullough ( a Protestant from the Shankill Road) were intimidated by hard-line loyalists when he carried the Irish tricolour at the Olympic Games in 1998. Barry McGuigan was accused of being a turncoat by some Nationalists and was labelled "Barry the Brit" when he opted to compete for the more lucrative British titles rather than the Irish titles and also because he chose to enter the ring under the United Nations flag rather than the tricolour (Sugden, 1995:211).

## **RUGBY UNION**

2.12 Rugby continues to function in an all-Ireland context in Northern Ireland despite being a Protestant/Unionist dominated sport. Sugden (1995:205) suggests that this is because rugby is mainly a middle-class sport played in middle-class grammar schools and that, in general, the middle-classes in Northern Ireland have a tendency to feel less threatened by maintaining at least some cross-border contacts.

2.13 However, rugby does still continue to suffer a degree of sectarian tension. Although rugby clubs in Northern Ireland may claim to be non-sectarian, the majority of rugby clubs have their foundations in an education system which is divided along sectarian lines (Sugden, 1995:206).

2.14 Even though Ireland fields a rugby team consisting of players from both North and South, tension still remains in relation to which flag should be flown at matches, which anthem should be aired and where international matches should be played. There is also the additional question over allegations of bias in regards to the selection of players and coaches in the Irish team (Sugden, 1995:205).

## **CYCLING**

2.15 Despite the perception that cycling is a neutral sport, cycling in Northern Ireland is divided along sectarian lines for the sport's participants are divided between two separate governing bodies. The Northern Ireland Cycling Federation (NICF) is predominantly Protestant and the Ulster Cycling Federation (UCF) is split fairly evenly between both Catholics and Protestants, however, more Catholics are in the upper echelons of the organisation. The UCF is the result of the amalgamation of a number of other cycling governing bodies including the National Cycling and Athletics Federation (NACF) which had associations with the GAA.

2.16 The NICF are vehemently opposed to the amalgamation of its organisation with the UCF into a single all-Ireland governing body. This has led to allegations that the NICF is a sectarian organisation. Some local councils dominated by unionists have become entangled in the dispute by refusing to support races organised by the UCF.



## **CRICKET**

2.17 Cricket is played in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland and appears to have been less effected by sectarianism than sports such as rugby or football.

Players for Ireland's international cricket team are selected from both sides of the border. However, cricket is more popular amongst Protestants, the majority of cricket club members are Protestants and the majority of clubs are located in Unionist areas (Sugden & Bairner, 1993:51). Sugden & Bairner (1993:51) suggest that cricket is not a popular sport amongst the Catholic community for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is perceived to be a culturally British sport, secondly it is rarely played in Catholic schools and lastly because cricket clubs are mainly located in Protestant areas which are frequently inaccessible to Catholics.

## **GOLF**

2.18 Golf has so far managed to avoid major sectarian divisions, mainly because it is an individualistic sport and lacks mass spectatorship in Northern Ireland (Sugden & Bairner, 1993:70). However, some golf clubs possess certain rules and regulations which can exclude members of the population and therefore can maintain communal divisions. The use of golf clubs for socialising by top personnel in Northern Ireland has made them an ideal target for terrorist attack (Sugden & Bairner, 2000:70).

## **3. GOVERNING BODIES VIEWS OF SECTARIANISM IN SPORT**

3.1 Bairner & Harvie's (1995) study of 16 sports governing bodies highlighted that most governing bodies do not believe that sectarianism exists within their sport. The GAA and the IFA both deny that their sport and their organisation is sectarian. The IFA, in particular, maintains that it has "always been a non-sectarian organisation"<sup>2</sup>.

## **4. HAS SPORT BEEN USED TO COUNTERACT SECTARIANISM?**

4.1 Below is a selection of a number of initiatives aimed at counteracting sectarianism in sport:

In 1998 the Northern Ireland Sports Council launched a "Sport without Prejudice" Campaign<sup>3</sup> which raised awareness of the need to address sectarianism within sport. The campaign asked those who participate or support sport to refrain from using foul or abusive language, using sectarian language, waving flags or emblems which could be offensive and singing sectarian rhymes or songs. The campaign also included a number of projects aimed at encouraging participation in sports from all sections of the community.

Youth Sport Omagh<sup>4</sup> is a voluntary cross-community organisation seeking to promote "reconciliation through sport". The objective of Youth Sport Omagh was to build a £1.8 million sports complex specifically for usage by young people from both sides of the community.

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<sup>2</sup> [www.irishfa.com/page56.html](http://www.irishfa.com/page56.html)

<sup>3</sup> [www.sportni.org/Pages/aboutus/swpac.htm](http://www.sportni.org/Pages/aboutus/swpac.htm)

<sup>4</sup> [www.ysomagh.com/background.htm](http://www.ysomagh.com/background.htm)

There have also been numerous small initiatives aimed at encouraging Catholic schools to participate in rugby and to encourage Protestant children to become involved in Gaelic sports.

## **5. MEDIA REPORTS RELATING TO SECTARIANISM AND SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

*The Belfast Telegraph*

17 February 1999

*"Bigotry in sport"*

A survey commissioned by the Northern Ireland Sports Council revealed that 67% of people in Northern Ireland believe that sectarianism is rife in Ulster sport. Two thirds of respondents either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that religious tension was associated with sport in Northern Ireland, whilst 66% believed sport was troubled with spectator violence. When asked the question, 'are there any sports which you would see as having reinforced divisions between the two communities', 27% stated Gaelic Football, 15% stated hurling and 14% soccer.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive/showdoc?docloc=1999/February/17/SPORT/afront>

*The Belfast Telegraph*

19 March 1999

*"IFA not sectarian says Boyce"*

At the announcement of the appointment of the IFA Community Relations Officer, Jim Boyce, President of the IFA reiterated that the IFA has never adopted a sectarian policy at any time in its 119 year history.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive/showdoc?docloc=1999/February/17/SPORT/afront>

*The Irish News*

20 October 2000

*"Time to fly the flag of football for all"*

IFA and the Community Relations Council produced a series of banners "Give sectarianism the boot" and "Football for All" placing them around Irish league grounds as part of their anti-sectarian campaign. Cliftonville was the first club to receive the banner sets as it has been the most active club in the fight against sectarianism.

A Cliftonville supporters club representative became the first ever community relations officer of an Irish League Club. It is hoped that other clubs will also appoint community relations officers although some clubs are dragging their heels regarding support of the campaign.

*The Observer*

4 March 2001

*"The Celtic divide in Belfast"*

Highlights sectarian abuse of footballers, for example Neil Lennon, Anton Rogan a Catholic from West Belfast who played for Northern Ireland in the late eighties, Allen McKnight a Protestant who played for Celtic and who got verbal abuse from Northern Ireland supporters. Also highlights the problems faced by Bixente Lizarazu a member of the France World Cup squad who was born a Basque but chooses to play for France. Lizarazu has been under 24 hour police protection as ETA view him as a traitor and have sent threatening letters to his parents home.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4145906,00.html>

*The Sunday Times*

11 March 2001

*“Database to kick out Ulster football’s sectarian bigots”*

Irish Football Association (IFA) are to introduce a new initiative to prevent a repeat of the sectarian recently directed at Neil Lennon. The IFA wants to expand and upgrade its close-circuit television network at Windsor Park. The names and photographs of those who shout sectarian abuse will be stored on a database and the information will be circulated to stewards to prevent them gaining access to the grounds. Fans will be asked to produce proof of identity when buying tickets, thereby making it possible to identify hooligans by matching their seat number with details given at purchase. Fans will also be encouraged to use a confidential phone line to name and shame those responsible for sectarian chanting. Similar methods have been used in Scotland where Celtic and Rangers have both used photographic evidence and improved ticket allocation to ban hundreds of fans from Parkhead and Ibrox.

Dr Joe Bradley of Stirling University has conducted research into sectarianism in football in Scotland has offered to help the IFA draw up guidelines on what constitutes sectarian behaviour.

<http://www.sunday-times.co.uk/news/pages/sti/2001/03/11/stiireire01007.html>

*The Irish News*

14 March 2001

*“Good to see IFA finally take action on sectarianism”*

IFA introduces Code of Conduct for Supporters in the light of the sectarian abuse aimed at Neil Lennon at Windsor Park. Argument that IFA should have acted sooner in tackling sectarianism in football.

<http://www.irishnews.com/archive2000/16021001/local11.html>

*The Irish News*

19 March 2000

*“Boyce blames soccer strife on ‘street’ life”*

IFA president Jim Boyce denied the IFA had ever been guilty of sectarianism, he stated that the IFA had never “picked teams or selected players on religious grounds”. The IFA also unveiled their first ever Community Relations Officer who announced a five point plan of action which included – reviewing all relevant IFA policies and procedures, incorporating all community relations elements into IFA training and coaching courses, ensuring the rights and needs of all in football are respected, developing a ‘fair play’ charter applicable to all clubs and generating wide publicity support for the community relations programme.

[http://www.irishnews.com/k\\_archive/190399/local3.html](http://www.irishnews.com/k_archive/190399/local3.html)

*The Guardian*

28 March 2001

*“Giant Strides”*

Highlights the cross community appeal of Northern Ireland’s ice hockey team the Belfast Giants.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4160208,00.html>

*The Guardian*

15 May 2001

*“A Game of Two Halves”*

Six years ago in Scotland a sixteen year old boy (Mark Scott) was murdered in Scotland for wearing a Celtic shirt, since his death seven other young men have died due to sectarianism. Cara Henderson, a friend of the murder boy has set up “Nil by Mouth” Scotland’s leading anti-sectarian group. Nil by Mouth has produced a series

of posters around football grounds which picture a bloodied victim in a hospital casualty unit under the headline "Sectarian humour can have you in stitches".

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4186759,00.html>

*Belfast Telegraph*

20 July 2001

*"Football world gets a lesson from IFA"*

IFA anti-sectarian campaign "Football for All" to be used to tackle neo-Nazi violence on Europe's football terraces. Many countries at an international conference of football associations in Buenos Aires expressed an interest in the campaign.

<http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/cgi-bin/archive/showdoc?docloc=1999/February/17/SPORT/afroft>

*BBC News Northern Ireland*

20 August 2001

*"GAA repeats Rule 21 pledge"*

The GAA has reiterated its intention to abolish Rule 21 which bars member of the British Security Forces from playing Gaelic sports. The rule will be abolished when "effective steps are taken to implement amended structures and policing arrangements envisaged in the British/Irish peace agreement."

[http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/sport/hi/english/northern\\_ireland/newsid\\_1501000/1501036.stm](http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/sport/hi/english/northern_ireland/newsid_1501000/1501036.stm)

*The Irish News*

10 September 2001

*"Mystery over 'GAA fine' for hunger strike rally at Casement"*

Rumours suggest that Antrim GAA country board have been fined £15,000 for allowing a hunger strike commemoration to be held in Casement Park. Thousands gathered at the west Belfast GAA grounds for the event which featured an address by Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams and an appearance of an IRA colour party. However, the Antrim county secretary insisted he had no knowledge of any imposed fine.

<http://www.irishnews.com/current/news14.html>

## 6. SECTARIANISM AND SPORT IN OTHER COUNTRIES

### SPAIN<sup>5</sup>

The hosting of the Olympic Games in Barcelona in 1992 deeply divided Spain by stimulating Catalan nationalism. Catalonia is a part of Spain with its own separate culture, language and separate identity. Catalan nationalists were highly fearful that the central Spanish Government would use the Olympic Games to reinforce their own identity and culture and at the expense of the Catalan culture.

The main issues for the Catalans in regards to the Games were the status of the Catalan language and the presence of the Catalan flag and national hymn in the ceremonies. Catalan separatists wanted a separate team to represent them in the Games, or if there was to be an integrated team they wanted the Catalan members distinguished from the rest of the Spanish team. There were threats to disrupt the Games by demonstrations and mass meetings if the Games were not Catalanised.

During the reception ceremony for the Olympic Flame the speech of the Spanish Minister for Education was drowned out by whistling and shouting from the nationalist

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<sup>5</sup> see Hargreaves, J (2000) "Spain Divided: The Barcelona Olympics and Catalan Nationalism in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

crowd. Tanks, Spanish troops and helicopters were deployed as the Olympic Torch passed through the nationalist stronghold of Banyoles.

On the one hand the Olympic Games divided Spain between Catalan nationalists and the rest of the Spanish population. However, on the other hand an Olympic pact approved by the central government six weeks before the commencement of the Games conceded that nationalist Catalan symbols would be included in the Games in a dignified manner. This action in addition to the successful performance of the Spanish athletes in the Games had a unifying effect on the country.

### **CANADA**<sup>6</sup>

Ice hockey is both a divisive and unifying sport in Canada. It is unifying by the way in which Canadians unite behind the national team especially against rival competitors such as America. However, Quebec nationalism has had a tendency to threaten this unification. There have been claims of an under-representation of French Canadians in national ice-hockey teams as evident in the Olympic Games held in Lillehammer in 1994 where it was revealed that just one Quebec athlete had been selected for the Canadian ice-hockey team.

The allegation of discrimination against French Canadians manifested itself in 1955 when French Canadian Maurice Richard an ice-hockey player for the Montreal Canadiens was suspended for the remainder of the season for hitting a referee. Many French Canadians felt that this was an extremely harsh and discriminatory decision, the match ended in a riot started by the supporters of Richard.

### **SOUTH AFRICA**<sup>7</sup>

South Africa is one of the worlds most divided societies. During the Apartheid era the white dominated state decreed that sport should be racially segregated which resulted in the exclusion of the non-white population from high profile team sports such as cricket and rugby. However, in the new South Africa sports are being used to enhance community solidarity. Soccer coaching clinics are being used at youth level to promote integration between the different ethnic backgrounds. In 1994 the United Schools Sports Association of South Africa was formed to replace the racially segregated governing bodies for school sports.

However, the black community within South Africa is still divided along ethno-tribal and political lines. The various tribes and political factions amongst the black population support different football teams and leagues, for examples, the teams Alaqulusi and African Wanderers were representative of different tribes.

Football is very much a black dominated sport in South Africa. It played a vital part in the fight against apartheid, as blacks were barred from holding public office, football became the focus for black community political activity. Throughout the country soccer stadiums served as venues for mass meetings and political rallies. White people often feel alienated from soccer in South Africa because of its associations with the ANC and the Pan African Congress.

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<sup>6</sup> see Harvey, J. (2000) "Sport and Quebec Nationalism: Ethnic or Civil Identity in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

<sup>7</sup> see Guelke, A. & Sugden, J. (2000) "Sport and the "Normalising" of the New South Africa" in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

## **BELGIUM**<sup>8</sup>

Belgium is divided along both linguistic and cultural lines into three regions (Walloonia, Flanders and Brussels) and three communities (Flemish community, French community and German community). The Belgian national football team has played an instrumental role in uniting such a divided country. The organisation of Belgian football continues to remain national in structure and attempts to divide the national Belgian Football Association into a Flemish and Walloon division have failed. However, there still remains frequent disputes over the proportion of players from each region in the national team.

## **GERMANY**<sup>9</sup>

Recently old East German/West German division have emerged in some aspects of sport in the reunified Germany. In some football grounds the old GDR (German Democratic Republic – East German) flag has become visible at matches. “We don’t want any Western swines” are shouted at matches and are directed against west German opponents and spectators. After reunification many clubs changed their names and colours, however, recently many fans have started to use the old (pre-unification) names and colour combinations.

Divisions also exist between Germans and the large Turkish population residing in Germany. Despite being the largest immigrant group in Germany, very few Turks are visible in the German football Bundesliga. This is despite the fact that Turkish men are very enthusiastic about football. Those few Turkish players who played in the Bundesliga in the 1970s and 1980’s were often subjected to racist and xenophobic chants, in many cases by their own club supporters. As a result the Turkish community have formed their own sports clubs which compete in local and regional leagues against mainly German teams.

## **INDIA**<sup>10</sup>

Social divisions between Indian Hindus and Pakistani Muslims have been expressed in cricket in recent years. During one of India’s cricket world cup matches anti-Pakistani chants were coming from sections of the Indian crowd during a match which didn’t even involve Pakistan. In another cricket world cup Bombay, known as the cradle of Indian cricket, was bypassed as a venue for hosting matches as it was feared that if India drew with Pakistan anti-Muslim prejudices could result in ethnic and communalist violence.

Cricket, however, also help to unite the Indian population. Cricket is India’s national sport and is a popular pastime amongst all people in India regardless of religion or caste. When the Indian national team play a match streets are said to be deserted as people are gather round radios and TV screens.

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<sup>8</sup> see Vanreusel, B; Renson, R. & Tollenner, J. (2000) “Divided Sports in a Divided Belgium” in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

<sup>9</sup> see Merkel, U. (2000) “Sport in Divided Societies – The Case of the Old, the New and the Re-United Germany” in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

<sup>10</sup> see McDonald, I. (2000) “Between Salem and Shiva: The Politics of Cricket Nationalism in “Globalising” India” in J. Sugden & A. Bairner (eds) Sport in Divided Societies. Oxford: Meyer & Meyer Ltd.

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