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## ***NON-AGENDA***

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With the view of causing an increase to take place in the mass of national wealth, or with a view to increase of the means either of subsistence or enjoyment, without some special reason, the general rule is, that nothing ought to be done or attempted by government. The motto, or watchword of government, on these occasions, ought to be — Be quiet...Whatever measures, therefore, cannot be justified as exceptions to that rule, may be considered as *non-agenda* on the part of government.

—*Jeremy Bentham* (c.1801)

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### **The Economics of Pitch Invasions**

**Ron Duncan**

**I**nvasions of sports fields by large numbers of ‘fans’ seem to have become more common in recent times. The crowds are mostly amiable but sometimes there is aggressive behaviour towards the players and umpires. As well as posing some threat to players, umpires and security personnel, pitch invasions occurring during the course of an event spoil the entertainment for other fans. These invasions of cricket ovals or football fields should be distinguished from transgressions by individual spectators who mostly appear to be driven by exhibitionist tendencies. I argue that the two behaviours are quite different and should be handled differently.

There is a form of self-enforcement or internal control within crowds that aims at minimising disruptions, so that a disturbance created by a member of the crowd does not spoil the enjoyment of listening to a concert or watching a movie or a sporting event. The disturbance created by talking or unwrapping sweets during a performance draws the ire of the crowd, which is usually enough to control it. In a sense, therefore, there is no free-riding by individual members of a crowd.

There are external controls of crowd behaviour as well as the internal controls. There are security people at sports events or ushers in theatres; also there are legal sanctions such as fines for extreme misbehaviour. While the internal and external forms of control appear to be effective with respect to individuals’ misbehaviour, they do not appear to be effective against mass

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misbehaviour such as pitch invasions. To understand why, we need to understand the different dynamics or economics at work.

An individual running onto a pitch or making a noise in a theatre has weighed up the benefits and the costs and decided that the cost of the internal or external sanctions is more than compensated by the benefits (exhibitionist pleasure, bets with friends, etc). Large group misbehaviour within a crowd leading to a pitch invasion, or what might be called a 'rebellion', has different economic underpinnings. The expected cost to an individual in a rebellion will be lower the larger the group, as the expected probability of being sanctioned falls with the size of the rebellion. Therefore, the benefit to the individual of their anti-crowd behaviour can easily outweigh the cost of participating. Moreover, as with any rebellion there must be a leader or leaders of a pitch invasion. And it is in the interest of the leader(s) to increase the size of the invasion force so as to reduce the expected cost to each individual, including themselves. The internal mechanism of crowd control is not effective against a rebellion; again for the reason that the individual cost of any sanction is unnoticed and therefore irrelevant. Moreover, the personal cost to well-behaved members of the crowd of trying to impose controls over the unruly mob is likely to be very large.

Because the dynamics of individual and mass misbehaviour are different, the approaches towards control of individual misbehaviour at sporting events and pitch invasions should be different. Individual misbehaviour is best controlled by sanctions (such as fines). As we have seen in Australia in recent years, the incidence of individuals running onto the pitch has been greatly reduced by the use of heavy fines. Some may argue that sanctions do not affect behaviour. But one only has to look at the difference in the behaviour between ice-hockey players, where a punch may lead to two minutes in the penalty box, and American (gridiron) football, where a punch will very likely lead to the loss of several months of income, to see that sanctions can be very effective. A game of ice-hockey is often a sequence of fights between players, interrupted by some ice hockey. One rarely sees a punch thrown in a game of gridiron.

In the case of pitch invasions or mass misbehaviour, ex post sanctions are unlikely even to be applied, as generally seen unless someone is actually assaulted. Therefore, identification of the leaders or inciters of crowd misbehaviour is likely to be the best way of reducing the incidence of pitch invasions. Thus, recent police and stadium action in the United Kingdom and Australia of identifying inciters of misbehaviour and prohibiting them from entry to the sports arena seems to be the most appropriate form of control. Perhaps they should also be charged the total cost of the damage caused by the invasion.