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## **Brawling in Berne: Mediated Transnational Moral Panics in the Football World Cup 1954**

### **Abstract**

This paper explores the use of national and racial stereotypes in the moral panic surrounding a case of athlete violence at the 1954 World Cup of Football, focussing on the differences in mediation of this event across three nations with different forms of involvement in or connection with the match. Texts are analysed from Norwegian and English national papers, and Swiss papers of German origin using Fairclough's (1995a, 1995b, 2003) critical discourse analysis. Each of the three national settings presented four discursive perspectives: degradation of play, the referee, the locker room fight, and national racial stereotypes. The media have long operated as agents and stimulants of moral indignation (Hall *et al*, 1978; Cohen, 1972:80). The analysis explores the extent to and ways in which mediation of the violence may be understood through the logic of a moral panic, interpreted as a parallel to Fairclough's societal discourse order. We argue that the discursive framing of the event in each national context reveals common significant characteristics in the understanding of significant variations in the national and racial stereotypes invoked that are specific to the implicit codes associated with national socio-cultural practices, and to reinforce asymmetrical power relations to manage a sense of cultural threat to Western and Northern European cultural codes.

Keywords: moral panic, critical discourse analysis, athlete violence, national racial stereotypes, asymmetrical power relations, football.

# **Brawling in Berne: Mediated Transnational Moral Panics in the Football World Cup 1954**

## **Introduction**

It is in the character of popular mediated memory that ‘misbehaviour’ by elite athletes is a contemporary blight. This ahistorical mythologizing aside, scholars never need to look far to find evidence that former days were not so golden and not so respectable. As historians and media sociologists we are interested in understanding the conditions surrounding this event as well as the initial form of the texts that have played a crucial role in its remembering.

Furthermore, sports’ mundane historicism means that understanding these phenomena opens the potential for both critiquing and debunking the ideological functions of mediated sport discourses in contemporary settings. One such instance is the Hungary-Brazil quarterfinal of the 1954 football World Cup in the Swiss city Berne. The match was reported to be extremely violent, both on and off the field. The mediated responses to this event sought to control the damage to the dominant image of the game as a moral practice developing respectable and virtuous men. This article explores the differences in mediation of this event across three nations with different forms of involvement in or connections with the match; England as the ‘cradle’ of modern football, Norway as not qualified but with a keen audience and Switzerland, as the organizer. The discursive framing of the event in each national context reveals common characteristics ascribed to variations in the national and racial stereotypes invoked that are specific to the implicit codes associated with *respective* national socio-cultural practices.

Sport media – one of society’s “moral entrepreneurs” (Thompson, 1998: 7) – carry and project a powerfully banal and mundane nationalism (Billig, 1995), while sporting events need to have a history and longevity to feel important (Boyle & Haynes, 2000). The multinational character of the then 24 year-old football World Cup and football’s extensive role in articulating and asserting various racial and national stereotypes mean that this event in 1954 provides a useful forum through which to explore the discourses of mediated sport. During the 1950s sports news was a minor element in both the Norwegian and Swiss daily press, although it grew steadily from the 1960s onwards. In contrast, there is a long tradition of a sports press in Britain, with a number of specialist national and local sports newspapers

from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In addition, the daily national and local newspapers also included considerable coverage of sports.

### **The Context of the Battle of Berne in 1954**

The FIFA World Cup in 1954 featured a higher number of nations than ever before. The tournament was dominated by European teams, from Austria, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, England, France, Hungary, Italy, Scotland, West Germany and Yugoslavia, but included teams from East Asia (Korea), Africa (Egypt), West Asia (Turkey) and the Americas (Uruguay, Brazil and Mexico). The World Cup was mediated as sensational for its high-scoring games and a surprise win for the Federal Republic of Germany. Hungary was the favourite: the national team was the Olympic gold medal winner two years before, and remained unbeaten since May 1950 (31 games: 27 wins and 4 draws). The spectators of the final were expecting the Hungarian magic to work again. After leading 2-0 against West Germany, whom they had beaten 8-3 in the opening round, the favourites went down 3-2.

Hungary beat Brazil 4-2 in a high tension match in the quarter final that ended in locker room fighting between players, managers and delegates. The match had begun in driving rain producing slippery conditions and a hard-to-control ball, which itself did not help cool tempers that frayed as the match progressed. The match statistics of 42 free-kicks, 2 penalties, 4 cautions and 3 dismissals illustrate its fractious character, with the number of single-match dismissals not surpassed in the competition until the 2006 World Cup Finals. Under a headline ‘Hungary overpowered Brazil in a hard and dramatic fight’, the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* on June 28<sup>th</sup> reported:

In the 73<sup>rd</sup> minute, the Hungarian half Bozsik and Brazil’s Nilton Santos were sent off when they started to fight regularly. Some minutes earlier Hildegkut (Hungary) was hurt and was lying down on the ground at the same time as Santos started faking injury, and several South American journalists and photographers flocked together on the field, and the police had to clear the field to continue the game...The Brazilian coach, Alfredo Moreiro, was very discontented after the match and claimed that his team ought to have won.

The text describing the match in *Aftenposten* is very much in line with coverage in the German language Swiss and English national papers: during the second half the play became more intense with the Brazilians producing many of the fouls. Possible explanations why this game became so violent include that the omission of Puskas, the Hungarian captain, meant that the Brazilians saw themselves as having a greater chance to win the cup. We cannot

know with any certainty, but it is not unreasonable to assume in the context of a major international sports tournament, that Hungarian pride in their success and Brazilian desire to giant-kill may be seen as combining to produce a heightened emotional atmosphere that was intensified by frustrations linked to the effects of the bad weather. Both teams were reported as taking part in the violence, which contributed to its intensification. As a consequence, and despite the claims of the English papers, the referee did not seem to control the match. The contrast between the English newspaper reporting of the 1953 defeat of England 6-3 at Wembley and this Hungary-Brazil match suggests that it was the violence itself that was newsworthy and in need of management (Hill, 2003).

### **A Critical Perspective**

Our analysis of this incident draws on Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995a, 1995b, 2003). Critical discourse analysis investigates the tension between what is constituted (past) and what is constituting (present). Fairclough's approach interprets texts as integrated parts of specific social and cultural practices where meaning has three central elements: actions, representations and identification (Fairclough, 2003). Violence in the public sphere (action) appears through representations that become the basis of reader interpretation and meaning-making to produce identification. These representations as a specific point in the text comprise discourses; for example a sentence can be an identification through which value assumptions (i.e., what is desirable) are in focus and mediated directly or indirectly (Fairclough, 2003: 55). As such, discourses become "ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the 'mental world' of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world" (Fairclough 2003: 124). This article identifies the main themes represented in the newspaper discourses surrounding the events, and we explore the particular perspective from which they are represented (Fairclough 2003: 129).

These discourses are understood to be tied to a meta-discourse of moral panic as outlined by Cohen (1972: 28) as events when an "episode... emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stereo-typical fashion by the mass media". Tempting as it is to read the responses to the events in Berne as a moral panic, we are sceptical of the classical sociological uses of the notion that tend to identify only weakly the morality involved: our approach therefore critically adapts rather than adopts Cohen's

approach. There is little doubt that analysts such as Cohen (1972) and Hall *et al* (1978) identify the panic, but apart from the elements of outrage they identify, notions of morality are more difficult to discern. In both these cases of classic sociological and cultural studies accounts ‘morality’ may be a code for ideology (Zylinska, 2005: 41-62). Morality and ideology, while they may usefully be conflated at times to enhance a socio-cultural dynamic of power and dominance, are not the same: to be so, the morality in question would need to be characterised by a loose schemata of elements the flexibility of which becomes the bases of its affective power (Thompson 1990, esp. pp 52-67). We ask in line with Zylinska (2005: 50): what is it exactly that needs to be sacrificed for the threatened value system to hold?

Our analysis here is based in a separation of ideology and morality. Football plays a moral role in shaping national masculine and racial stereotypes in the context of industrial capitalism, and in doing so is held to embody a series of principles of right (correct) conduct beyond those imposed by the laws of the game: that is, the ethics of football are this morality performed.<sup>1</sup> Football’s morality – the extra legal ethics of correct conduct – gains ideological power in this context through its connections with another schema the defining characteristic of which is an implied and assumed national-cultural, and racialized, hierarchy. As western and northern Europe lost its cultural authority to an increasingly decolonising world and perceived itself to be culturally and politically threatened by an expanding set of Soviet-aligned states, the moral panic surrounding this violent football match centred on a discourse that was shaped by a notion that here as a challenge from ‘not really Whites’ who lacked capitalist civility. As such, it exposes a wider response to an emerging set of intellectual and ideological challenges to industrial capitalism. This match violated football’s morality and thus presented a profound ethical challenge to the socio-cultural order that morality helped justify and sustain. The moral panic became a mechanism to control and minimise the effects of that challenge, and to preserve a sense of western and northern European superiority.

This meta-discourse of moral panic is a parallel to Fairclough’s societal discourse order; the sum of all genres and discourses which are mediated in a field of society (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 1999, esp. pp. 69-71; Fairclough, 1995a, pp.55-56; 1995b, pp.10-15). Fairclough’s three-dimensional approach allows for analysis of the relationship between texts and socio-cultural practice. In this paper the processes of textual production (including linguistic practices), distribution, and consumption are minimised. Texts about male violence are linked to racial representations and national stereotypes. In doing so we draw on the notion of

asymmetrical power relations linked to a Eurocentric conceptual framework that is enabled by its dominating and exploitative location in global power relations (Harding 1998: 91). This asymmetry finds its expression in two principal ways: for Chakrabarty (2000) it is the ‘asymmetrical ignorance’ revealed in many analysts’ discussions purporting to be comparative literary and textual analyses, whereas for Harding it is often manifested as “systematic ignorance” (1998: 68). Our use of asymmetry is designed to make more explicit the means by which nations have the “definitional” power of knowledge (Holter, 1996) to categorise others, and to enhance the links in this context between the dominant sociological uses of moral panic and critical discourse analysis. These power relations may be textually explicit or implicit, where the “analysis of implicit content can provide valuable insights into what is taken as given, as common sense” (Fairclough, 1995b: 6), and therefore contribute to the naturalisation of practices of domination (Bourdieu, 1977). With this in mind, we also explore the latent meaning production in the relevant texts and relevant non-discoursal elements (Fairclough, 2003: 25). Thus, micro-texts of a sentence, or in some cases a word, are interpreted not only as giving local significance to the situation in which they occur, but as linked to latent macro-texts of various dominating values in a culture.

We have chosen to purposively sample the various nations’ newspapers; Switzerland, Norway and England. This selection is partly one of convenience, but more importantly each nation had a different relationship with the match – host (Switzerland), spectator (Norway), and both rival and source of authority (England). England’s source of authority was two-fold: a claim to being the home of football, and more prosaically in providing the referee and one line judge for the match itself. Three of the biggest Norwegian national papers in 1954 are in focus: the conservative *Aftenposten*, the liberal *Dagbladet* and the conservative *Verdens Gang*.<sup>2</sup> Only *Dagbladet* sent a reporter to the World Cup, while *Aftenposten* relied on United Press (UP) and their own commentator in Oslo. Only *Verdens Gang* and *Dagbladet* mediated the scandal on the front page. This was the only article about the game in *Verdens Gang*, whereas *Dagbladet* produced four articles, of which three are included in this analysis.<sup>3</sup> All the four articles in *Aftenposten* are to be found in the sports section and included in this paper.

The only German language national papers from Berne that reported sport in 1954 were *Der Bünd* – a liberal paper (two articles on the game), *Berner Tagblatt* – a conservative paper (two articles), and *Berner Tagwacht* – the official organ of the Social Democratic Party (one article). All these articles are found in the sports’ section. None of the Swiss papers featured



the Brazil-Hungary scandal as front page news, where the emphasis was a more globally significant event: it was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the assassination in 1914 of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo. Only one article from each of these papers is included in the study, because the two others did not mention the violence. In 1954 the tabloid sports press with its focus on scandals, conflicts and sex was unknown in Switzerland and the rest of Europe. As the organizer of the World Cup, Swiss papers tended to present the competition by dealing with football performances in the hands of a successful host. The analysis of the English coverage of the events also draws on the national press. All reports of the Hungary-Brazil match discuss the violence or its consequences. All the major national daily newspapers covered the events. Many gave front page coverage to the scandal including the populist *Daily Mirror* (one of two articles), the liberal *Manchester Guardian* (one of three articles), and the conservative papers *The Daily Telegraph* (its only article) and *The Daily Mail* (one of three articles). Only the newspaper of the establishment, *The Times* (one of one article), did not give front page coverage.

The focus here is on the way violence is related to the social construction of ethnicities through the invocation of ascribed racial hierarchies in sports reporting by the press in three countries. Each of the three national settings presented four discursive perspectives: degradation of play, the referee, the fight in and near the locker room, and the focus on national racial stereotypes. Each of the four discourses is mutually interdependent in an interdiscursive relationship that accentuates a racialized hierarchy of blame and thereby manages the challenge to football's industrial masculine morality. The discourses are tied to the central theoretical issue shaping the analysis: the extent to which the mediation of the violence is constructed through a logic of moral panic, with a focus on the moral.

### **National Racial Stereotypes**

Mediated sport constructs and reconstructs stereotypes of gender, race and nationality (Tudor, 1992; Rowe, 2003; Helland, 2003; Flekke, 2003; Lippe, 2002; Lippe, 2004, Lippe 2007). In telling stories newspapers draw upon an extensive reservoir of stereotypes, including male competitiveness, toughness, and desire to control and directly or indirectly follow the law. Normative masculinities in 1950s industrial societies were tied to the role of the male breadwinner. Private and public arenas were held to be sharply divided. Leisure – or free time – in the 1950s was understood as a male preserve (Green *et al*, 1990). According to the

dominant media views of the time, industrial man was virtuous and 'civilised', because white, dominant masculinities were normalised and naturalised in that they were not featured as a problem. The western male was a rational being who had conquered his innate aggression and now preferred to settle disputes by negotiation and superior reason (Barrett and McIntosh, 1982; Delphy and Leonard, 1992; Segal, 1988). This ideology held that his 'virtuousness' and 'civilisation' meant that he would use physical violence to protect his way of life and his loved ones only when confronted by aggression and violence by less virtuous and civilised others. In this world of rational industrial masculinity, sport was held to constrain and contain industrial man's "natural" aggressiveness. (Lippe, 1997) In case he was not able to fully control his aggression, however, sport was also a place where industrial man learned to be civilised and virtuous.<sup>4</sup> Its moral rules resulted in ethics that were held to constrain athletes beyond the laws of the game and beyond the field of play, as seen in the ideal of the games ethic, and those of the ideal of 'fair play' (Loland and McNamee, 2000; Mangan, 1986, 2000; Wigmore & Tuxill, 1995). It is this morality at the heart of the Brazil-Hungary violence moral panic.

In each of the mediascapes (Appadurai, 1990) analysed differing social and cultural expectations meant that this industrial masculinity took on specific local characteristics. In Norway it was shaped by the relatively recent growth of industrial capitalism and the pervasive national-rural ideal, whereas in Switzerland vital aspects of national industrial masculinities were articulated to Swiss multinational and multilingual forms as markers of national distinctiveness and difference. In England, where the ideals of industrial masculinity were historically deep-rooted they were being reframed by a perceived crisis of Empire, an essential element in England's national self-image (Wright, 1985, pp 1-33; Schwartz, 1996, pp 1-8; Colls, 2001, pp 179-82) and by decolonization that make significant and explicit the language of race in the English media coverage, and in doing so make it qualitatively and quantitatively distinct from the Swiss and Norwegian.

Each of these mediascapes relied in their reporting of the events on stereotypes as a fixed conventional representation (Perkins, 1979; Hinton 2000; Pickering 2001: 16-21). These stereotypes pre-exist their specific use: they are already existing concepts that are hailed into existence by trigger traits. O'Donnell (1994), in his study of football stereotypes, characterises mediated versions of Scandinavians as people with coolness and clinical rationality, Germans are presented as mentally controlled, disciplined, effective, reliable and

hard working, whereas Latin Americans are magical, creative, irrational, undisciplined, reckless with a temperament supercharged with emotions, and completely irresponsible. Analyses by Blain, Boyle and O'Donnell (1993), and more recently by Crolley and Hands (2006), have deepened our understanding of these European stereotypes and enriched our sense of their impact on media content. Attaching the label Scandinavian, German or Latin American to an individual or collective activates these pre-existing traits.

Identities, including stereotypical ones, are constructed within a discourse produced in specific historical and institutional sites (Hall, 1997). These identities, Hall argues, are constructed through discursive relationships to the Other, that is, an identity is juxtaposed by inferential racism to the Other in relation to what it *lacks*, to what it is not. A vital component of those Others is “those apparently naturalised representations of events and situations relating to race, whether ‘factual’ or ‘fictional’, which have racist premises and propositions inscribed in them as a set of unquestioned assumptions” (Hall, 1990: 13). The asymmetrical power relations that allow some nations to define others means that the cultural centre (in this case, northern and western Europe) has generated an inferential racism that is often integrated in sporting stereotypes, which are more easily reconstructed in the everyday interpretative mechanisms of the Other. Markers of the asymmetrical power relations include the English/British claim of authority derived from having ‘invented’ many modern sports, as well as the cultural, political and financial domination of the institutions and organisations of international sport.

## **Discourses on the orgy of violence**

### The degradation of play

A dominant theme in the game's mediation was the degradation of the morality of football.

*Aftenposten* reported on June 29<sup>th</sup> that:

A Hungarian player is supposed to have started the tough fight. This initiated the rough match and the series of tackles, gobs of spit in the faces of the opponents and other actions off one's trolley between sportsmen. The fact that the Brazilians grew ten times worse than the Hungarians when they were invited to such a fight, is another matter. This is in accordance with most of the sources.

In another article the same day under the headline of “FIFA warns both Hungary and Brazil”,

*Aftenposten* reported that “The Berne newspapers named today the players of both teams thugs.” *Dagbladet* used the headlines “Soccer ball – the Root of Evil” and “No Limits on World Cup Scandals” to introduce a June 29<sup>th</sup> story stating:

The World Cup tournament degenerates beyond all limits. The scandal-match Hungary Brazil will certainly create great consequences... When empty bottles, stone throwing, fist fighting, gobs of spit, scornful attitudes, police clubbing and vandalism are the context of a football match, the best thing to do is to cancel the whole cup.

This is the most clear cut and negative of all the texts.

Similar discourses may be seen in the Swiss newspapers. Under the June 29<sup>th</sup> headline of the *Bern Tagblatt* “Spiteful Hungary-Brazil Match”:

They [the two teams] played violently several times, and because the referee, Ellis, did not have eyes on his back, the Brazilians were never on the right places on the field [to be seen].

The *Berner Tagwacht* stated on June 28<sup>th</sup>:

It was really a crying shame that these teams experienced such a degrading finish. Humberto and Buzanski fought a duel (on the field) just before the finish without observing the ball. Because the Brazilian initiated the act of violence in such an unfair way, Ellis had to send him off the field as well.

Unlike the Norwegian press, *but* like the other national English dailies, *The Daily Telegraph* relied on its on-site correspondent for its June 28<sup>th</sup> front page lead:

Scenes reminiscent more of the bull-ring than the football field marked the World Cup quarterfinal in which Hungary beat Brazil by 4 goals to 2 here to-day.

*The Manchester Guardian* on June 28<sup>th</sup> contrasted English “grit and orthodoxy” in the June 26<sup>th</sup> quarter final against Uruguay, to the Brazil-Hungary match that was “nothing but a shambles”. In the *Guardian’s* view, the English match officials protected the integrity of the game in defeat, while the Hungarian victory was made hollow by the events both on and off pitch that undermined the ethics of the game.

Similar sentiments paralleling *Dagbladet* on June 29<sup>th</sup> may be seen in *The Times* on June 28<sup>th</sup>:

Never in my life have I seen such cruel tackling, the cutting down of opponents as if with a scythe, followed by threatening attitudes and sly jabs when officialdom was engaged elsewhere.

*The Times* did not comment on the off-pitch events. It did, however, note:

Praise be this was not the final, and so far as world domination of the game is concerned if this is what it breeds then the British Isles are well out of it.

The populist *Daily Mirror* revealed the potential of tabloidization with its June 28<sup>th</sup> front page

headline ‘Riot at ‘Mad’ Soccer Match’, over a story with the opening sentence “Vicious fighting broke out between players and officials of two World Cup football teams here tonight”. Later in the story: “It was more than bad. It was disgusting – and a disgrace to all the other competitors in the tournament”. The contrast with the English broadsheets and much of the Norwegian and Swiss coverage is pronounced, although *Aftenposten*’s reference to ‘thugs’ is not dissimilar.

In Norway, *Dagbladet* mediated the battle on the field using the moral rhetoric of a normative critique, calling it “the root of evil” in one of the headlines. In the context of puritan Norway of the 1950s this connotes the work of the devil. The value assumption is as clear-cut as it could have been at the time: winning with style in the heavenly team game has been debased to the underworld of hellish darkness. The *Dagbladet* reporter was, as the only Norwegian journalist sent to cover the tournament, granted the status of and authority as an accredited expert on football. By linking the events of this match to satanic evil he invokes a powerful Norwegian ethical frame to present this World Cup as a perversion and corruption of football. *Bern Tagblatt* reported that the players acted “violently” and *Berner Tagwacht* framed the finish “degrading”. These metaphors are more common in the Swiss sports media than in the Norwegian or English papers, although *The Times* is a notable example.

Breaking rules and fighting both on stage and off stage transgressed the moral codes of the World Cup. This was mediated as a non-negotiable intrinsic element of football. In contrast to the media of today, the readers of 1954 did not know – with a few exceptions – what the different players actually did in the violence. Much of the mediation of the match is therefore a collective presentation of battle, and as such an offence as a whole to football-as-virtuous by two nationally representative groups of men who are expected to be virtuous because they are footballers. As such, the degradation had to be managed in national terms in order to restore the integrity of football. Within the English coverage there is an extra dimension associated with the sense that football is an English game. The English claim football as theirs, and assert the right to define and prescribe the moral codes and ethical practice associated with it. A higher status and greater moral power was claimed for English football specifically and British football more generally through claiming football as a marker of Englishness and given the terms of the repeated refusal of the (English) Football Association and its allies in Scotland, Wales and Ireland to participate in the early world Cups and their strained and spasmodic membership of FIFA. These assertions to moral superiority and the wide-spread

adherence to the cultural codes of popular imperialism meant that English papers were likely to find a sympathetic audience for their claims that despite the quality of the teams, they could not resist 'foul play'. *The Times* claims that the British (in this case, English and Scottish) teams were better off out of international competition in favour the more moral play at 'home' is an assertion of this moral superiority, yet paradoxically implies fragility and the need to protect English and British sporting morality from 'less civilised' challenges. As such, it is a kind of fatal impact analysis of sporting, national and racial morality that inverts the normal power relations, but is consistent with miscegenist notions of pollution of the blood.

### The referee: the challenges to authority

Mitigation of football's degradation was beyond the ability of the game's authority on the day. The Berne papers detailed the attempts to control the match: *Der Bünd*, June 29<sup>th</sup>

The referee, Ellis (England) did everything possible to normalise the play. He marked the fouls with his whistle, he warned the players, he tried to calm them, he stuck to his decisions about sending players off the field; .... All these sanctions did not help, so it was a relief when the match was finished.

*Bern Tagblatt* (June 29<sup>th</sup>) noted as follows:

The Brazilians were unfortunately very bad losers. Therefore, it was great luck that the best referee of them all, Ellis (England) was chosen to [referee] this "final". In contrast to the very beautiful and completely fair match he had seen between Switzerland and Austria on Saturday in Lausanne, he had to leave this slaughter in an unsatisfied way.

The notable difference in the English coverage is the elevation of the role of the English referee to nationally iconic redeemer of football. According to *The Manchester Guardian*, he "never worked harder or more indulgently in the cause of law and order", whereas *The Daily Mail* front page headline read: "Boot-and-Bottle World Cup Riot; Gallantry of English referee prevents bloodshed" with the text noting the same: "Bloodshed was only avoided on the pitch by the gallantry of an Englishman, Mr Arthur Ellis, the Halifax referee, who had charge of the game, with Mr W. Ling, of Cambridge, one of his linesmen." In *The Daily Mirror* on June 28<sup>th</sup>, Ellis was "the man who kept his cool.... He was magnificent, the calmest man in the great Wankdorf stadium". By June 29<sup>th</sup>, according to the *Mirror*, Ellis had become a "hero" (p 13). Readers did not have to worry: not one but two English officials (Ellis and Ling) were there to control and prevent the potential riot. Despite the excesses of this match, the sanctity of the beautiful game was secure, and with it white, industrial masculinity's morality and

ethics.

Mediated discourse on the referee(s) in all football world cups has existed since 1934 (Lippe, 2008). Normally, the team that loses focuses on the bad judgement of a referee. In the quarter final of the 1954 cup, in contrast, other than the statements of the Brazilian team officials, there was no criticism of him at all in any of the papers. There is again a distinctive set of characteristics that the English press developed. Not only did he use his experience and strength to control the game, he also relied on English “gallantry”, on pluck, courage and staying “calm” in the face of adversity as befits a true Englishman. In doing so, he shouldered the Englishman’s philanthropic burden of protecting ‘Johnny Foreigner’ from himself.

### The battle of the locker room

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, *Aftenposten* announced that the worst part of the fight took place in the locker room after the match. The Norwegian papers did not state what kind of violence took place in or near the locker room, except for the *Verdens Gang* report on June 28<sup>th</sup> that

Puskas attacked the dark-headed Brazilians with an empty bottle. One of them fell down on the floor, and another got a cut over the eye before the police intervened and stopped the temperamental soccer player.

All three Berne papers covered the fight near the locker room the same way. *Der Bünd* and *Berner Tagblatt* used the same journalist, with the result that there were only a few sentences difference between the two reports. The journalist “si” from *Der Bünd* focused on the violence on June 29<sup>th</sup>. Under its headline ‘The battle of Wankdorf’ the story read

The spitefulness which took place in the second half of the match between Brazil and Hungary continued with a nasty afterplay, which was carried out mainly in the passage towards the locker room under the stands. Both parties threw bottles.... It is difficult to determine who started it all. The fight was stopped by the military police .... Both [Hungarian] federation officials appeared on Sunday, after the job was finished, with bandages on their faces. The injuries seemed to come from bottle fights.

In addition to this *Berner Tagblatt* noted as follows the same day:

When someone threw a bottle on a Brazilian player, the slaughter started. The military police and the Securitas People were commanded out and closed the hall off. When the players and their “staff” went into the bus, their slightly wounded (bodies) with scratches and bumps were visible.

The Swiss papers focused on the fights near the locker room, while the Norwegian papers referred to the fights in the locker room.

Again, the English coverage is markedly different in tone. According to *The Daily Telegraph*,

Bottles were thrown, dressing room doors and windows smashed and all available police within call were rushed to stop the fights.

This report is similar in tone to *The Daily Mirror* and *The Daily Mail*. According to the more circumspect *Times*:

At the end a minor revolution broke out. First it began on the field between spectators, photographers, police, and a general swarming mêlée of bodies. After the teams had struggled into the tunnel out of sight under the stand, more trouble broke out. Whom it concerned in particular could only be left to the imagination, as more police were summoned up and disappeared from view down that same tunnel.

*The Times* was not alone in its martial metaphors. While *Berner Tagwacht* called the locker room fracas “a regular battle”, *Berner Tagblatt* referred to it as “unpleasant afterplay” and *Berner Tagwacht* labelled the happening an “afterplay of evil”. This is a strong metaphor that can be associated with puritanical assertions of moral decay.

The battle metaphor was only used about the actions near the locker room, and not about the match itself, although it was both violent and brutal. The exception is *The Daily Mirror*, which referred to “vicious fighting” and a “riot”, but left unclear any distinction between the on-field and dressing-room events. The fact that about thirty policemen had to calm down all the male fighters – not only players – gives an impression of the lawlessness of the game and a challenge to the moral order by implying that the fighting was not between a few individuals but the majority of the Hungarian and Brazilian squads, including some team officials. No Brazilian officials are reported to have been seen with bandages on their faces.

### National Racial Stereotypes

Whereas both the Norwegian and Swiss newspapers noted that the on-field violence was perpetrated by the Brazilians and in doing so used some implicit markers of racial distinctiveness (they were referred to in *Verdens Gang* as “dark headed”), only the English papers and *Aftenposten* explicitly racialized this event. In the view of *Berner Tagwacht*, June 28<sup>th</sup>, the Brazilians were technically skilled but were also to blame for the fight because “[s]ome uncontrolled and undisciplined Brazilians even brought the whole match into discredit.” The correspondent “Lkn” commented in *Aftenposten* on June 28<sup>th</sup>:

we are aware that Hungarians are more refined than the primitive and hot-



blooded Brazilians. So, the Hungarian offence turned out to be sly as a fox – but all the same most effective.

According to the same paper on the same day the Brazilians are “ten times worse than the Hungarians when they are invited to fight.”

The English newspapers gave less attention to match reports and commentary, preferring to accentuate the violence. Despite serious match analysis rather than description, in the *Manchester Guardian* (June 28<sup>th</sup>) there is an invocation of the Brazilians as devious and untrustworthy:

Hidgkuti ... suddenly found himself playing in a pair of one-legged shorts, the other leg having been torn off by some shadowy clutching hand.

*The Daily Mail* (June 28<sup>th</sup>) noted that:

the Brazilians were the main offenders and the Hungarians retaliated only under extreme provocation. The South Americans, many of them Negroes, started heavy tackling from the kick-off. They got wilder as the game progressed in heavy rain conditions which rendered it difficult for their players, in their lightweight footwear, to control the ball.

This language is run through with marked racialized views, as is the report in *The Times* the same day:

Let it be said at once that it was the fast, strong, coloured Brazilians who began all the trouble.... It took the Hungarians a long time to be goaded into retaliation.... And all the while, as the fires simmered and finally flared up, it was they who were trying to play the more considered, cultured game along the ground.

This is explicit racialization in the English papers is paralleled by references in *Aftenposten* on June 29<sup>th</sup> to the Brazilians and “primitive” and “hot-blooded”.

The picture of these wet, muddy and fighting bodies symbolises a brutal type of masculinity that is normative only in some subcultures of young men. It is in contrast to the ideal of a sportsman who follows the rules of sport: the disciplined man in the disciplined body in the disciplined industrial society. If nothing else, industrial masculinity prioritises discipline and respectability. In terms of northern and western European ideals of industrial capitalism, the Brazilian and the Hungarian teams in the quarter final symbolised a marginal type of masculinity in the field of sport. To break the rules so dramatically was interpreted as a departure from accepted practices of sportsmen in the World Cup and had to be explained in a manner that protected football’s virtues. Traditional and inferential racist characteristics are reconstructed in the texts from Norway and England. In all the six continental European papers the Brazilians were “dark-headed”, “technically brilliant”, “undisciplined” and they

“totally lose control”, because they are “hot-blooded” and “ten times worse than the Hungarians”. Here the notion of morality is most clearly seen: its invocation is essential to the construction of a scandal narrative, where the scandal became the mechanism to continue the moral struggle after the competition is ended.

Norway did not qualify for the World Cup. The nation, however, absent or present, is crucial to the experience of the cup (*Aftenposten*, June 29<sup>th</sup>):

Even matches among cold-blooded Norwegians can get quite tough at times. So, one wonders how the situation might develop when hot-blooded southerners totally lose control over a temper that could ignite several revolutions in the peaceful Norwegian Parliament....

Here Norway is interpreted by emphasizing peaceful parliamentary government. At first glance this appears to be a creative piece of writing. However, in the context of what is the non-discoursal social element of the text (Norway) and the clear value assumption that it is the ideal democratic state in the world politics of 1954, its creativity links to other media discourses. Many conservative newspapers in Norway reported the anti-communist activities of the US House Un-American Activities Committee as a necessity for the ‘free west’ to stay safe from the Soviet Union. There was a similar communist hunt in Norway, which lasted much longer than during the 1950s. Both Brazilians and Hungarians are seen as so notably different as to possess tempers that if uncontrolled would produce revolution in Norway, with the clear implication that they are somehow inherently different from the ‘cold-blooded’ north.

The not-so-Southern Hungarians are depicted as “more refined than the primitive and hot-blooded Brazilians” (*Aftenposten*). The further south on the map, the more primitive in the eyes of the Northerners and the Centre, the more in need of and the more difficult to discipline and control. According to O’Donnell (1994), the centre (in his case, Germans, the British and the French) has the power to define the content of a stereotype. Because Norwegians are interpreted as sharing the puritan work ethic and having an ability to control their temper, the stereotypes of absent Norwegians and those of the centre are similar.

The Hungarians are situated near the centre but not quite “one of us” to be neither quite, nor the right type of, White. As a result, the stereotypes of this team included more positive characteristics than the “dark-headed” Brazilians, such as “fabulous discipline”, a “machine-like defence”, with “more refined” play. This refinement of the north is partial: the

Hungarians are “sly as foxes”. This is because these men took part in a fight outside of the rules of football. In this way, they did not manage to cool their tempers. They have the opposite of the ascribed characteristics of a white bourgeois gentleman from the western world: they have the virtues of industrialism but not of capitalism.

The relations of power in these texts are asymmetrical. This imagined unified cultural centre collectively defines the Hungarians’ and Brazilians’ relationship with the North, on the one hand, and much more importantly, with the South, on the other. These asymmetrical power relations construct a framework within which these sport-based stereotypes articulate to political and economic relations and ideologies that draw on pan-European as well as global relations of “centrality and peripherality” (O’Donnell, 1994: 356). *The Daily Mail*’s attribution of blame to the Brazilians appears immediately after a subheading ‘Provocation’. The Hungarians are White, but not ‘proper’ Europeans because of their Balkan location and popularly assumed but incorrect Slavic associations (by proximity) and Hungary’s inclusion in the Eastern (Soviet) Bloc. As a result, they were restrained until the provocation became too extreme, whereas the “dark headed” (*Verdens Gang*) “Negroes” (*Daily Mail*) were depicted as unable to cope with the frustrations caused by the weather, set out to play in a wild and aggressive manner, and become less civilised, more primitive and as such ‘revert to type’ as they remain unable to assert their control. It is here that the *Mail*’s racialization links to both *Aftenposten* and *Verdens Gang*. It is notable that the *Mail* does not call into question the Brazilians’ football skills, the failure to control the ball is a product of inappropriate equipment (the lightweight boots), but points to their emotional instability (c.f. *Aftenposten*’s “hot-blooded”) as the cause of the problem.

The Brazilians were not only presented as lacking in self-control by their Blackness, but were also by their South American origins. As “Negroes” the Brazilians were held to be less civilised than the Hungarians, as Latins they were like their Southern European counterparts, more volatile. Although counterfactual, we cannot help wondering how the violence would have been reported had the South American been the Whiter Argentineans or Uruguayans. While the *Daily Mail*’s report does not refer to the Brazilian’s ‘Latin-ness’, it states early in the piece that this “was the most disgraceful display in international football ever seen outside South America”. This leaves open the interpretation that worse things had happened in South American football, that worse things were not uncommon in South American football, and that violence of this nature should be expected of South American football. This racialized

discourse was not limited to the populist and conservative *Daily Mail*. The coverage of the match by *The Times* laid the blame on “the fast, strong, coloured Brazilians”. Once again, the coverage is run through with the language of racial hierarchy, of European superiority, of Black ill-discipline, volatility, lack of civilisation, and skill and brawn (the *Guardian* referred to them as “superbly built”) without tactical nous or emotional restraint.

The coverage in the English press, unique in its explicit identification of race as a causal factor, must be understood in the context of England in the early 1950s. As Colls (2001: 4) notes many of the securities of Englishness began to unravel in the mid 1940s as the 40-year realisation that it was “no longer a world military power, no longer an imperial power, no longer a manufacturing power, [and] no longer an island power” began. With this realisation came a recognition of and anxiety over the weakening moral authority derived from England’s central role in the 17<sup>th</sup> century “constitutional revolution” and the 18<sup>th</sup> century “commercial and industrial revolution” (Colls, 2001: 3). As part of this unravelling of national self-image, the onset of decolonization had given new impetus to a racism that was rationalised by the pseudo-science of racial thinking and social darwinism (Fryer, 1984: 133-190, 272-286). This was racism that saw Black criminality in English cities, but criminality of a kind linked to moral laxity and exploitation. (Gilroy, 1987: 79-80), as well as the demonization of independence struggles in Africa, most explicitly seen at this time in the discourse of the ‘Mau Mau’ ‘terror’ in Kenya in tension with a sense of new Britons, of the colonial sons-and-daughters come ‘home’. The English newspaper coverage articulates to a wider discourse of race and nation, triggering pre-existing racial codes that made not only explicable but entirely expected that the Brazilians should have been the perpetrators while the Hungarians were slow to react to provocation, although their marginal European status means that when they did react the events soon became a “riot”. That the ‘problem’ should be so felt intensely through football should be no surprise – an attachment to games, especially football, is one of the eight national character traits ascribed by Orwell to the English in 1944 (Orwell, 1970: 19), and the English claimed a proprietorial interest in football through their claim to having invented the modern game.

The Brazilian team was depicted as much worse than the Hungarians in a racialized discourse that suggests that their Blackness makes them incapable of absorbing and performing the principles of right conduct (morality) and lived moral philosophy (ethics) attributed to football by the moral missionaries of European industrial capitalist culture. This is a taken for

granted background knowledge. This naturalised arbitrariness as a set of unquestioned assumptions created the “dark-headed” other as less civilised than the core and the north. The Brazilians were mediated as degenerators of the football cup made possible by Hungarian moral inadequacy.

### **The battle of Berne: A moral panic?**

As noted at the outset, this event is both of historical and sociological interest. Sport is one of the most intensely historicist popular cultural practices; England’s claim around the Euro 1998 tournament that ‘football’s coming home’ is matched by the central role that the myth of the 1905 All Blacks plays in the special rugby relationship between New Zealand and Wales. In contrast to 1954, mediasports in Norway is now about male football and their white and coloured icons. Although the Norwegian national male football team seldom qualify for the World Cup or the Olympics, and skiing is supposed to be the national sport of the country, 75 % of the total sports mediation in TV2 in 2007 – the channel with the Norwegian football rights – was about male football (Lippe, 2008). The very few male victories are reconstructed several times every year in the media, especially the 1981 magic moments over England, 2-1, which kicked that country’s team out of the World Cup. Arcane knowledge of sporting pasts is proudly held and shared by fans and by media commentators, and shapes the links between sport and the banal nationalisms of mundane life. A recurring central aspect of sport and national self-image nexus is the sense of a golden era of a sporting past, a nostalgia for former greatness – either in terms of national sporting success, or a sporting ethics and morality. A crucial element of this, and most, nostalgias is the (re)creation of an always already existing, continually new, sense of moral, ethical, or socio-cultural crisis – where these moral, ethical and socio-cultural terms are aspects of the loose ideological schemata of a dominant social order. Our analysis, therefore, suggests two contemporary resonances. First, there is the trite observation that the current golden age of 1950s football was not so golden. The second significance is of far greater significance: our critical discourse analysis of the newspaper texts surrounding the match in three settings reveals the media of production of the current myth of the game as aberrant, and of some of the mechanisms by which the myth of the 1950s golden age is reproduced. In doing so, we have been able to identify ways in which the Historian’s archive has been constructed, as well as the more popular archive that underpins and shapes both the memories and the historicisation of the event. As neither of us speaks or reads Hungarian or Portuguese, there is space for researchers to extend this analysis by

exploring the construction of other scholarly and popular archives, and with that the bases for other historicisations of this event. In this instance, a powerful challenge to that mythic golden age is contained, not by concealing it, but by elevating it to an exception.

The brutality of the fight as reported, together with the discourse on the degrading play, mobilised images of the lawless monstrous-masculine<sup>5</sup> in contrast to disciplined industrial masculinity. A form of moral panic is mediated in all the papers, eight of nine articles in the Norwegian papers, three of five in the Swiss papers and all in the English ones. The Berne papers named the players of both teams “thugs” with *Berner Tagwacht* categorising the game “a crying shame”. The Norwegian *Dagbladet* concluded that the “best thing to do” was to “cancel the whole cup”, and *The Daily Telegraph* compared the match with a bullring. The Berne papers stated that the fight near the locker room had to be stopped by military police (that is, by the militarization of the sporting carnival, suggesting that the event transgressed civil as well as football’s norms). The referee is in a law-and-order logic of discipline the most important and vulnerable agent of a team game. He was reported by two of the three Swiss papers and all the English ones to be unable to do his job. The papers in England and Norway all mediated a moral threat to sport. The Swiss media contributed to the creation of a wave of panic through the mediation of the fight on and off the field. The actions by these men are understood as those of a marginalised group of top athletes, not the “real” sports athletes, but “the others”.

The traditional stereotypes of the Southerners were reconstructed in the papers of all the three countries; the Brazilians were “hot-blooded” (*Aftenposten*), “dark-headed” (*Verdens Gang*), and “undisciplined” (*Berner Tagblatt*), “coloured(s) ... who began all the trouble” (*The Times*) and “got wilder as the game progressed” (*The Daily Mail*). These texts contain elements of inferential racism. England, the cradle of modern football and the weakening centre of the British Empire, was confronted by decolonisation and changes that saw the growing significance of Black players who threatened to destroy “our” game of football: “never in my life have I seen such cruel tackling” (*The Times*). There is a powerful trope of the Brazilian and to a lesser extent Hungarian athletes unsuited to the moral codes of football.

Norway seemed to copy the English ideas of asymmetrical power relations between the rational Whites (Winston Churchill was still THE Norwegian hero among the bourgeoisie in 1954), and the hot-blooded Blacks to a greater extent than the Swiss. The players were

described as technically brilliant, and European centralist stereotypes were deployed; the Hungarians “showed fabulous football discipline”, a “machine-like defence” (*Aftenposten*) and with “superbly built Brazilians ... everyone expected the finest display ... the true elixir of football” (*The Manchester Guardian*). The depiction of the Hungarian team as being “sly as a fox” (*Aftenposten*) can also be included in a stereotype of the centre: they have brains, rather than mere brawn.

The dominant theme in the Swiss, Norwegian and English newspaper reports of this brawl in Berne is one of disputed normative masculinity, but each of these reports is mediated through and articulated to national racial stereotypes that overdetermine those disputed masculinities within the centre and shape the national masculine stereotypes of the margins. Each paper presented the events using discursive forms appropriate to these national stereotypes, while also allowing for variation in class and political associations. Although not all articles mediated the construction of a moral panic, the dominant trope of the mediation of the event took the form of an international western and northern European moral panic. The media discourses – deployed by one of the moral entrepreneurs of European industrial capitalist culture – sacrificed and demonized blackness and hot-bloodedness to the ideals and mythologies of footballers. This sacrificial act was effected by linking the stereotypes of irrationality and indirectly immorality more explicitly to the Brazilians than to the not-quite-(our kind of)-White-but-nevertheless European Hungarians. The hegemonic ethical-racial values of the sports press reasserted the dominant social values, and as such of the moral and political authority, of northern and central-west Europe: this is most obvious in the English and Norwegian papers. Media stereotypes depend on the symbolic power of words and images. Almost 50 years after the event, the place-name of Berne is still understood by some sports journalists to symbolize “the battle of Berne” (*The Hindu*, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Zylinska (2005) outlines a means of interpreting ethics in this performative mode.

<sup>2</sup> *Verdens Gang* changed from a morning to an afternoon paper in 1952. These three papers are analyzed in the project "Tabloidization of sport and culture from the 1930s till 2005."

<sup>3</sup> The article not included was about the possibility of cancelling a planned match between Hungary and Brazil.

<sup>4</sup> This is not to argue that sport has been disciplined by a civilising process, but that sport is held to perform a series of civilising roles by building virtuous individuals. This mythology of sporting masculinity finds its clearest expression in structural functionalist sociologies of sport, and underpins not only many popular approaches to sport as social practice, but also much sport policy.

<sup>5</sup> We are inspired here by Creed's "monstrous-feminine" in Rowe, 1997.