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Spurs must ban own army from using the 'Y-word'

The FA will contact Chelsea and West Ham United before their next games with Tottenham Hotspur, asking them to remind supporters of the need to behave respectfully after recent reports of antisemitic abuse.

Chants of "Spurs are on their way to Auschwitz, Hitler's gonna gas 'em again" have been heard while the hissing that can accompany games against Spurs is increasingly prevalent according to the authorities.

Chelsea have appealed to fans to be more enlightened in the past. West Ham's co-chairmen David Sullivan and David Gold wrote to supporters, emphasising a "zero-tolerance" approach to any form of bigotry.

Premier League clubs can do more, learning from some of the tactics of their Bundesliga counterparts. Borussia Dortmund, working with five football liaison officers, focus on the more enlightened fans, encouraging them to educate their Neanderthal peers. Werder Bremen have specific fans who mingle with the crowd, addressing the problem at source by talking to anyone involved in discriminatory chants or reporting them to stewards.

Last season, English football's equality and inclusion organisation, Kick It Out, received 402 reports of discrimination in the Premier League, EFL, non-League and grassroots, including football-related posts on social media. Of these, 79 were antisemitic. An Action Against Discrimination panel met last week at JW3, the Jewish community centre in London, to debate "Antisemitism in football — How serious is it now?" Very serious was the conclusion.

The chief executive of Kick It Out, Roisin Wood, revealed to the audience that after her organisation launched an app for fans and players to report discriminatory abuse, she received 800 offensive messages. Although there remain ugly occurrences within stadiums, as Spurs have endured, it is becoming increasingly clear that Twitter and Facebook are the new arena for the propagation of antisemitism in football.

As Wood points out, there is the "anonymity the internet offers people", meaning emboldened bigots and a difficulty in tracking those committing hate crime via cyber-space. "We have to get the likes of Facebook and Twitter to take this seriously," Wood says. "They need to be quicker at taking down offensive postings."

Those who are caught can be banned, such as a player from a county league team last season who received a seven-game suspension for an antisemitic tweet. Social media seems the new battleground.

The Anne Frank House in Amsterdam hosted a conference on antisemitism in football last year and one of its conclusions after two days of discussions was that "the majority of the antisemitic manifestations have moved from the stadiums to football-related social media over the last few years".

Yet social media is also casting a light on the problem, fans recording offensive chants which then get sent to the Kick It Out app or simply posted on YouTube. Twitter and Facebook can help confront the evil tainting the game.

"Football has improved but antisemitism, as well as all forms of discrimination, continues to take place in the game," Wood adds. "I would challenge both the government and CPS to take it seriously. Some police forces get it. Some don't think it's an issue. My big plea to the police force is for them to start training their officers to actually understand what is antisemitic abuse."

FA figures on antisemitism indicate a "decrease on last year", although the governing body stresses that "high-profile incidents like the *quenelle* (Nicolas Anelka's inverted Nazi salute) and Dave Whelan's comments in 2014 remind us it's still an issue".

The Wycombe Wanderers player, Joe Jacobson, who was on the panel at JW3, said he had not experienced any antisemitic abuse on the field, and argued that the key to addressing the problem was education.

Anecdotal evidence highlighted the scale of

'Football cast a spotlight on an issue for a period before the beam is focused elsewhere'

the problem. Jonathan Mettiss, AAD chairman, high-profile lawyer and Chelsea supporter, talked about how he brought a private prosecution against a Chelsea fan because of antisemitic abuse. Anthony Clavane, the journalist who has written a book "Does Your Rabbi Know You're Here?", encountered antisemitic comments in the past when discussing the subject with one well-known club chairman and leading football writer.

There was a general plea from those present at JW3 for the media to address antisemitism more. Some confusion can prevail. Tony Bloom, the Brighton & Hove Albion chairman, recounted the story of a reporter investigating whether his club's fans were being fascist, and chanting "siege hell" when in fact they were just singing "seagulls".

Whatever the FA's stance, there is clearly an under-reporting of the problem. "For every



Split views: Tottenham Hotspur supporters say that they have reclaimed the Y-word, yet the term remains offensive to many, and is used by opposing supporters often in a derogatory manner

person who does report an incident," says Wood. "I hear from others who say 'what's the point? What's the point of going through the process, nothing's been done.'" Antisemitic fans have become more cunning at games, knowing they are being recorded, so do their chanting in the concourses.

Quality of stewarding is clearly an issue. "The stewards do not always seem to have the necessary knowhow and skills to adequately counter discriminatory behaviour from football supporters," reported the Anne Frank House. "Representatives from the Netherlands, England, Germany and Poland all indicated that this situation occurred in their countries."

"Many participants doubt whether the current training courses offer sufficient tools for the stewards to learn to adequately respond to racist, antisemitic or discriminatory manifestations. Stewards need to have basic knowledge about prejudice against Jews, the Holocaust and the language that is used in anti-Jewish slogans."

In fairness to stewards, many participants at the conference pointed out that it "takes skills and courage to respond adequately". Again, clubs need to address the problem via stewarding as well as monitoring social media.

Clubs naming and shaming offenders would spread the message more but there is also a desire for a more nuanced approach from the FA. Kick It Out believes that "if it's a young fan simply lashing out on Twitter after a match" then education is a more appropriate response. An older supporter found guilty of antisemitic behaviour deserves a longer ban.

The five-game ban imposed on Anelka by the FA following his *quenelle* was widely derided as

pathetic. In fairness, the FA is far more proactive than other associations but the Anne Frank House concluded that "the fight against antisemitism has never been a focal point of these British initiatives, as the focus was always on addressing racist behaviour from supporters against coloured players". The FA disputes that, saying it focuses on all forms of discrimination.

Under the FA chairmanship of David Bernstein, England became involved with the Holocaust Educational Trust and seven of the players visited Auschwitz at Euro 2012 but, as so often with good initiatives in football, they are never fully maintained. Football has a great ability to cast a spotlight on an issue for a period before the beam is focused elsewhere.

Better governance, including stronger leadership from the authorities, was one of the arguments at JW3 of Jonathan Arkush, the president of the Board of Deputies. Arkush also called for a blanket ban on the use of "the Y-word", a discussion that clearly divided the audience at JW3, including among Spurs fans.

The FA "considers that the use of the term 'y*' is likely to be considered offensive by the reasonable observer". The Metropolitan Police ruled in 2013 that anybody, Spurs or opposing fans, using the Y-word was liable to prosecution under section 5 of the Public Order Act, yet it continues to be chanted.

Spurs fans counter that they have reclaimed the Y-word, yet it remains offensive to many, and is used by opposing fans defending their actions. It is such a vexed issue, generating much heat at JW3, but the only possible answer is for self-policing among Spurs fans and a collective decision not to use "the Y-word". The debate, and problem, continues.