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'We are grateful for the opportunity to act as ambassadors for our club and our country': sporting hospitality during the Northern Ireland conflict

Abstract

Association football did not escape the destructive effects of the conflict in and about Northern Ireland from 1969. As 'the troubles' escalated through the 1970s, several international teams declined to visit Northern Ireland, adversely affecting the revenue and reputation of the Irish Football Association (IFA) and its affiliated clubs. British clubs cancelled pre-season friendlies in both Irish jurisdictions. To counteract the domestic game's crisis, clubs across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's border counties pioneered a unique mode of sporting hospitality.

While clubs' officials, sponsors, and supporters were determined primarily to elevate their particular team, they shared with the Belfast football authorities a broader desire to promote the regional game. Hosting British opponents in European competition and pre-season friendlies, teams in the north of Ireland welcomed visitors with studied generosity. Coalescing around these cross-channel encounters, football officials from both sides of the Irish Sea asserted that sporting fraternity transcended 'the troubles'. Trawling matchday programmes, the sports press, and the archives of football governing bodies in Belfast and Dublin reveals how Irish hosts and British visitors alike promoted their game as a cornerstone of a robust civil society capable of outlasting the Northern Ireland conflict.

Keywords

Football, Northern Ireland conflict, European competition, Irish Football Association, Football Association of Ireland, sporting hospitality

Football and the Northern Ireland conflict

European football brings a welcome added dimension to the local scene and we are grateful for the opportunity to act as ambassadors for our club and our country which all our visitors have in the past discovered to be a warm, friendly and breathtakingly beautiful part of the world – a far cry from the image of Ulster which is flashed across television screens throughout the world.

The quote above is from Coleraine Football Club chairman Jack Doherty, anticipating his team's UEFA Cup fixture against Dundee United at The Showgrounds, September 16, 1987.¹

On the evening of Monday September 29, 1969, more than 500 young British men crossed the Irish Sea and landed in Belfast. A dozen sported the blazers of Arsenal Football Club, visiting Northern Ireland's capital city for an Inter-Cities Fairs Cup fixture with Glentoran. By contrast, the vast majority were Royal Marine commandos hastily dispatched to Belfast after rioting flared the previous weekend. Neither the Arsenal officials, nor the Royal Marines, could have foreseen that over the next four decades, the British Army's deployment in Northern Ireland, Operation Banner, would become its longest continuous commitment.

Nor could they have anticipated the curious role that football clubs and authorities would play against the backdrop of the conflict.

Northern Ireland came into being in 1921, when the Government of Ireland Act (1920) became effective, creating two Home Rule parliaments on the island of Ireland—one in Belfast and another in Dublin. At the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish War, the treaty of December 1921 reinforced partition; constituted as Northern Ireland, six north-eastern counties would remain integral to the United Kingdom, while the island's remaining 26 counties formed the Irish Free State, a British Dominion. The southern jurisdiction eventually left the Commonwealth in 1949, becoming the Republic of Ireland. Laying irredentist claim to the north as 'part of the national territory', Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution nominally committed Dublin to pursuing reunification. Their most consequential ramification, however, was to pique the suspicions of Northern Ireland's predominantly Protestant unionist majority. Meanwhile, comprising approximately one-third of Northern Ireland's populace, the mostly Catholic nationalist community remained largely unreconciled to the constitutional position.

The disorder which precipitated troop deployment in Northern Ireland exploded in 1969 after several years of intensifying protest and counter-protest. Founded in 1967, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) encompassed heterogeneous activists challenging discrimination against the Catholic minority in housing, employment, policing, and electoral rights. In 1969, however, loyalist counter-demonstrators and the Ulster Special Constabulary violently suppressed NICRA marches, and intercommunal disorder ensued. Throughout the summer, in Belfast and Derry, nationalists erected barricades to prevent loyalists and the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) from entering Catholic-majority areas. In this incendiary context, in August 1969, Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan deployed the British Army in Northern Ireland as 'military aid to the civil power'.²

After the British Army arrived in Northern Ireland, the Irish republican movement experienced a rancorous split, from which the Provisional IRA emerged. Through the following three decades, pursuing the longstanding republican aspiration to Irish independence, the Provisionals waged a guerrilla war against the British state.³ The ensuing conflict cost more than 3,500 lives: republicans killed more than 2,000 people, including over 700 civilians, while British forces were responsible for more than 350 deaths, including nearly 200 non-combatants. Simultaneously, loyalist paramilitaries launched a bloody campaign against Northern Ireland's Catholic minority in toto, killing more than 800 civilians.⁴ After republicans and loyalists declared initial ceasefires in 1994, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 significantly reduced the level of violence in Northern Ireland. Signed by most of the local political parties, and by the governments in Westminster and Dublin, the Agreement stipulated that Northern Ireland's constitutional position could change only by the electoral consent of an internal majority.

Throughout the conflict, competitive football stubbornly endured in the Irish League, which was the top tier of domestic football in Northern Ireland. However, from the 1970s, as violence increased, elite sport in the region suffered. Exiled from Belfast for four years, Northern Ireland's national football team played 'home' matches in such incongruous locations as Coventry and Hull. The regional game's crisis deepened in 1981, when Irish republican prisoners in Long Kesh, led by IRA volunteer Bobby Sands, commenced a hunger strike for special-category status.⁵ Some five weeks into his hunger strike, standing on an Anti H-Block ticket, Sands won the Fermanagh-South Tyrone by-election with 30,493 votes.

After 66 days without food, Sands died on May 5, 1981, becoming the first of ten republican prisoners – comprising seven Provisional IRA volunteers and three members of the Irish National Liberation Army – to die that year. An estimated 100,000 people attended Sands's funeral, and the Provisionals hailed 'a welcome sign of the revived spirit of republican resistance amongst a saddened people'.⁶ Fearing for their safety, in May 1981, the national teams of England and Wales refused to fulfil their British Home Championship fixtures in Belfast. For the first time in almost a century, the traditional end-of-season tournament was abandoned.

Security concerns among the civil and sporting authorities also profoundly impacted club football in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's border areas. In Northern Ireland's second city, the tribulations of Derry City Football Club were particularly illustrative. Derry's Brandywell ground was situated at the heart of the Bogside, a republican stronghold. During a match in September 1971, local youths torched Ballymena United's bus. When the RUC ruled the Brandywell unsafe, Derry were forced to play 'home' matches some 30 miles away in Coleraine. Within 13 months, the costs of relocation and dwindling matchday attendances were insurmountable: an Ulster Cup match against Crusaders at Coleraine yielded a paltry £33 in gate receipts.⁷ At the start of the 1972/1973 season, the RUC indicated that football could return to Brandywell, but a 6-5 majority of Irish League clubs vetoed the proposal, leaving Derry with little option but to resign from the league. The club remained exiled from senior football for 13 years until, by a special FIFA ruling, Derry became the only team based in the northern jurisdiction to join the (southern) League of Ireland.⁸

The historiography of sport in twentieth-century Ireland has rendered detailed analyses of two cardinal aspects of how the conflict impacted football. First, scholars have illuminated how political friction aggravated inter-club rivalries and football-related disorder. Cormac Moore's forensic research, for example, has revealed how cross-border hooliganism compounded mutual misgivings between football administrators in Belfast and Dublin, frustrating attempts to launch an all-Ireland national team.⁹ Succinctly delineating the IFA's contested place in a divided society, Paul Rouse's magisterial volume orients nationalist perceptions of the national team's Windsor Park home as a cold house for Catholics.¹⁰ Benjamin Roberts, meanwhile, has surveyed how ethno-national conflict pervaded sporting allegiances, situating historically why clubs with substantial nationalist support – most notably Cliftonville, Derry City, and Donegal Celtic – serially charged the northern football authorities with pro-unionist bias.¹¹

Second, via a rich seam of research fusing the sociology and history of sport, scholars such as Alan Bairner, Mike Cronin, John Sugden, and Peter Shirlow have interrogated how football fandom reproduced political divisions in Northern Ireland during the conflict. Figurational sociologists such as Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning examined how sporting communities assumed their social forms. Positioning sport in a 'civilising process', Elias and Dunning postulated that by arousing 'imaginary danger', sport allowed 'excited' passions to be channelled cathartically in non-violent, rules-based settings.¹² In this framework, sport had a 'liberating' effect, canalizing spontaneous, libidinous, and emotional impulses and thereby relieving 'stress-tensions'.¹³

Following this figurational approach, analysts of sport in Northern Ireland have focused upon how sporting communities cohered and articulated their identities. In a divided society, they argued, football provided a vessel for supporters to reassert and reinforce partisan politics. For Sugden and Bairner, when football was played and supported within ethnonational silos,

it reproduced socio-political enmities.¹⁴ In their analysis of Linfield's predominantly Protestant, unionist fanbase, Bairner and Shirlow contended that fans attending Windsor Park in the 1990s – either to support Linfield or Northern Ireland's national team – were enacting 'reactive cultural resistance', girding their loyalist identities against the spectral challenges of socioeconomic hardship and Irish republicanism.¹⁵ Gerry P. T. Finn and David Hassan have contended similarly that supporters of 'nationalist' teams such as Donegal Celtic articulate a communal, counter-hegemonic identity against Belfast's normatively unionist football establishment.¹⁶ Adducing the troubled career of Derry City, and its nationalist supporters' antipathy towards the IFA, Cronin has highlighted the tendency for clubs in a divided society to convey engrained political grievances.¹⁷

These scholars are certainly justified in highlighting how football fandom in Northern Ireland routinely reinforced ethnonational silos during the conflict. However, notwithstanding domestic rivalries between some of Northern Ireland's leading clubs, when facing British opponents, football officials and organizers not only pursued their narrow institutional interests, but collectively promoted the game's viability in their troubled locale. Attempting to elevate their clubs and the regional game, football boardrooms and governors across the north of Ireland positioned themselves as the epitome of a hardy civil society capable of outliving the civil unrest.

Scrutinising historically how football authorities navigated the conflict in the north of Ireland complements this interdisciplinary field of research. Extending the analytical focus beyond clubs' supporters – and to their officials, sponsors, and the game's authorities – elucidates a salient feature of football during the conflict, that is: how national administrators and club representatives attempted to combat Northern Ireland's outcast status in the sporting world. Especially during encounters with British opponents in European competition and pre-season friendlies, a broad football fraternity – spanning directors, officials, players, and even supporters – mobilized as representatives for their clubs, and for sport in the north of Ireland more broadly.¹⁸

A sporting outcast

Northern Ireland's status as a sporting outcast developed from the early 1970s, as football clubs and governing bodies across Britain and Europe grew reluctant to send teams into a polity gripped by civil unrest. Clubs and countries due to visit Northern Ireland were mindful primarily of the safety of their players and staff. They were also wary of their travelling supporters becoming embroiled in disorder. These concerns impacted clubs beyond the northern jurisdiction, too: on several occasions, English and Scottish teams cancelled friendly fixtures in the border regions of the Republic of Ireland, or demanded that European ties be relocated to the supposedly safer environs of Dublin. In 1973, when the UEFA Cup draw pitted Aberdeen against Finn Harps, the Dons' chairman, Dick Donald, told his Irish counterparts that 'for security reasons we are not too keen to go and play at a venue so near the border'. Donald proposed to UEFA that the Irish leg should instead be played 140 miles away in Dublin.¹⁹

For British clubs due to play in Northern Ireland, the difficult political context compounded prior anxieties about football hooliganism. The Football Association (FA) and its member clubs were especially apprehensive about British fans attending European fixtures on the island of Ireland, since continental matches had witnessed particularly notorious disorder. Tottenham Hotspur hooligans rioted in Rotterdam in 1974, for example, when Feyenoord

defeated Spurs in the UEFA Cup: 50 people were arrested and 200 were injured. The following year, after seeing their team beaten controversially by Bayern Munich in the European Cup final, Leeds United fans rampaged in Paris. Their team was banned from European competition for four seasons, subsequently commuted to two.²⁰

While Ireland's domestic football did not experience the same scale of disorder as the British game, occasional spikes indicated the incendiary consequences when rival hooligans inflamed political divisions, as several leading historians of Irish sport have noted.²¹ Perhaps the most infamous hooligan episode involving club football in Ireland surrounded a cross-border European Cup tie in August 1979 between Linfield, a south Belfast club with deep loyalist roots, and Dundalk, a border town in the Republic dubbed 'El Paso' by British journalists noting the preponderance of IRA fugitives.²² Both teams were champions of their respective leagues. The match at Dundalk's Oriel Park coincided with a particularly tense juncture: two days earlier, the Provisional IRA had killed 18 soldiers in a double bomb attack on a British Army convoy at Warrenpoint, County Down, and killed four, including Queen Elizabeth II's cousin, Lord Louis Mountbatten, off the coast of Mullaghmore, County Sligo.²³ In Dundalk, the Linfield directors' seven-point directive to their 5,000 travelling supporters – 'please behave in a dignified manner' – went unheeded.²⁴ Brawls erupted between Linfield ultras and some of the 400 Gardaí who had been drafted into the border town. Burning a tricolour flag, Linfield rioters climbed upon the main stand and threw missiles at locals. The violence later spilled on to the streets. More than 50 Gardaí suffered injuries, and 12 were hospitalized.

The crisis of football in Northern Ireland flowed primarily not from hooliganism, but from the reluctance of foreign clubs and countries to travel. From October 1971, for more than three years, international teams refused to play in Northern Ireland, forcing the national team to play 'home' matches incongruously in English cities such as Coventry and Hull. At the nadir of this exile, only 6,000 spectators attended Sheffield's Hillsborough to watch Northern Ireland play Bulgaria in September 1972.²⁵ Football was the most acutely affected of several sports disrupted by the conflict. In 1972, for example, the rugby union Five Nations Championship was abandoned for the only time in its history. After Bloody Sunday on January 30, 1972 – when Parachute Regiment soldiers shot 26 unarmed civilians, killing 14, after a civil rights march in Derry – Scotland and Wales announced they would not play in Ireland. The competition returned to Ireland the following year, however, when Rugby Football Union premier Dickie Kingswell insisted that England would fulfil their Dublin fixture, to widespread acclaim from a capacity crowd at Lansdowne Road.

Windsor Park's no-go status alarmed Northern Ireland's football authorities, who lamented their lost revenue and prestige. By 1974, with the national team enduring its third year of exile, the IFA Council admitted 'great concern': without a prompt 'return to normal conditions' in the province, the game and its governing body would face a 'major crisis'.²⁶ In March 1975, the Football Association of Yugoslavia announced that their team would play in Belfast. However, the IFA's ordeal was far from over. Through the 1970s and early 1980s, British governing bodies' qualms about playing in Northern Ireland caused frostiness between the IFA and its counterparts across the Irish Sea. In 1976, when the Scottish Football Association (SFA) declined to play a European youth championship match in Belfast, the IFA refused to relocate the tie to a neutral venue, and declared themselves 'disappointed' with the SFA's 'attitude'.²⁷ When the SFA further announced that their senior team would not play in Belfast until 'the troubles' were over, the IFA secretary lambasted the 'very dogmatic' Glasgow governing body.²⁸

The national team's outcast position both impacted the IFA financially and underlined its isolation from the game's authorities in Britain. Anticipating the British Home Championship series of 1981, IFA president Harry Cavan fervently hoped that the annual tournament, a 'life-blood' as a source of revenue, would 'survive' beyond its ninety-eighth year.²⁹ But after May 5, 1981, when republican MP Bobby Sands died on hunger strike in Long Kesh, civil unrest intensified and the FA announced that England would not play in Belfast.³⁰ The Welsh FA soon followed suit. The series of 1981 attained infamy as the first in the competition's long history to be aborted. Bemoaning the 'very serious financial loss' of two lucrative fixtures, the IFA claimed compensation from the associations in London and Cardiff.³¹ The curtailed championship also harmed Northern Ireland's on-field preparation for World Cup qualifiers.³² Within three years, the Home Championship was discontinued. Facing revenue losses of £100,000 per annum, the IFA Council committed to 'stringent economy measures'.³³

The British authorities' security concerns also significantly hampered Northern Ireland's leading clubs. British teams' reluctance to cross the Irish Sea threatened the cross-channel fixtures which had generated revenue and beneficial publicity for clubs in Ireland. In 1970 and 1971, for instance, the Texaco Cup had offered a valuable income stream for the highest-ranked Irish teams not already involved with European competition.³⁴ For Derry City, suffering financial hardship and declining matchday attendances, hosting eventual winners Wolverhampton Wanderers in the inaugural Texaco Cup semi-finals represented a vital fillip. Addressing Derry's annual general meeting in November 1970, the club's honorary secretary anticipated a 10,000-strong Brandywell crowd providing a crucial tonic after a 'financially disastrous' year.³⁵ Raising £10,000, Derry's Texaco Cup run realized the greatest sum ever won by an Irish League team.³⁶ However, from 1972 – when 472 people died during the bloodiest year of the conflict – Irish clubs were no longer invited to participate in the Texaco Cup. Underlining the 'invaluable' gate receipts and prize money, League of Ireland secretary Paddy McCourt unsuccessfully pleaded with the organizers to allow Irish clubs to play their 'home' matches in Britain.³⁷ The sponsors subsequently organized a separate, lower-profile tournament for Irish teams, with less lucrative rewards than the Texaco Cup.³⁸

Simultaneously, in the summer of 1972, chary of hosting fixtures in a year when some 321 civilians lost their lives, the IFA's Senior Clubs Committee reluctantly decided against nominating Northern Ireland's clubs for European competition.³⁹ The Irish League's leading clubs admitted resignedly that if European teams refused to visit Northern Ireland, relocating these fixtures to Britain would be financially unsustainable.⁴⁰ The decision caused considerable anguish among club officials and the IFA; only the previous season, the governing body had hailed Distillery, Glentoran, and Linfield for the 'manner in which they welcomed and entertained' European visitors.⁴¹

Since competing against Europe's biggest clubs represented both a sporting highlight and a financial boon, the threat to European ties threw the crisis of Northern Ireland football into especially sharp relief. In the summer of 1973, successfully imploring the IFA to submit them to European competition, Ards, Crusaders, and Glentoran even offered to play their 'home' ties in Britain. Crusaders manager Billy Johnston pithily admitted that European football was 'the only real incentive we can offer the players. They deserve some recognition for winning the Irish League'.⁴² When Glentoran proceeded to enjoy a terrific run to the quarter-finals of the Cup Winners' Cup in 1974, the IFA's annual report hailed the east Belfast club for conferring a 'considerable amount of prestige' upon the embattled regional game.⁴³ The

kudos and importance of European football was equally apparent to Ivan Cooper, Minister of Community Relations in the short-lived Northern Ireland Assembly established by the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973. In January 1974, pledging his support for revivifying football in the country, Cooper suggested to Cavan that the IFA should prioritize hosting marquee European matches.⁴⁴ On both sides of the border, club officials and their respective football associations recognized that eye-catching European ties presented a rare opportunity to advertise the Irish game on the international stage. Vying for greater representation in European competition, in 1977, the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) Executive Committee urged UEFA to admit two League of Ireland clubs to the UEFA Cup.⁴⁵

As conflict deepened in Northern Ireland, many British players became reluctant to travel even for non-competitive friendly fixtures. The resulting cancellations deprived Irish clubs of valuable income from pre-season exhibition matches, and negated the good offices of Irish football's advocates in Britain. In 1973, at the initiative of their Belfast-born player-manager Terry Neill, Hull City had arranged a pre-season tour of Northern Ireland. Neill combined his role on Humberside with coaching the Northern Ireland national team. But when Hull's players changed their mind at the eleventh hour, the player-manager was forced to cancel the trip. An embarrassed Neill apologized to the clubs affected: 'I'm sorry if hopes had been raised falsely, but I spoke to the players a month ago and they raised no objections ... It is tragic, but you can't go against a majority decision'.⁴⁶ Similarly, in July 1976, when the Provisional IRA killed British ambassador Christopher Ewart-Biggs, two prominent English clubs, Southampton and West Bromwich Albion, cancelled planned visits to the Republic. Newly promoted to the First Division, Albion's players cited safety concerns as they axed their fixture against Finn Harps. A spokesman for the players and officials expressed 'great disappointment ... that we are unable to return to Ireland where we have enjoyed ourselves so much on and off the field and were afforded so much friendship and hospitality'.⁴⁷

A charm offensive of sporting hospitality

Inverting Norbert Elias's configurational model – in which sport provides a non-violent outlet for passionate impulses, thereby helping to maintain a 'civilized society' – the sociologist Paul Martin has adroitly proposed that in warzones, sport might play a different role. Martin suggests that if, in a civilized society, sport offers a rules-based channel for managing 'stress-tensions', conversely, in a context of societal breakdown or intercommunal conflict, sport might represent instead a vital source of 'clarity, certainty, security and order'.⁴⁸ During the conflict in and about Northern Ireland, football's governors, club officials, and financial backers positioned the game in comparable terms. Both to promote individual clubs, and to counteract the crisis of regional sport more broadly, football officials in Northern Ireland and the Republic's border counties developed a unique mode of sporting hospitality during the 1970s and 1980s. Especially embracing cross-channel fixtures, football representatives across the north of Ireland persistently attempted to persuade British visitors that sporting fervour in Northern Ireland epitomized an essentially peaceable civil society which would outlast the conflict.

It is undoubtedly true, as Bairner, Rouse, and other leading analysts of Irish sport have argued, that football fandom in Northern Ireland frequently served as a vehicle for pre-existing political antipathies. Political partisanship was a significant feature of fan culture within the Irish League. After the conflict erupted at the turn of the 1970s, league fixtures spanning the intercommunal divide were especially wont to amplify ethnonational antagonism. Fans of Northern Ireland's most explicitly unionist clubs were especially given

to displays of loyalist partisanship. For instance, after proclaiming its members' support for the RUC in 1969, a Linfield supporters' club in Newtownabbey hosted B Specials, invited British soldiers to their social club, and subsequently raised funds for one of their number who was imprisoned for loyalist paramilitary activity.⁴⁹

Nevertheless, when facing British opposition in high-profile fixtures, football communities in the north of Ireland – encompassing supporters, club officials and sponsors, and the game's governors – shared a determination to promote their club, their environs, and the regional game. Collectively, these diverse constituencies cultivated a tradition of sporting hospitality. In European fixtures and cross-channel friendlies alike, fans craved the thrill of seeing their favourites challenging Britain's best teams, club sponsors heralded a positive marketing platform, and officials welcomed additional revenue. Moreover, they all shared with the game's governing bodies a broader commitment to ensure that football across the region would survive the conflict.

To dispel negative stereotypes of Ireland and its populace, football representatives tapped into a preferable alternative, which trumpeted 'famous' Irish hospitality. The latter ideal was familiar to grandees of the British game even before the conflict escalated; welcoming Linfield to Maine Road in 1970, Manchester City chairman A.V. Alexander hailed the 'royal hospitality' which 'English clubs visiting Ireland always receive'.⁵⁰ Repurposing the motif for fixtures with British visitors during 'the troubles', clubs across the north of Ireland projected their environment as a sanctuary for sport defying the unrest. Concomitantly, organizers and club officials implicitly combated the anti-Irish media which had gained traction in British soccer and society. In a sporting context, such negative caricatures were perhaps most familiar to Irish footballers playing in Britain during the conflict. Conor Curran's extensive interviews with Irish ex-professionals indicated that while many characterized slurs as 'banter' rather than abuse per se, being derided as 'paddies', 'micks', or 'bombers' was a routine feature of the harsh industrial language.⁵¹

Developing their sporting hospitality, football representatives across the island of Ireland extended established modes of diplomacy connecting elite sport and politics. For example, as part of the 'Ulster Week' ceremonials in Britain in September 1966, Linfield played an exhibition match against Newcastle United at St. James' Park, where Northern Ireland's Prime Minister Terence O'Neill joined local civic dignitaries in the executive boxes.⁵² O'Neill envisioned the Ulster Weeks not only promoting trade between Britain and Northern Ireland, but enhancing the image of 'the province'.⁵³ In the Republic, too, despite the state's historical hostility towards the 'garrison game' – until 1971, the Gaelic Athletic Association's Rule 27 prohibited its members from participating in 'foreign' games such as association football – soccer officials could cultivate cordial relations with government. In May 1971, for example, when the FAI marked its fiftieth anniversary with a match against an England XI, the visiting officials – including FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous – were welcomed to a ceremonial luncheon, post-match dinner dance, and an audience with President de Valera at his official Phoenix Park residence.⁵⁴

First and foremost, as violence peaked in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, clubs in Ireland attempted to allay British visitors' misgivings about crossing the Irish Sea. Making a virtue of necessity, club directors and managers conveyed to visiting teams that what they lacked in resources they would compensate for in the warmth of their reception. In 1973, mindful that Aberdeen had been reluctant to play their UEFA Cup fixture so near to the border, Finn Harps officials endeavoured to welcome their Scottish guests. For Harps chairman Fran

Fields, the Aberdeen tie, in his club's first European campaign, represented a milestone in his quest to 'put the name of Finn Harps on the football map'.⁵⁵ Fields and director Michael Kelly personally greeted Aberdeen's squad in Dublin and escorted them on the 180-mile journey to Donegal. However, disembarking in Donegal Town to train, Aberdeen complained that the grass was too long, and they were further dismayed to find that Gaelic football posts differed in size and specification from soccer goals.

At this seemingly unfavourable moment, the Harps directors redoubled their generosity. First, they transported their opponents a further 20 miles to Ballybofey, granting Aberdeen the use of Finn Park for two pre-match training sessions.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, they provided a welcoming reception for the Scottish press. The modesty of their hosts' resources heightened the travelling journalists' gratitude: one reporter remarked upon having 'seldom been made so welcome' as they were at Ballybofey, where Harps officials 'could not do enough for the Aberdeen party'.⁵⁷ Impressing their visitors, the Harps' munificence bore diplomatic rewards. Aberdeen's representative on the Scottish League management committee pledged to lobby other Scottish clubs to resume cross-channel matches in Ireland, and promised that Aberdeen would return to Ballybofey for a fundraising exhibition match.⁵⁸

Cultivating their role as munificent hosts, clubs in Northern Ireland explicitly purported to represent a beleaguered sporting community persevering despite unpropitious circumstances. In 1976, north Belfast team Crusaders landed a stellar European Cup draw with English First Division champions Liverpool. A committed advocate for the domestic game, Crusaders chairman Derek Wade would later serve as a liaison officer for the national team at the World Cups of 1982 and 1986. Welcoming Liverpool to Belfast, Wade averred that the plum draw was a boon not only for Crusaders but 'for the entire footballing following of the country' after seven years of conflict in which 'through no fault of the game, the Province has experienced immense difficulties'.⁵⁹

Cognisant that apprehensive British players often played a decisive role in fixture cancellations, Northern Ireland's regional organizers and club officials deliberately directed their charm offensive towards visiting squads. Welcoming Liverpool to Seaview, Crusaders even allowed the Merseysiders to use the more comfortable home team dressing room. Preparing for the fixture, the north Belfast club liaised extensively with IFA president and FIFA vice-president Harry Cavan, who publicly declared that he hoped Liverpool's players and supporters would extol among the British media and football authorities Northern Ireland's sporting hospitality.⁶⁰ These diplomatic initiatives impressed Liverpool's star players and press alike. Interviewed on his return to England, the Reds' top goal-scorer Kevin Keegan remarked that he and his teammates had enjoyed a tremendous, almost unbelievable reception. It took your breath away. With all the troubles they have in Belfast, the people came out to enjoy themselves, and I think they did ... By their reception, their supporters did a great job to encourage English clubs to go to Ulster.⁶¹

The same year, when second-tier minnows Carrick Rangers became the first junior side to reach the second round of the Cup Winners' Cup, they liaised with IFA secretary Billy Drennan to coordinate a reception for their opponents, Southampton FC. Like Drennan, Carrick officials envisioned a sporting spectacle strengthening the IFA's case for the national teams of England and Wales to return to Belfast. For Carrick chairman William McAuley, his club's interests overlapped with those of football in Northern Ireland more broadly; welcoming spectators to the Southampton match, McAuley aspired to his team both joining

the top-tier Irish League and serving as ‘worthy ambassadors of Northern Ireland in future European tournaments. Lets [*sic*] hope that this ambition will be fulfilled in the near future’.⁶² Hailing the club’s remarkable exploits in European football, the regional sports press lauded Carrick as fitting representatives of the regional game. Celebrated Belfast football correspondent Malcolm Brodie asserted that ‘Carrick have done us proud ... [as] wonderful ambassadors for the Province whose football clubs this season have done so much to create a proper image’.⁶³

Asserting their credentials as sporting hosts, clubs fused their sectional interests with those of the game in the north of Ireland overall. In the summer of 1975, for example, Finn Harps hosted pre-season friendlies against Glasgow Celtic and West Bromwich Albion. Addressing a celebratory reception for both clubs at a hotel in Stranorlar, Harps chairman Fran Fields underlined his club’s importance to the local community – Bishop of Derry, Dr Edward Daly, was a guest of honour – and implored British teams to strengthen their support for cross-channel football. Fields’s overtures won kudos for the club among influential figures in the British game. The chairman represented his West Brom counterpart Bert Millichip with a Donegal landscape painting, and invited Bishop Daly, a fervent football fan, to wax lyrical about Albion’s Irish international player-manager Johnny Giles. Giles subsequently donated a West Brom playing kit, which the Ballybofey team wore for the following two seasons.⁶⁴

Combining his club commitments and his longstanding service on the FAI’s Council and Executive Committee, Fields was a determined champion of football in his native Donegal, persistently urging the Dublin headquarters to develop soccer in the state’s northernmost outpost.⁶⁵ Embodying the interwoven interests of club and country, Fields became president of the League of Ireland for the 1977/1978 season.⁶⁶ When Harps were drawn against Merseyside giants Everton in the UEFA Cup in 1978, Fields revelled in the ‘fantastic draw’. Since Everton had agreed to reverse the tie – enabling Harps to host the first leg, generating an anticipated crowd of 10,000 and ‘enough money to see us through the season’ – Fields was eager to ‘give [Everton] a good time’. On arrival at Everton’s hotel in Donegal Town, Fields hosted a gala dinner for both clubs’ officials, and presented ornamental crystal glass to each Everton player.⁶⁷ Courting the English press, too, Fields promised all travelling journalists an Irish ham to take home.⁶⁸

In purely competitive terms, a fixture with an opponent from the top tier of English or Scottish football offered Irish clubs a minimal chance of success. Throughout the conflict, clubs from Northern Ireland or the Republic’s border counties met British teams in European or cross-channel competition on nineteen occasions (see Appendix). Only once did an Irish club emerge victorious. In 1970, Coleraine shocked Kilmarnock with an astonishing comeback in the Inter-Cities Fairs Cup, prompting Kilmarnock manager Walter McCrae to apologize to his team’s supporters for the ‘rather inglorious’ result.⁶⁹ Coleraine’s win was the exception to a definite rule. In an array of resounding victories over part-time Irish counterparts, British teams justified their reputation as overwhelming favourites. Finn Harps suffered an especially emphatic beating when they played Derby County in the UEFA Cup in 1976. On their way to a 12-0 thrashing in the first leg, Harps trailed by nine goals within 45 minutes, as besieged goalkeeper Gerry Murray later recalled: ‘I wished that there had been a big hole in the ground and I hadn’t had to go back out onto the pitch’.⁷⁰

As far as Irish clubs’ boardrooms were concerned, the financial rewards of a high-profile British opponent outweighed the significant sporting adversity. When Carrick Rangers earned a second-round tie with Southampton in the Cup Winners’ Cup in 1976, they arranged to play

their ‘home’ leg 12 miles away in Belfast, where they could accommodate a bumper crowd. After the expenses of travelling to Luxembourg in the previous round, Carrick’s jubilant chairman Billy McCauley could herald a tie which ‘relieves all our financial worries’.⁷¹

Such financial incentives further impelled Irish clubs’ studied welcome. To facilitate a lucrative Cup Winners’ Cup tie in 1981, Dundalk laboured to overcome Tottenham Hotspur officials’ trepidation. Just five days before the Oriel Park fixture, the IRA kidnapped supermarket magnate Ben Dunne in a highly-publicized extortion plot. The north London club’s directors demanded that UEFA switch the match to Dublin. Having recruited 200 stewards to work alongside 500 Gardaí, Dundalk convinced Tottenham to travel, although the visitors, chary of hooliganism, sold only 500 of the 3,000 allocated tickets. Spurs even enlisted security men to stand guard as their players trained in the town, while armed detectives were on duty at the team’s Ballymascanlon hotel. Despite Tottenham’s circumspection, the financial and sporting boon of a capacity home crowd vindicated the County Louth club’s efforts. Safe in the knowledge that 17,500 locals would realize gate receipts of £70,000, which was a record for matches on the island of Ireland outside Dublin, Chairman J. Oliver Quinn could welcome the Londoners generously; he stated ‘the demand for tickets ... is testimony to the appeal of Spurs’.⁷² Moreover, Quinn – a local hotelier who inveighed against British media derogations of Dundalk as ‘El Paso’ – envisaged the match helping to ‘enhance Dundalk’s image abroad’.⁷³

Chiming with local business interests, Irish clubs’ burgeoning tradition of hospitality also strengthened their connections with commercial sponsors. The conflict which precipitated the crisis of sport in the north triggered a disastrous downturn in tourism, which declined dramatically from the early 1970s. In 1973, Northern Ireland recorded its lowest ever visitor numbers – at 435,000, a 53 percent decline over five years – and tourism did not return to pre-conflict levels until 1991.⁷⁴ Especially for firms which relied on tourism, cross-channel sporting affinities promoted a compelling image. For example, when Dundalk hosted Tottenham in the Cup Winners’ Cup of 1981, Gerry Clarke, a businessman who chaired the border town’s International Festival committee and sat on its Chamber of Commerce, welcomed the influx of crowds which promised both to improve ‘Dundalk’s image in the sporting world’ and to boost the local economy.⁷⁵

Wielding influence in club boardrooms, businesspeople encouraged carnivalesque sporting initiatives to promote their environs. In the summer of 1978, the national tourism organization, Bord Fáilte, and local officials in Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo collaborated with businesspeople connected to Finn Harps. Together, they instigated an exhibition fixture with Blyth Spartans, a semi-professional team from the north-east of England. The previous season, Blyth had achieved giant-killing fame by sensationally reaching the fifth round of the FA Cup. Working alongside the Harps’ directors, representatives of Donegal’s hospitality sector coordinated a post-match sportsman’s dinner for their visitors.⁷⁶ Addressing the gala event in Letterkenny, Fran Fields and Donegal Tourism director Dermot Walsh took the opportunity to reassure the English officials, press, and dignitaries that Donegal was ‘as safe a holiday destination as anywhere in Europe’.⁷⁷ The diplomatic designs were not lost on Blyth, whose chairman similarly told the dinner guests: ‘We haven’t just come here to play football, we are here to make friends’.⁷⁸

Hosting Tottenham in the Cup Winners’ Cup in 1982, Coleraine similarly promoted their locale as an attractive holiday destination for British tourists. Framing the tie more as a diplomatic exercise than a competitive match, Coleraine’s directors and civic dignitaries

wholeheartedly embraced the chance to extol to British visitors the idyllic north Antrim coast. Declaring the Tottenham fixture ‘perhaps the greatest’ in his 33 years as club chairman, Jack Doherty invited George McIlrath OBE, the town’s Ulster Unionist Party mayor, to address the travelling Londoners through the columns of the matchday programme. McIlrath lauded the ‘seaside resorts of Portrush, Portstewart and Castlerock with their miles of golden beaches. I hope that many of your supporters will return on holiday when they can be assured of a very warm welcome’.⁷⁹

After the Home Championship’s collapse in May 1981 threatened to condemn Northern Ireland to the footballing wilderness, several domestic clubs invited leading English teams to break the informal boycott. Throughout the summer, Liverpool, Norwich City, Nottingham Forest, and Wolverhampton Wanderers all played friendly matches in Northern Ireland. Amplifying their gratitude, host clubs’ supporters venerated visiting players while officials courted managers, directors, and the press. In August 1981, after Wolverhampton Wanderers played a friendly at Linfield in front of 5,000 delighted spectators, manager John Barnwell affirmed that their experience at Windsor Park had allayed his players’ misgivings, and vowed that they would return. To woo the travelling media, Linfield invited journalists from the Black Country into the boardroom to observe a gift-giving ceremony. The arrangements had the intended effect: ‘Doesn’t this all show you how wrong it was of England not to come here for the British Championship’, remarked Eddie Griffith, the football correspondent of the Wolverhampton *Express & Star*.⁸⁰

High-profile fixtures enabled clubs simultaneously to assert their country’s suitability for elite sport and to publicize their club credentials. In 1981, five years after hosting Liverpool in the European Cup, Crusaders invited Bob Paisley’s team back for a pre-season exhibition match. The home team promoted the occasion both to unveil a £250,000 development project at Seaview, and to amplify opposition to the British football associations’ unofficial boycott on Northern Ireland. Exalting their visitors, the north Belfast club encouraged Liverpool to parade the European Cup on a lap of honour. As the European champions enjoyed a standing ovation, the Crusaders directors gave gifts and souvenirs to their Liverpool counterparts. Opening the new stand at Seaview, Liverpool chairman John Smith told the assembled press that he endorsed the IFA’s criticism of the FA: ‘England don’t know what they missed by not playing here’.⁸¹

Derry City’s return to European football in 1988 epitomized the determination of clubs in the north of Ireland to defy the turbulent political conditions and to promote the local game. With an overwhelmingly Catholic and nationalist fanbase, Derry had a long history of strained relations with the Belfast football establishment. During Derry’s 13-year exile from senior football, the IFA had rebuffed the club’s attempts to re-join Northern Ireland’s top tier. Derry’s hierarchy positioned themselves not as ambassadors for football’s governors in Northern Ireland per se, but instead, more specifically, for football in their conflict-riven city. As David Hassan has compellingly argued, for Derry’s nationalist supporters, their club represented a sporting underdog whose troubled career allegorized the position of Northern Ireland’s Catholic minority.⁸² As far as their representatives were concerned, the Candystripes’ courageous performances and devoted supporters articulated their civic pride. When Derry re-entered European competition in 1988, club chairman Ian Doherty paid tribute to the city council’s ‘commitment and assistance towards the rebirth of Derry as a senior club’.⁸³

As they prepared to host the first leg in September 1988, Derry's unstintingly accommodating directors circumvented several obstacles. First, UEFA rules stipulated that police must be present in match stadia. But by convention, since Derry's return to senior football in 1985, RUC officers had never entered the Brandywell. The club brokered an intricate deal with both UEFA and the RUC for police to remain externally in the vicinity of the stadium.⁸⁴ However, the fixture was cast in doubt again when Cardiff received a handwritten threat warning them against travelling. Seeking advice from the Welsh FA, Cardiff chairman Tony Clemo said that his directors took the threat 'very seriously ... There is no way we can put anyone at risk'.⁸⁵ At this unpropitious juncture, Derry manager Jim McLaughlin – who was 'very sad to hear of a threat of this kind' – redoubled his efforts to reassure the prospective visitors. McLaughlin insisted that Cardiff would be warmly received in Northern Ireland's second city: 'I can promise them they have nothing to fear from the people of Derry'.⁸⁶

Derry's charm offensive moved the Bluebirds' officials, players, and supporters alike. Those who had formerly worried about their safety departed asserting Northern Ireland's viability as a sporting venue. After watching his team play in front of 11,000 spectators at the Brandywell, Cardiff manager Frank Burrows lavished praise upon his genial hosts:

We were given first-class treatment from the moment we arrived in Derry and the reception the players received on the pitch – both before and after the game – was fantastic to say the least. The exemplary behaviour of the [Derry] City fans was incredible and I, personally, have never witnessed anything like it.

A veteran of more than 25 years in football, Burrows was so overwhelmed by the Candystripes' welcome that he sent his players back on to the pitch at full-time to thank the home supporters: 'They will never receive a reception like that ever again'.⁸⁷

Derry's hospitality equally impressed the small band of Cardiff supporters who defied their club's directives and travelled to the match. The Welsh fans' tickets had been lost in the post, but at the Brandywell a Derry director helped them to gain access. The match was played in a carnival atmosphere, with the few dozen Cardiff fans mixing freely among the throng of home supporters, as one of the Welsh contingent attested: 'We couldn't have been treated better. It was a pleasure to be there and we enjoyed every minute – and there was never any hint of trouble'.⁸⁸ Reminiscing the following year, a Cardiff supporter remembered the Derry fans' enthusiastic greetings for the visiting team and their followers:

There are many memories of this trip for the fans who went over, the sight of tanks outside the ground, myself, being stopped by an armed soldier ... but the lasting memory will be the reception the fans gave ourselves and the team while over there.⁸⁹

Bolstering sport and civil society

The conflict in Northern Ireland had a significantly deleterious impact upon football across the north of Ireland. Northern Ireland's national team faced exile in the 1970s and an unofficial boycott in the 1980s. Meanwhile, clubs across the north of Ireland were denied lucrative and prestigious friendly fixtures with leading British teams. Furthermore, in European competition, teams were often reluctant to play in Northern Ireland or the Republic's border regions, and some refused outright.

In response, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, club officials and football organizers across the north of Ireland honed a distinct mode of sporting hospitality. Directors, sponsors, and supporters all contributed to these charm offensives particularly energetically when they hosted major British clubs in European competition. While these fixtures afforded little

chance of on-field victory, they offered invaluable opportunities for Irish clubs to act as beneficent hosts. Welcoming, charming, and vaunting their British guests, officials and organizers asserted to prominent visitors that Northern Ireland's conflict need not render it a sporting wilderness.

Approaching cross-channel sporting encounters, Irish clubs positioned themselves in the vanguard of a civil society superseding the conflict. Routinely characterizing the Northern Ireland conflict as a security problem, or 'civil unrest', clubs on both sides of the Irish Sea cast footballing hospitality as the exemplar of civil society's enduring normality. Northern Ireland's football communities strove not only to counteract the conflict's negative impact upon the game, but to promote among visitors a positive image of the wider region.

Celebrating sport as a reassuring societal constant, Northern Ireland's sporting representatives partially coincided with the politics of the British administration, which depicted 'the province' as an essentially peaceful idyll temporarily beset by malign extremism. When the national team qualified for the World Cup in Spain in 1982, the Northern Ireland Office produced 25,000 copies of a 24-page brochure which downplayed the extent of the conflict. Some 2,000 copies, including French, German, and Spanish translations, were given to the team's players and staff to distribute in Spain. Although the editorial granted that there were social divisions in Northern Ireland, it portrayed a bucolic region, where violence was

not on the scale that many people abroad have been led to expect ... Despite the efforts of a small number of terrorists to impose their will on the community, there is a growing degree of normality about life in Northern Ireland ... the trouble is a reality to only a tiny proportion of the country and to a few comparatively small areas.

Launching the magazine at Stormont, junior minister Nicholas Scott declared that the publication attested that there was 'so much more to Northern Ireland than the violence which so often captures the headlines'.⁹⁰

When British visitors travelled to the north of Ireland, they largely embraced the role of beneficent tourists in a much-maligned arena. Revelling in destigmatizing sport in the north, British visitors reciprocated their hosts' bonhomie. Sometimes surprised but always charmed, directors and chairmen often juxtaposed their genial welcome against the tumultuous social backdrop. When British clubs toured Northern Ireland, they assumed the role of altruistic allies for the troubled local football fraternity. Albeit rather nebulously, visiting officials envisioned their game galvanizing a civil society to outlive 'the troubles'. At Glentoran in 1981, Tottenham Hotspur manager Keith Burkinshaw contended that sport epitomized the civil normality which must endure beyond 'the troubles': 'Northern Ireland is a tinderbox, but it would be more so if people like us didn't do a thing about it. That country needs something and we hope to go some way to providing it'.⁹¹ Similarly, when First Division champions-elect Liverpool visited Glentoran for a friendly in April 1982, chairman John Smith anticipated the fixture bolstering the polity against internal divisions: 'Football has done much to help the Northern Ireland community, to keep a degree of normality. We are happy to play a part in this'.⁹²

Irish soccer's sporting hospitality in the 1970s and 1980s differed substantially from the narrower, more cynical opportunism of apartheid South Africa's football authorities who, facing increasing international pressure in the 1970s, hastily convened flagship fixtures with touring teams in a largely cosmetic attempt to curry favour with FIFA.⁹³ Nor, at this juncture, did Ireland's football representatives conceive the 'sport for all' initiatives deployed at the

turn of the millennium in Israel-Palestine and Liberia, where government strategists moulded sport policy to choreograph consociationalism between historic adversaries.⁹⁴ Necessarily, however, in promoting the north of Ireland as a region fit for sport, Ireland's sporting representatives implicitly normalized their constitutional arrangements and cast militant politics as the marginal domain of an extremist minority. In claiming to levitate above politics, they implicitly positioned their game as a quintessential feature of a peaceable status quo ante to which they aspired to return.

It has been widely noted that in their keynote intervention on sport's multivalent social functions, Dunning and Elias postulated that in 'civilized' modernity, sport offered a frisson of excitement to channel passionate impulses and to relieve 'stress-tensions'.⁹⁵ The authors' converse question, however, has been comparatively overlooked: how might sport's characteristics modify when its social context lapses into disorder, or even outright conflict? As we have seen, in domestic football fixtures during the conflict in the north of Ireland, supporters often aligned with ethnonational silos reaffirming antagonistic political identities. When Irish clubs faced British opponents, however, football organizers, officials, and spectators configured a different role for their game.

In European competition and pre-season friendlies alike, football organizers and officials across the north of Ireland doggedly determined to sustain the regional game despite societal breakdown. Football, they maintained, could be a beacon of a civil society capable of outliving the conflict. While they prioritized sustaining their particular clubs, representatives also committed, secondarily, to promoting their locale more broadly, and to contributing, if only marginally, to a more positive image in Britain of the north of Ireland. Perceiving 'the troubles' essentially as a problem of extremism on the social periphery, football governors and boardrooms posited that by bolstering civil society, sporting hospitality could epitomize a future Northern Ireland evolving towards stability.

Appendix

Matches between teams from Northern Ireland (and, underlined, Republic of Ireland border counties) and British opponents in cross-channel and European competition, 1969-1989

Season	Irish club	British club	Competition	Results (aggregate score listed in parentheses: Irish club's score always given first)
1969/1970	Glentoran	Arsenal	Inter-Cities Fairs Cup	1-0; 0-3 (1-3)
1969/1970	Dundalk	Liverpool	UEFA Cup	0-4; 0-10 (0-14)
1970/1971	Derry City	Wolves	Texaco Cup	0-1; 0-4 (0-5)
1970/1971	Coleraine	Kilmarnock	Inter-Cities Fairs Cup	1-1; 3-2 (4-3)
1970/1971	Linfield	Manchester City	European Cup Winners' Cup	2-1; 0-1 (2-2: Manchester City won on away goals)
1973/1974	Finn Harps	Aberdeen	UEFA Cup	1-3; 1-4 (2-7)
1976/1977	Carrick Rangers	Southampton	European Cup Winners' Cup	2-5; 1-4 (2-9)
1976/1977	Crusaders	Liverpool	European Cup	0-5; 0-2 (0-7)
1976/1977	Finn Harps	Derby County	UEFA Cup	1-4; 0-12 (1-16)

1978/1979	Finn Harps	Everton	UEFA Cup	0-5; 0-5 (0-10)
1979/1980	Dundalk	Glasgow Celtic	European Cup Winners' Cup	0-0; 2-3 (2-3)
1980/1981	Crusaders	Newport County	European Cup Winners' Cup	0-0; 0-4 (0-4)
1981/1982	Dundalk	Tottenham Hotspur	European Cup Winners' Cup	0-1; 1-1 (1-2)
1982/1983	Coleraine	Tottenham Hotspur	European Cup Winners' Cup	0-3; 0-4 (0-7)
1982/1983	Dundalk	Liverpool	European Cup Winners' Cup	1-4; 0-1 (1-5)
1983/1984	Drogheda United	Tottenham Hotspur	UEFA Cup	0-6; 0-8 (0-14)
1987/1988	Coleraine	Dundee United	UEFA Cup	0-1; 1-3 (1-4)
1988/1989	Derry City	Cardiff City	European Cup Winners' Cup	0-0; 0-4 (0-4)
1989/1990	Glentoran	Dundee United	UEFA Cup	1-3; 0-2 (1-5)

¹ Jack Doherty, 'History in the making', Coleraine versus Dundee United match programme, September 16, 1987. Hereafter, matchday programmes are listed simply by fixture and date.

² For a comprehensive overview of the civil rights movement's strategic evolution, and the reaction of the security forces and loyalist vigilantes, see Bob Purdie, *Politics in the Streets: The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1990).

³ For a critical analysis of the republican movement's dynamic heterogeneity after the civil rights movement was suppressed in the late 1960s, see Jack Hepworth, *'The age-old struggle': Irish Republicanism from the Battle of the Bogside to the Belfast Agreement, 1969-1998* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 17-54, passim.

⁴ Malcolm Sutton, *Bear in Mind these Dead: An Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland, 1969-1993* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1994).

⁵ Harold Wilson's Labour government withdrew politically-motivated prisoners' special-category status in 1976. Protesting Labour's 'criminalization' policy, prisoners demanded free association, education, and recreation; one visit, one letter, and one parcel per week; and exemption from wearing prison uniform and undertaking prison work. For four years, protesting republicans refused to leave their cells or wear prison uniforms, and wore only blankets. In October 1980, attempting to break the deadlock, prisoners commenced an abortive hunger strike for their five demands. The next hunger strike began on 1 March 1981, when Sands refused food.

⁶ 'Sporadic but intense rioting', *An Phoblacht/Republican News*, May 9, 1981.

⁷ Benjamin Roberts, *Gunshots and Goalposts: The Story of Northern Irish Football* (London: Avenue Books, 2017), 154.

⁸ Malcolm Brodie, ed., *Irish Football League, 1890-1990: Official Centenary History* (Belfast: Irish Football League Ltd, 1990), 39.

⁹ Cormac Moore, 'Football unity during the Northern Ireland troubles?', *Soccer & Society* 18, nos. 5-6 (2017): 663-78; Cormac Moore, 'The formation of the Football Association of Ireland', *Soccer & Society* 28, no. 8 (2021): 820-33.

¹⁰ Paul Rouse, *Sport and Ireland: a history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 305-6.

¹¹ Roberts, *Gunshots and Goalposts*, 150-5 & 227-31.

¹² Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilising Process* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19-62.

¹⁴ John Sugden and Alan Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society in a Divided Ireland* (London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 7-8 & 71-90.

¹⁵ Alan Bairner and Peter Shirlow, 'Loyalism, Linfield and the Territorial Politics of Soccer Fandom in Northern Ireland', *Space and Polity* 2, no. 2 (1998): 163 & 168; Peter Shirlow, 'Sport, Leisure and Territory in Belfast', in *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, ed. Alan Bairner (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), 229-30.

¹⁶ Gerry P. T. Finn, 'Sporting Symbols, Sporting Identities: Soccer and Intergroup Conflict in Scotland and Northern Ireland', in *Scotland and Ulster*, ed. Ian S. Wood (Edinburgh: Mercat, 1994), 33-55; David Hassan, 'Sport, identity and Irish nationalism in Northern Ireland', in *Sport and the Irish: Histories, Identities, Issues*, ed. Alan Bairner (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2005), 133-4.

¹⁷ Mike Cronin, 'Playing Away from Home: Identity in Northern Ireland and the Experience of Derry City Football Club', *National Identities* 2, no. 1 (2000), 65.

¹⁸ Retaining official terminology for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, where this analysis refers more broadly to both Northern Ireland and the Republic's border counties, it employs instead 'the north of Ireland'. While this formulation is often deployed as a nationalist cipher delegitimizing Northern Ireland's constitutional position, it is used here in a politically neutral sense, merely as a geographical descriptor.

¹⁹ 'UEFA Cup-tie "too close to border"', *Aberdeen Evening Express*, August 16, 1973, 16.

²⁰ Rob Steen, 'Sensationalists United? Football Hooliganism and the English Press', *Sport in Society* 19, no. 2 (2016), 273.

²¹ Rouse, *Sport and Ireland*, 303; Sugden and Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society*, 85; Cormac Moore, *The Irish Soccer Split* (Cork: Atrium 2015), 219-20 & 226; Evan Marshall, *Fields of Wonder: The Incredible Story of Northern Ireland's Journey to the 1982 World Cup* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 2022), 103.

²² Toby Harnden, *'Bandit Country': The IRA and South Armagh* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1999), 73. In February 1972, during an episode of the BBC current affairs programme *24 Hours*, reporter Max Hastings controversially described Dundalk as 'an ugly, boring, little town'. The British press, meanwhile, designated Dundalk 'El Paso' or 'Dead Man's Gulch'. 'Dundalk's 'El Paso' tag – absolute piffle!', *Dundalk Democrat*, February 5, 1972, 4.

²³ The Mullaghmore bomb also killed Mountbatten's 14-year-old grandson Nicholas Knatchbull and 15-year-old boat hand Paul Maxwell. Doreen Knatchbull died the following day as a result of her injuries.

²⁴ 'Linfield Fans Told to Behave', *Irish Press*, August 3, 1979, 7.

²⁵ Marshall, *Fields of Wonder*, 12.

²⁶ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter, PRONI) D4196/2/2/1: IFA Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for Year ended April 30, 1974.

²⁷ PRONI D4196/2/2/1: IFA Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for Year ended April 30, 1976.

²⁸ 'Scotland Not For Belfast', *Irish Press*, February 21, 1976, 12.

²⁹ Harry Cavan, O.B.E., 'Welcome to our English and Welsh Friends', Northern Ireland versus England, May 16, 1981, versus Wales, May 22, 1981.

³⁰ On its centenary in 1984, the Home Championship was terminated. Gavin Newsham, 'Football vs the Troubles', *FourFourTwo*, May 2021.

³¹ PRONI D4196/2/2/1: IFA Annual Report 1980/1981.

³² Malcolm Brodie, ed., *Northern Ireland Soccer Yearbook, 1981-1982* (Belfast: Howard Publications, 1981), 5.

³³ PRONI D4196/2/1/12: Minutes of IFA Council Meeting, September 25, 1984.

³⁴ Annually from 1970, clubs from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland contested the International League Board Competition, known, for sponsorship purposes, as the Texaco Cup.

³⁵ ‘D.C.D.O. Secretary on Fans Lack of Enthusiasm’, *Derry Journal*, November 17, 1970, 6.

³⁶ ‘Derry Facing Snags in Big Texaco Date with Wolves’, *Ireland’s Saturday Night*, November 14, 1970, 9.

³⁷ Chris James, ‘Troubled Irish Ask Liverpool For Help’, *Liverpool Echo*, March 14, 1972, 18.

³⁸ Jim Heath, ‘How the Texaco Cup Briefly Gripped Parts of Scotland and the West Midlands’, *When Saturday Comes*, 173 (July 2001).

³⁹ ‘North Opts Out Because of “Risk”’, *Irish Independent*, June 1, 1972, 1.

⁴⁰ PRONI D4196/4/15/3: Irish Football Association Senior Clubs Committee, 1969-1980. Minutes of Senior Clubs Committee, April 25, 1972.

⁴¹ PRONI D4196/2/2/1: IFA Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for Year ended April 30, 1972.

⁴² ‘Irish Clubs’ Tough Draw’, *Belfast Newsletter*, July 12, 1973, 12.

⁴³ PRONI D4196/2/2/1: IFA Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for Year ended April 30, 1974.

⁴⁴ PRONI D4196/2/1/11: Minute Book of the Irish Football Association Council, 1970-1977. Minutes of Council Meeting, January 29, 1974.

⁴⁵ University College Dublin Archives (hereafter, UCDA) P137/41: Executive Committee, August 18, 1977.

⁴⁶ ‘Hull Switch – Go South’, *Belfast Telegraph*, July 24, 1973, 18.

⁴⁷ ‘West Brom Pull Out’, *Irish Independent*, July 27, 1976 12; ‘Doubts about United’, *Evening Herald*, July 27, 1976, 16.

⁴⁸ Paul Martin, ‘Some Thoughts on the Meaning of Sport in War Zones’, *European Journal for Sport and Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2009), 144.

⁴⁹ John Kennedy, *1st Newtownabbey Linfield Supporters Club: The First Fifty Years* (Rathcoole: 1st Newtownabbey Linfield Supporters Club/Newtownabbey Borough Council, 2009), 23, 25, 27-8, 32.

⁵⁰ A.V. Alexander, ‘Welcome to Linfield’, Manchester City versus Linfield, September 16, 1970.

⁵¹ Conor Curran, *Irish Soccer Migrants: A Social and Cultural History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2017), 176-190 & 195-202.

⁵² ‘Welcome to our Guests’, Newcastle United versus Linfield, September 19, 1966.

⁵³ David Shaw and Anna Walsh, ‘Ulster Weeks: “England’s prosperity must be Ulster’s opportunity”’, *Études irlandaises* 44, no. 2 (2019), 13. In purely sporting terms, the Newcastle match was unsuccessful, with Linfield thrashed 7-2 in front of a meagre crowd of just 4,224. However, from the standpoint of cross-channel trade, the game was unexpectedly beneficial: impressed with the visitors’ embattled goalkeeper, Newcastle paid £7,000 for Willie McFaul, who proceeded to become a stalwart at St James’ Park over the next two decades, playing nearly 300 games before coaching and managing the team.

⁵⁴ UCDA FAI P137/16: Special Committee, February 22, 1971; UCDA FAI P137/22: P. J. O’Driscoll, FAI Annual Report 1970-71 (June 4, 1971).

⁵⁵ Frank Gilfeather, ‘Finn Harps... the Team that FRAN Built’, Aberdeen versus Finn Harps, September 19, 1973. I am grateful to Bartley Ramsay for this reference.

⁵⁶ Seamus Martin, ‘Attack the Order at Ballybofey’, *Irish Independent*, October 3, 1973, 13.

⁵⁷ ‘Dons May Return to Friendly Ballybofey’, *Evening Express*, October 6, 1973, 3.

⁵⁸ Seamus Martin, ‘Harps Play a Merry Tune’, *Evening Herald*, October 4, 1973, 25.

⁵⁹ Derek Wade, ‘Welcome to Liverpool’, Crusaders versus Liverpool, September 28, 1976.

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- ⁶⁰ Michael Charters, 'Melwood Dress Rehearsal – with Phil in Star Role', *Liverpool Echo*, September 29, 1976, 20.
- ⁶¹ Ibid.
- ⁶² Carrick Rangers versus Southampton, October 20, 1976.
- ⁶³ Malcolm Brodie, 'Tiny Carrick have Proved their Point', *Belfast Telegraph*, October 20, 1976, 22.
- ⁶⁴ 'Fields Urges More Visits From Cross-Channel Clubs', *Derry Journal*, August 1, 1975, 19.
- ⁶⁵ See, for example, UCDA FAI P137/24: Council, January 7, 1977.
- ⁶⁶ Bartley Ramsay, *The Finn Harps story* (Ballybofey: Finn Harps Publications, 2008), 68.
- ⁶⁷ 'Goodison opinion', Everton versus Finn Harps, September 26, 1978.
- ⁶⁸ Ann Cummings, 'Ballybofey Awaits the Big Ballyhoo', *Liverpool Echo*, July 13, 1978, 26.
- ⁶⁹ After a 1-1 draw in Northern Ireland, Coleraine travelled to Kilmarnock for the second leg. They trailed 2-0 at half-time at Rugby Park before a Des Dickson hat-trick inspired an astonishing comeback and an improbable victory, 3-2 on the night and 4-3 on aggregate. Walter McCrae, 'Manager's view', Kilmarnock versus Hearts, October 3, 1970.
- ⁷⁰ Ramsay, *Finn Harps story*, 59-63.
- ⁷¹ Bill Ireland, 'Countdown at Carrick', *Belfast Telegraph*, October 7, 1976, 16.
- ⁷² J. Oliver Quinn, 'Welcome from Dundalk Chairman', Dundalk versus Tottenham Hotspur, October 21, 1981.
- ⁷³ 'European Cup Fever Grips Dundalk', *Irish Press*, October 21, 1981, 6.
- ⁷⁴ Stephen W. Boyd, 'Tourism in Northern Ireland: Before Violence, During and Post Violence', in *Tourism and War* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), eds. Richard Butler and Wantanee Suntikul, 178.
- ⁷⁵ 'European Cup Fever Grips Dundalk', *Irish Press*, October 21, 1981, 6.
- ⁷⁶ 'Blyth Spartans for Ballybofey', *Derry Journal*, April 7, 1978, 16.
- ⁷⁷ 'Fran Fields Replies to "Unfair" Criticism', *Derry People & Donegal News*, December 23, 1978, 10. As director of the tourist board in Donegal, Leitrim, and Sligo, and a senior member of the National Tourism Council, Carrigart hotelier Walsh enjoyed a public profile as a 'Donegal Man of the Year' in the early 1980s. See: Dermot Walsh, *Graduates Help Lead the Way to Peace* (Seanad Éireann election flyer, 1981). Copy in author's possession.
- ⁷⁸ 'Donegal welcome Blythe [*sic*] Spartans', *Donegal News*, June 3, 1978, 4.
- ⁷⁹ Jack Doherty, 'Welcome to Our Visitors' and George A. McIlrath, 'WELCOME from the Mayor of Coleraine', Coleraine versus Tottenham Hotspur, September 15, 1982.
- ⁸⁰ Malcolm Brodie, 'Blues Draw – Wolves Will Return', *Belfast Telegraph*, August 5, 1981, 21.
- ⁸¹ Malcolm Brodie, 'Snappy Liverpool in Seaview "Carnival"', *Belfast Telegraph*, August 25, 1981, 17.
- ⁸² Hassan, 'Sport, Identity and Irish Nationalism', 133-4.
- ⁸³ Ian Doherty, 'Message from the Chairman', Derry City versus Cardiff City, 7 September 1988. I am grateful to Brian Dunleavy for this reference.
- ⁸⁴ Kieran Rooney, 'Derry Facing Problems over Cardiff Clash', *Irish Independent*, July 13, 1988, 10.
- ⁸⁵ 'Waiting Game for Derry over Match', *Belfast Telegraph*, August 27, 1988, 17.
- ⁸⁶ Liam Kelly, 'No Go!', *Evening Herald*, August 25, 1988, 52.
- ⁸⁷ 'City Rolls out Red Carpet for Visiting Cup Rivals', *Belfast Telegraph*, September 8, 1988, 12.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid.
- ⁸⁹ 'A Trip Down Memory Lane...', *Watch The Bluebirds Fly! A Cardiff City Football Fanzine*, 6 (October 1989).
- ⁹⁰ 'Soccer Stars Tackle Image-Boosting Goal', *Belfast Telegraph*, June 11, 1982, 9.

⁹¹ Malcolm Brodie, 'Glens Talks on Bonuses', *Belfast Telegraph*, August 6, 1981, 25.

⁹² 'Reds Win New Army of Fans', *Liverpool Echo*, April 20, 1982, 13.

⁹³ As Gustav Venter's detailed research has demonstrated, attempting to circumvent their pariah status, the South African authorities hosted high-profile visitors for exhibition matches. In 1976, for example, with a senior FIFA delegation imminent and the threat of expulsion looming, Football Association of South Africa (FASA) president Dave Marais hastily organized a match with a select Argentine XI. Marais's efforts were in vain, however: later that year, FIFA expelled the SAFA, and affiliated international teams could no longer play in South Africa. See: Gustav Venter, 'Experimental Tactics on an Uneven Playing Field: Multinational Football and the Apartheid Project During the 1970s', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 1 (2019), 84.

⁹⁴ Gary Armstrong, "'Talking up the Game": Football and the Reconstruction of Liberia, West Africa', *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 9, no. 4 (2002), 490-1.

⁹⁵ Elias and Dunning, *Quest for Excitement*, 54.