

Financial prudence and football have never gone hand-in-hand and as the major clubs continued to spend lavishly on transfer fees, the club's hand wringing was never likely to gain support other than from inside their own boardrooms.

In January 1968 the report of an inquiry by a team headed by psychiatrist Dr. J.A. Harrington was sent to the Minister of Sport, Denis Howell, and the football authorities. It concluded the solution lay largely with the clubs and amongst their recommendations was a major investment programme to upgrade League grounds, specifically:

- Segregation of rival supporters within the ground;
- Seating to replace terracing;
- A central on-site police control room, with police officers linked by radio;
- A moat to act as a no-man's land between the pitch and spectators, with access bridges protected by the police.

Several of these recommendations would appear in Lord Justice's Taylor report into the Hillsborough Disaster, but appeared incongruous with the scale of the problem in 1967. The football authorities had a more pressing problem, misbehaving players rather than fans.

### **Trouble on the field**

The Football Association attributed a causal link between increasing player ill-discipline on the field and growing spectator unrest off it. They were determined to eradicate the former problem by deterring offenders with lengthy suspensions, thus helping reduce the latter.

First to fall foul of the new hard-line policy were Leeds' Billy Bremner and Jim Baxter from Sunderland, both sent off in matches, coincidentally, against Fulham. In early October Baxter was given a 21 day suspension for kicking an opponent and Bremner 28 days for using obscene language. Towards the end of United's game with Arsenal just two days later, Denis Law and Ian Ure were sent off for fighting. Both were regarded as persistent offenders by the F.A. who handed down six week suspensions – the longest given to a player since 1947. Under the terms of the F.A.'s disciplinary regulations neither player could be paid during the period of the suspension, which applied to domestic, continental and international fixtures.

With the authorities focusing on player behaviour it was not surprising bookings and dismissals rose to new records, and were accompanied by excessive press coverage. Both peaked in late November when Burnley played Arsenal twice in just four days; three Arsenal players were dismissed and there were numerous cautions. Thereafter press interest waned, like with so many of the F.A. campaigns before and since.

Nonetheless the perception that standards of player conduct were deteriorating remains an important facet of the 1967/68 season. The majority of League managers were quick to argue against suggestions that they should be held jointly responsible for their player's on field behaviour, and in general they would be regarded, in today's parlance, as 'old-school'. Most possessed an inherent belief in sportsmanship and rejected the cynical approach that

was gaining influence on the continent and in South America.

The most influential coach of the time was Internazionale's Helenio Herrera. In 1964 he guided *I Nerazzurri* to their first *Serie A* title in almost ten years, and added further titles in 1965 and 1966. They also won the European Cup in 1964 and 1965, and the Inter Continental Cup in 1964 and again in 1965. He perfected the *catenaccio* (chain), essentially a system of counter attack that relied largely upon attacking full backs, in particular at Inter on the undoubted talents of Giacinto Facchetti at left back. As they swept all before them they were dubbed La Grande Inter and although criticised by purists for the use of cynical tactics, the so-called 'professional foul', and gamesmanship, their reputation endured until evidence of both the use of performance enhancing drugs by the players and bribing of match officials by the club emerged two decades later.

Herrera ensured his players were fully prepared and little was left to chance. He introduced comprehensive dossiers on the opposition to brief his players before every game; he was amongst the first to use motivational psychology and the Inter players were subjected to his strict disciplinary code and dietary control. This system and management style was soon adopted by many less imaginative coaches, driven by ambition or desperation, as the blue print for success. Unfortunately lacking the quality of Inter's players they were left with the baser and more cynical aspects of it and constructive play gave way to destructive, sportsmanship lost out to gamesmanship and the joy of winning was replaced by a fear of losing. Its influence began to be felt in the Football League, nowhere more so than at Leeds United where Don Revie was an early convert.

Thankfully for every coach that sought to micro manage each game there were coaches who refused to compromise their principles of creative, attacking football: Matt Busby at United; Bill Shankly at Liverpool, who had been beaten by Inter in the 1965 European Cup semi-final and was perhaps the most vociferous critic of Herrera's philosophy; Joe Mercer at City; Harry Catterick at Everton and Bill Nicholson at Tottenham. According to legend they sent out players with the simple advice to enjoy themselves. Of course this does them a great disservice by implying they were tactically naive. One look at their respective records disproves that.

### **Business as usual**

The perceived wisdom was that the top four sides of 1966/67 together with the two Merseyside clubs and Tommy Docherty's young Chelsea side would mount the strongest title challenge. Of the seven only Liverpool had made a significant signing during the summer; Bill Shankly paying £95,000 to bring Tony Hateley from Stamford Bridge. He joined an array of attacking talent at Anfield that included Roger Hunt, Ian St John and wingers Ian Callaghan and Pete Thompson. The side boasted an equally impressive midfield and defence, at the centre of which was Ron Yeats and Tommy Smith.

Across Stanley Park at Everton Harry Catterick was rebuilding the side that had taken