

Executive Summary: Banning from Grounds

The survey gives an insight into football fans' attitudes towards reasonable criteria for individuals to be banned from grounds. The survey was commissioned after increasing publicity about fans being banned after various incidents. Bans for 'non-violent' issues rarely generate the sort of publicity that bans for 'violent' behaviour do but does one punishment fit all the 'crimes' – is writing a disparaging remark in a fanzine as serious as assaulting a steward?

1. THE SURVEY SAMPLE

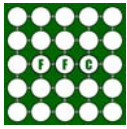
- The report consists of the views of 1304 on-line football fans with a good distribution between those aged 16 and 55 - respondents were predominantly male.
- There was wide geographical participation in the survey; in all fans of 107 clubs were represented in the survey with a good spread between the four professional divisions in the English League.
- There was a particularly strong representation of supporters from Division One clubs partly due to high profile cases (within the club's fan circles) of fans being banned.
- The survey sample shows a strong weighting towards season-ticket holding fans but still displays a good distribution from those fans who attend a few matches to those attending no more than 20 games per season. This highlights how the issue is a concern to all fans, regardless of their attendance.

2.1 RESULTS OVERVIEW: THE KEY ISSUES

THE MOST SERIOUS OFFENCES

- The list below shows - in descending order - what offences respondents believe are most serious:

TYPE OF OFFENCE	% OF RESPONDENTS FELT OFFENCE IS ALWAYS A REASONABLE CRITERION TO BAN SOMEONE
Throwing missiles – either towards fans or players	84
Racist abuse	71
Violent conduct within or around the ground	65
Coming onto the pitch to berate a player	59
Being drunk and disorderly within or around the ground	13
Streaking	12
Promoting libellous and/ or offensive remarks against the club	8
Repeated standing in a seated area	3
Owning a web address using the club's name	1
Speaking out against the club in a constructive manner	0



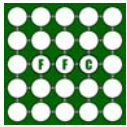
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THE DECISION ON BANS

- There is a concern that these decisions are made by only one side – the clubs. Only 5% of respondents believed that the club alone should make the decision on upholding a ban for non-violent offences and only 19% believed this should be the case for violent offences.
- 92% of respondents are unaware of any process to complain about a ban/ eviction
- 83% would back a supporter representative being involved in an assessment of the appropriateness of any ban
- The important theme that comes out amongst the comments submitted to the site relates to an uncertainty about the decision-making process when it comes to banning individuals from grounds. The contradictory opinions between fans on certain issues showed the confusion as to what actually happened in the course of events and whether or not the actual decisions were right.
- When it comes to 'offensive' behaviour – antagonistic behaviour directed against a specific person or group of people - there is a stronger feeling that these are always reasonable criteria to ban someone as age increases. From this it would be logical to assume that as age increases respondents display more antipathy towards and are more uncomfortable with offensive behaviour.
- This contrasts with 'non-offensive' behaviour – behaviour not specifically directed against someone. As age increases there is tangibly less feeling that 'non-offensive' behaviour is a reasonable criterion to ban someone. Younger respondents are proportionately more in favour of bans being imposed for offences such as repeated standing in a seated area or owning a web address using the club's name. A possible reason for this could be as age increases respondents display less antipathy towards and are less uncomfortable with 'non-offensive' behaviour.
- As match attendance decreases there is a stronger feeling that both offensive and 'non-offensive' behaviour are a reasonable criterion to ban someone. This is interesting as those attending more games are by definition more likely to be affected by such things yet seem to display less of an antipathy towards them. A possible reason for this could be that those attending more matches have become more used to these occurrences than those who don't attend so often – the latter finding it harder to deal with.

SAFETY VS. LIBERTY

- 55% felt it was more important, in terms of crowd control, to preserve the safety of the majority, even if this means the liberties of some innocent people may suffer by being incorrectly ejected
- 45% felt it is more important to preserve the liberties of the majority, even if this makes it harder to protect the safety of individual fans



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