

Performance Task 2: Independent Written Argument

AP Seminar

1 April 2021

Kick Racism Out of Football

Introduction:

Racism is prominent in the athletic world. Many fans will do anything to show pride in their country, even through racist actions. George Orwell explains how fans use boos and insults to make sure one side is “humiliated,” (23). Claudia Rankine explains how these players are supposed to be “good” during racist attacks and humiliation (25). These players are held to higher standards than white athletes and face more scrutiny. Many believe racism in sports reflects racism in society. In 2018, a scandal broke out surrounding the Windrush generation in England and Socialist Lawyer, a legal organization in the UK, explains that the “anti-immigration” rhetoric and discriminatory aspects of the “1971 Immigration Act,” were exposed (Socialist Lawyer 2). These people face discrimination yet are considered valuable to society, like Black footballers in the Premier League. Jonathan Liew, sports writer for *The Guardian*, shows arrests for racist chanting increased by 150% in 2020 (2). Naz Ali, Course Leader in Sports Management, states 43% of footballers faced racial abuse on Twitter last July (3). What is the most effective way to address racism towards Black footballers in the Premier League? To understand the complexity of this topic, it is important to look at it from a historical lens, the view of commentators and fans, and the view of Black players. Through exploration it will become clear that the organization Kick It Out is most effective because it tackles social media issues, addresses legal issues, and solves performative activism.

England and Racist History

Sports are considered a microcosm of society. St. Clair Drake, a Sociologist, shows that in 1935, the government only let so many Black men go on ships and forced them to register as “aliens,” causing them to lose jobs (203). Flash forward to 2018, during the murder case of 18 year old Stephen Lawrence. Lee Bridges, Professor of Law, believes the case was treated poorly because investigators patronized Lawrence’s family during investigations and “racially stereotyped” Duwayne Brooks (Bridges 300). One woman described Brooks as “distressed and upset,” but police described him as “aggressive, anti-police, and unhelpful,” (Bridges 307). Drake's perspective overlooks much of racism's impact in recent years in comparison to Bridges’. There is no easy way to solve institutionalized racism, and through research, education is a decent place to start. However, many angles on this debate show racism is embedded, meaning education will not have an impact on the population.

View of Commentators and Fans

Brooks was stereotyped harshly during a murder investigation, and these stereotypes can also be seen in English football. Liew shows that there was large evidence of racial bias in “2,000 statements” made by commentators (2). Lighter-skinned players were more praised for “intelligence, work ethic, and leadership” and darker-skinned players were criticised similarly and “seven times” more likely to be described by their power (Liew 2). This creates the idea that Black players are nothing but strength and power, leading many to believe they are not leaders. The result of commentators using racial bias are fans criticizing players as well. Jamie Cleland, Senior Lecturer in Sports, and Ellis Cashmore, Professor of culture, media, and sport, show that in the 70s and 80s Black players faced “monkey chants” and banana throwing (1). Now, 80% of

people believe it is easier to be racist due to social media (Cleland & Cashmore 9). Many Tweeters hide through anonymity to push racist thoughts. Clubs have offered training courses regarding anti-racism for fans that have worked. However, like shown in the perspective above, many scholars believe racism cannot change through just training.

View from Black Players

The perspectives shown heavily influence racism in football today. Spanish coach Luis Aragonés called Thierry Henry a “Black shit” on live television when trying to build his own player up. This is just one example of a coach who believes he can get away with this due to racism running rampant. Ramon Llopis-Goig, a sociologist, shows that racism “lowers morale” and makes players nervous. Players should not have to worry about abuse when playing a game they love. Steven Bradbury and John Williams, Professors of Football and Society, show anti-racism credentials were advertised on screens before a match, but this led to fans and even law enforcement starting “gorilla chants and hooting,” towards Black players (Bradbury & Williams 5). However, many clubs disagree with this perspective and believe pushing anti-racism ideas is helping to create change. Racism in England influences the bias of commentators and fans, making racism a concerning trend that will continue to grow without change.

Solution

Kick It Out , English football’s equality and inclusion organization, is the best way to resolve racism in the PL. It was established in 1993 and many believe it is the “heart of the fight” against discrimination (Kick It Out 2).. They “promote awareness, expose and challenge discrimination,” to help people flourish and achieve in a supportive community (Kick It Out 2).

Advancing these partnerships to working with Parliament will help create banning orders and new online rules. Also, including clubs in many campaigns and offering training will end performative activism. The advancement of Kick It Out will address racism on social media, work with Parliament, and remove performative activism in clubs to create long-lasting change.

Tackles Social Media Issues

Discrimination on social media affects representation in sports. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka believes role models are important for girls so they can “see and believe in their own capabilities,” (7). The belief in representation for women also connects to representation for Black players. Black fans need role models to help them believe they can achieve great things. But, Daniel Kilvington, Course Director in Media, and John Price, Senior Lecturer in Journalism, believe racist thoughts have been able to “flow online” via platforms through presenting whiteness, which hides Black role models (Kilvington & Price 66). Kick It Out is seen as “most active” in diversifying social media because they focus on its dangers, how to report and identify abuse, and offer training to both players and fans. This training is effective because some have organized “Kick It Out days” at their football clubs (Kilvington & Price 71). Paul MacInnes, a sport specialist, believes this organization can more thoroughly work with the PL and the Football Association (FA) to get things done. One problem is when police are looking for racial abusers, they have a hard time finding the necessary “identification verification” (MacInnes 2). Martyn Ziegler, researcher on sport politics, adds on to MacInnes idea of people hiding behind companies by stating many football clips are automatically taken down for breaching the “media rights agreements” but racist and homophobic abuse remains untouched (Ziegler 2). Through working with two of the most important groups in football, Kick It Out can

receive a larger platform and support to get things done. Parliament is also passing an Online Harms Bill that could force companies to give out this information, leading to the belief Kick It Out should become involved in the legal aspect of things.

Create Change with Parliament Help

Parliament interfering with racism in football is important. Ziegler explains how the culture secretary warned that platforms could be fined “billions of pounds” if they do not tackle racism (1). The proposed Online Harms Bill means the fines would be up to “10% of global turnover,” as well as senior management facing “criminal sanctions,” (Ziegler 1). The Online Harms Bill, if passed, will require companies to remove, identify, and limit the spread of illegal content, including racist discussions. This will make companies who are reluctant in banning “accounts, IP addresses, and devices” from the platform forced to do so (MacInnes 3). Kick It Out is active with the social media aspect of racial discrimination, and having Parliament on their side will help. Although this problem may be somewhat handled on social media, the problem of racism on the grounds still remains. Ziegler provides insight from Richard Carbon, the former Labor Minister, to show how this part of racism can be attended to. Carbon states that anyone found by police to have mistreated players online will be “held accountable” for their actions through a football banning order even before conviction (Ziegler 3). These orders were introduced in 1983 and include requirements to not go “within a mile” of a stadium during a match, meaning they must report to a police station (Ziegler 3). People may also be required to give passports to police before oversea matches. However, Clifford Stott, a professor of Sociology, and Geoff Pearson, a lecturer in Criminal Law, disagree with this idea because a “restriction order” from 1989 only affected matches outside of England, meaning nothing was

addressed in the Premier League. Their interpretation overlooks much of present football bans in comparison to Carbon. Carbon should also be more depended on because he was the former Labor Minister. Michael Ryan, a State Attorney, explains how the European Union would like to join the fight against racism yet cannot because of the current treaty system, which states they have no “direct authority” over sports (Ryan 45). However, Article 13 states the EU must work to eliminate racial discrimination. This could be interpreted in order to allow the EU to join the fight against racism. Especially with the Online Harms Bill being presented to the House later this year, Parliament and Kick It Out can work together to remove racism in football in no time.

Addresses Performative Activism

Many people believe the Premier League is being performative in the way they are handling recent events, but Kick It Out is doing more than putting up posters and showing support. Alyson Rudd, a British researcher on football, shows how the club Salford City donated its “back-of-shirt sponsorship” to the Kick It Out organization, showing their support for a group that wants to do more than just “stamp out” discrimination (Rudd 1). Ziegler explains the support for players taking a knee will not stop, but Kick It Out wants to take it a step further. Through ideas presented by defenders on Aston Villa, they will work to include a “short video” being shown at the beginning of games and approaching UEFA for the “European governing body” to be involved during tournaments, especially ones taking place at Wembley Stadium (Ziegler 1). This will ensure fans understand where each club stands on this issue and will help Parliament get involved, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. One player, Wilfred Zaha, believes taking a knee is just “something we do now” and a way for the people at the top to avoid taking real action. Kick It Out proves it will take action through working with fans to make the game better

for everyone. Using the campaign “Fans for Diversity,” the game will become more inclusive for fans (Kick It Out 11). They have funded hundreds of events and initiatives through the Fans for Diversity Fund, including the establishment of “women-only football tournaments,” (Kick It Out 11). The funding can only cover the proposed event and relies on justification from applicants, but because they host many events each year, this is not a problem. Kick It Out can reveal the complexity of racism at this level with its many anti-racist responses. Through working with other groups, Parliament, and other players, they can officially kick racism out of football and make sure fans know it is not tolerated.

Limitations and Implications

Kick It Out is an excellent solution, however, another angle on this debate suggests that it does not acknowledge institutionalized racism. Kevin Dixon, a senior lecturer in sports, believes color-blindness, or failure to recognize racism as a “societal and institutional” issue, affects the laws in place and causes players to make their own difference (141). The FA also has full control of football and only focuses on “collective fan behavior” instead of hegemony in the sport, setting the rules and standards low and maintaining “institutional ethos” which is harming racial equality (Dixon 141). But, once Parliament gets involved, Kick It Out can further address this issue. At the moment, all football clubs are involved in the campaign that were not in the 70s and many fans feel optimistic. They plan on having 20% of coaches be Black or minority ethnic as well as 11% having leadership roles in the FA. With more representation in the community and higher up, the push for change becomes stronger.

Conclusion

Racism runs rampant in the game of football. But, with Kick It Out, the problems of social media and performative activism can be addressed. Also, with Parliament becoming more involved, Kick It Out can begin dealing with the legal aspect of things and kick racism out. Encouraging clubs to push anti-racist ideas not just through posters and statements, but actions is one step to help Kick It Out achieve their goal. Hold clubs accountable because actions do speak louder than words, and the opposers of equality need to see they do not stand a chance in this fight. Players need to feel protected and the game needs to become more inclusive for everyone. Without the push for anti-racism, many players will step down and the beauty of the game will be lost.

Word Count: 2193

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