

Jelige: Football fans

Different sides of being a football fan

**A comparison between fans of
the English Premier League and
the National Football League**

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I. Introduction

Fanaticism. People can get fanatic about various things including, bands, video games, films and, of course, sports. Being a fan in many respects can be considered a lifestyle. It takes time, effort and in some cases a lot of money to do what fans really like. This thesis focuses on sports fanaticism. How do people become fans of sports? After having become one, how do people choose the team to root for? Do people choose to become fans or are they socialized into the world of sports?

Under the term 'sport', however, we can mean different kinds. To make it specific, I chose to narrow it down to football, two kinds of football, European, which is known as soccer too, and American football. Using the theories about sports fans, which naturally contain football fans as well, I would like to show that even if there are studies and thoughts about how being a sports fan works, it can differ from league to league, or in this case from continent to continent as well. The main aim of this thesis is to find out in what means they differ from each other involving such aspects like hooliganism, the number of female fans, and the fans' devotion shown in money and time.

The question that some people would ask is that why would a woman choose a topic that is primarily considered to be a manly free-time activity. My answer would be that because it is my life. I was raised in a sports-loving family. All members of my family love at least one sport passionately. Some of them were even not just passive, but active agents when it came to sports. Non-professionally, but my father had been playing football for a long time, and my mother was a handball-player in high school. I myself also tried out some sports, including volleyball and football. I cannot remember a time when I was not interested in sports. It is in my DNA.

I have to say that I have been watching the Premier League for a longer time now, and it is maybe a bit closer to me, but in the past few years I began to like American football too, however, I still do not have a favourite team in the NFL. As for the English Premier League, I have been an Arsenal supporter since 2006. As a fan myself, who however does not live in the countries of these leagues, I was curious how the fandoms of these leagues work in their respective countries. Watching the games from week to week, of course, I have already noticed some differences in the way they behave or appear. NFL fans tend to be louder and their clothes are nearly like costumes. At least, this is how I see it. But these are just differences on the surface. I wanted to look deeper.

II. Sociology of being a sports fan

Being a sports fan is a complex state. There are different elements added to it which make it complicated. First of all, the starting point is the term 'sports fan'. Who do we call a fan? Do they choose to become fans or are they socialized into the world of sports? In this section, we can find the definition to it and the two most important levels of identity when it comes to choosing a favourite team. The focus point is then narrowed down in the next section to specific leagues' fan bases in order to show that even if there are theories about what it is like to be a sports fan, when it comes to putting them into practice generalization may not be an answer. On one hand, I introduce aspects including history, distribution of the fan base, and the fans' devotion shown in money and time by bringing the fan bases of two of the greatest leagues as examples. But my main aim with this thesis is to answer the question whether we can make distinctions between fan bases, and if so in what ways and what the reasons are for such differences.

My choice of subjects for analysis is the English Premier League and the National Football League. They are both called football, but in fact they are two different games. In the case of Premier League, we speak about a game played between two teams of eleven players on each side, and the aim is to kick the ball into the goal. Those who kick the most goals win, and the league is won by that team which can make the most points out of all the games during the season. On the other hand, NFL is a more complex game compared to European football, including multiple rules and ways of winning a match. There are two different conferences. Winning either of these two conferences, which can be considered to be two separated leagues, means only that they are one step closer to their dreams. The winners of them can get to the ultimate final, the Super Bowl, and eventually the winner of the final is who goes into the history books. Besides another major difference between EPL and NFL is that while in the Premier League at the end of the season three teams get relegated, in the NFL there is no such thing. I chose these two leagues not just because of personal interest, but because these two leagues are the most watched ones and because of this, they are those which make the sports-loving part of the whole world excited from week to week.

In the case of NFL, we can speak about a 30-year-old popularity in the US. As a survey made by the Harris Poll in 2014 shows, more than a third of those asked favor the NFL over other American sports, including baseball, hockey, basketball and car racing. Since 1985, the year in which the first survey was taken among American sports fans, the NFL has been the winner of this poll every year. The second most popular sport, Major League

Baseball got fourteen percent, while on the third place college football finished with eleven percent. (Rovell, par. 1-3). On the other hand, EPL is the most-watched football league in the whole world. The games are aired in 212 countries and followed by 4.7 billion people every season. Altogether, 80 distinctive TV broadcasters show EPL matches from year to year. (Premier League, par. 2-3).

First of all, it is important to define what we mean under the term 'sports fan'. The necessity of this process lies in the fact that not everyone who attends a sporting event is a so-called fan. These people could rather be called 'a member of the audience' or a 'spectator'. So what is it like to be a real fan?

2.1 Definition of being a sports fan

There are multiple definitions to what we can call a sports fan. They include the individual interest, the importance of being a part of a community and also the amount of time a fan would spend by seeking information about his or her favourite team(s) and player(s). (Jacobson, par. 18).

Being a sports fan differs from a spectator mainly in his or her devotion towards a team or a player. This is the most important difference between them. According to Spinrad (as cited in Jacobson), a fan is someone who spends most of his or her time by searching for information about his or her favourite team, and always has his or her mind on sports, even when there isn't an actual game going on. In contrast a spectator, according to Wann, Melnick, Russell and Page (as cited in Jacobson), is someone who in fact watches the game in the stadium or at home through television or other media platforms, but is not really obsessed with the teams and players to an amount when he or she would spend hours "with" his or her favourite team. (par. 18).

The term 'sports fan' doesn't have one meaning. As for the press, sports fans are all associated with hooliganism, and are called hooligans without exceptions. In other cases, only those people are considered to be real fans who attend every match and watch them live in the stadiums. (Crawford 20). Why do the media call every football fan a hooligan? An answer might be that this is how they can make profit. The word 'hooligan' is mostly associated with negative meanings, including aggression. If we watch the news on television, what we hear is not primarily positive, because people need scandal and excitement. They want to hear and read about something uncommon or rare, which makes them interested. The question why people like to watch or read news about hooligans might be a psychological question. It might be an answer that watching others fighting or breaking things help some people in gratifying

their own frustration and anger. I myself believe that not every fan is a hooligan, in fact in most cases being a football fan is just some disguise for some people who just want to get into some trouble. For example, around a stadium a lot of tension is going on, so it is a good opportunity for them to find people, who are just as tense and angry, and with whom they can have a quarrel which can result in fights. On the other hand, sometimes supporters themselves, mainly the more violent ones, become hooligans. In this case, what we can speak about is the pursuit of belonging to some other group, with whom they can share not just their love towards a team, but their frustration and anger as well. These groups are those who primarily organize hooligan activities with rivals.

2.2 Two theoretical levels in the relation between sport and identity

2.2.1 Interpersonal/Network Level of Identity

This level is primarily about how people become fans with the help of friends and family. But in this case as well we can make a comparison between men and women. While in the 20th century and before that the main belief was that mainly men were those who attended matches and became fans, it is no longer the truth. Women are just as much fans as men are. Studies show that the process of becoming a fan goes back to childhood, predominantly in the case of men. Most of them were members of sports teams or were raised by their parents to become a sports-loving person. In that sense, we can say that their socialization included sports. Not just their parents or other members of the family influenced them when they were young, but products of sports merchandises also made a huge impact on them with, for example, their kits, bed linens with the logos of sports teams on them or other toys. For young boys sports players are role models. On the other hand, women are not socialized into sports in the same way. According to Dietz-Uhler, Harrick, End and Jacquemotte (as cited in Jacobson), women chiefly become fans of different sports by and after taking part in a matchday experience with their friends and family. So a similarity is that friends and family play a part in it, but the main difference between men and women in the means of becoming a sports fan is that while women became fans 'just' by watching a game, most men are born into the world of sports and they are most likely to play some kind of sport during their childhoods. (par. 20).

To this level belongs that fact too that becoming a fan of a team means the conversion into a community. A fan base includes collective identity and collective behaviour. In a sense they make a union against the group of opposition. But it is naturally not just about the fellow fans, but those who become fans of a team also claim themselves to be members of the team

itself indirectly. This is why they share in the joy of winning and the terror of losing. (Jacobson, par. 21-22).

The process of socialization into the world of sports might show some differences when we compare Britain and the US. While in both cases family plays a part in it, in the US education and also the whole cult of sports stars can have an effect. First of all, in the case of the family we can speak about a programme for the weekend, when the children can imbibe the atmosphere of the sports world. In Britain, families go out, watch the match and go home. In the US, however, they tend to take it to a higher level. The programme is not made up of just the match, but they also have a so-called “tailgating”, when they barbecue, drink and just talk, as if they were in their backyard, but in fact they do it in the parking lot of the stadium before the match. It is all about having fun and celebrating their favourite teams by organizing such a party around a sporting event, which can help in directing the kids towards sports. Creating good memories, which can be associated with sports is the key. In the US, education might also play a big role in how and why people are socialized into sports. Sports scholarships are not just in America, but all around the world are very well-known. My theory would be that in some cases in the US parents intentionally try to direct their child towards sports, because they see the opportunity in him or her becoming later on a potential contender for a college scholarship. Of course, in Britain there are sports scholarships too, but in most cases, for example, during Olympic Games many athletes, including not just Americans are introduced as scholars of American universities.

Another option for socialization would be the cult of sports stars. Naturally, the athletes of Britain are also famous and popular, but the degree of how Americans can be enthusiastic is incomparable. One example, which I experienced during the FIFA World Cup, can be the way they communicated on social media. The slogan 'One Nation, One Team' was invented just for this event by the United States Soccer Federation, and it was posted by everyone from young to old, from famous to ordinary people. An exact number of the tweets, including this slogan is hard to define, since it went viral. This could also make an impact on Americans, which could have meant that you do not want to stay out of it. In this sense, becoming a sports fan is inevitable if you want to bond socially and want to be a part of the US nation.

By both nations in a sense sports can also be considered as 'educators'. On one hand they help in the process of socialization. On the other hand, they teach us how life works. There are winners and losers. However sometimes not the result is the most important, but those things, which are learnt during the journey. Take for instance such characteristics like

discipline, teamwork and respect. They are important not just on the pitch, but in life outside of the sports fields. This is what Wellington also might have meant by having said that "the battle of Waterloo was won on the fields of Eton". Those British soldiers who fought at Waterloo might have won because of what they had learned during their years spent at Eton College. They had learned there the aspects of leadership and competitiveness. On the other hand, sports fields are claimed to be a place of fairness and equality. For example, the same set of rules are applied to each team. There are also major campaigns introduced by sports associations in order to fight against, for example, racism or any kind of discrimination.

2.2.2 Symbolic Level of Identity

This level also works with the question how a person chooses to become a fan of one team and not the other one. It can best be explained by the balance theory invented by an Austrian psychologist, Fritz Heider. The theory distinguishes two processes, the so-called BIRGing, meaning the 'basking in reflected glory', and the CORFing, which is the abbreviation to 'cutting off reflective failures'. Both of them are about avoiding unsuccessful people and teams. By BIRGing, for example, we can mean those individuals who after a victory would publicly make a connection between the team and themselves, even if they did not take part in the victory. It is a strategy for the fan to enlarge himself/herself by claiming to be a part of the team. On the other hand, under CORFing we mean the avoidance of being related to failure and to those who are connected with unsuccessfulness. So it is all about holding a positive image of oneself. Both tactics, however, are not much else about just promoting oneself and boosting one's ego. (Jacobson, par. 24-25).

An investigation was made about BIRGing and CORFing with the focus on the online activity of NFL fans. The result of this shows that fans do use the internet platforms, including Twitter and Facebook, to praise their beloved teams, and they mostly do so after a victory. It was also noticed that fans like to use these online networks to criticize and write rude comments about and to the fans of other teams, primarily when the opponent was defeated. (Jacobson, par. 26). Again, making fun of the rivalry team can be seen as a way of boosting one's ego. What the fans are trying to indicate by posting rude comments is that their team is better, which makes them also greater, since as fans they are also part of it.

After having received the answers to the questions what we can call a fan, and what those features are that help in the process of becoming one, I would like to show how general ideas about fan bases after being put into practice can result in not just similarities but

differences, when it comes to the comparison of two of the world's biggest leagues' fan bases, namely the English Premier League (EPL) and the National Football League (NFL).

III. A comparison between the English Premier League and the National Football League

EPL and NFL. Two abbreviations which would immediately make a sports fan think about two of the biggest leagues in the world, the English Premier League (EPL) and the National Football League (NFL). They both may be called football, however, there is a kind of debate among fans which one truly can be called 'football'. Naturally, there is a definite difference between them. It is not just about their rules, the nature of the game or the financial system of their major leagues, but also one of the reasons of why these great leagues are still rolling should not be forgotten, namely the love of the fans towards the games. As it is known that human beings are all different, it is just the same when we narrow it down to the “community” of sports fans. But what happens if we further reduce the focus point to the fan bases of different leagues? In many ways, being a fan of a Premier League team might differ from being one for an NFL team. The main aim of this thesis is to find out in what means they differ from each other.

3.1 Football hooliganism – The 'English disease'

Hooliganism, a term nowadays generally used with football. After hearing this word, most people would immediately think about violence, alcohol and danger. But what does this term really cover? Can we say that it is more likely associated with the English football culture than with the American one?

3.1.1 Definition of 'football hooliganism'

Before going into the details, it is necessary to define the word 'hooliganism'. Football hooliganism is a complex phenomenon. Predominantly, under this term we mean those activities, which are socially organized between groups of fan rivals. Therefore football hooliganism is primarily an organized phenomena. On the other hand, spontaneity also plays a part in hooliganism. (Spaaij 20).

According to Dunning, Murphy and Waddington (towards 1-2), there aren't any theories justified by psychology or sociology about football hooliganism. It is more like a phenomena which was labeled by the media and the politicians. It includes various patterns of behaviour, which involve some kind of violent protest by football fans in groups. The violation can be done verbally or physically, including cases like throwing objects at players or officials, causing damage to buildings connected to the club or to individuals, and fighting

with the fans of the opponent teams. These fights can contain weapons, for example, knives or guns. It does not primarily occur inside the stadiums. It can be done outside of it, or, for example, even on non-matchdays. There are different reasons too for such behaviour. Mainly, football hooliganism is a way in which predominantly men can express their frustration and anger against the fans of the opponents. But there are other cases, as well, when such events can occur. These cases include, for example, a protest against the owner of a team.

The fans of Hull City¹ can be taken as example to such protest against the club owner. The case was that Assem Allam, the owner of Hull City had the idea to rename the team to Hull Tigers. However this intention was not favored by the fans, since they felt like that beside their name they would also lose their identity and history. To make sure that the owner knows that they disapprove his action, they began to hang out banners saying 'City till we die'. Assem Allam claimed that these people with the banners are just the minority, a hooligan group, who just harm the team, since the players cannot focus on the game, but on the disagreement between fans and the owner. He even stated that if he is no longer welcomed to the club, then he will just leave without investing even more money in the team. Steve Bruce, the manager of the club asked the fans to calm down and to put their energy into rooting for the team instead of into a protest against the owner. (Leeson)

Rowe (as cited in Gow & Rookwood, 2008), however, claims that two theories can be separated in the question of hooliganism. On one hand, there is the genetic theory including inner instincts and frustration, which are shown in acts of aggression. On the other hand, there is a sociological theory which considers effects made by social features on fans. This includes the environment in which they live and come from. The media also belongs to one of these features. One explanation to such behaviour among fans is that by causing trouble anyone can get into the television or newspapers and have a moment of fame. Another cause involving the press can be that some fans want revenge after having read that their fellow fans were punched by the fans of the rival team. (74).

3.1.2 Football hooliganism in the British football culture

Football hooliganism is often called the 'British or English disease', because of its historical background. The relationship between British football and hooliganism goes back to the 1870s and 1880s. Although throughout the years the degree of violence occurred in Britain changed, there has never been a time without hooliganism in British football. Being a hooligan for these fans is kind of a lifestyle, which cannot be stopped even after the

¹ Hull City: A British football club

restrictions which were introduced into British football leagues so as to avoid such cases. (Dunning, Murphy, Williams 1).

1970s and 1980s were those periods in the life of British football when football hooliganism was at its highest. According to Marxist sociologists, the appearance of hooliganism in football could be credited to the poor conditions of the working class at that time, and also to their opposition towards the owners of the teams, who wanted to make the sport just a matter of business. Nowadays, in this era of the Premier League thanks to the restrictions introduced by The Football Association such incidents are not so common. On the other hand, hooliganism has always been primarily about the fights against the opposing teams' fans, and not against owners. (Ingle, par. 7).

Although there are restrictions, for example, the prohibition of alcoholic beverages and racist chants introduced by the English Football Association so as to suppress the violent activity of the fans, football hooliganism still remains as a part of the English football culture, and in this sense an element of the English Premier League. (Ingle, par. 12).

As it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, hooliganism and British football still cannot be fully separated. In spite of the restrictions introduced by the English Football Association, more rarely, but from time to time such incidents happen. This was the case in 2009, when the West Ham and Millwall² supporters got into a fight. Outside of West Ham's stadium, the Upton Park one man was stabbed, while during the match three hooligans invaded the pitch, who after this incident will be banned from stadiums for good. Additionally, the police took thirteen people to custody. According to the leader of the security team at that game, the whole incident was caused by just a small group of fans. (Brown & Mole, par. 1 & 8).

Further evidences that British football is not free of hooliganism can be shown by a report published in 2013. It claims that football hooliganism is again a major concern in the Premier League. The report included that the number of arrests is more than the double of the previous season's one, having increased from 273 to 554. The report also included two lists (see No. 1 in Appendix). One of them shows the number of arrests, and another list contains the amount of people who are banned from games by court order from team to team, including not just British clubs' supporters. (McTague, par. 2).

² West Ham and Millwall: Both are British football clubs

3.1.3 Football hooliganism in the National Football League?

As for the National Football League and its fan base, even if there is some kind of hooliganism, it is not something that is rooted in its history compared to the fan base of English football, including the predecessor league of the English Premier League.

As it was mentioned in a previous section, (see 3.1.1 'Definition of football hooliganism') there are different “rules” to being a hooligan. Most of their activities are done in groups of primarily men, and are most of the time organized, for example, on forums or by text messages through mobile phones between groups of opposing fans before matchdays. It is also not strange if they organize a fight between each other way outside of the stadiums, like in small streets or alleys. This is the so-called organized football hooliganism, which was and still is not a rare phenomenon in English football.

An example to that can be an incident happened between West Ham and Millwall supporters in 2012. Shaun Sheridan, one member of the 'Inter City Firm', a hooligan group of West Ham supporters, has been put into jail for twelve months for having arranged a hooligan clash between Millwall and West Ham fans. They were, however, stopped, when police officers had noticed that some sinister gathering was going on near a pub. As later the police had found out, the whole incident was organized through 150 text messages between West Ham and Millwall supporters, which were found on Sheridan's phone. (Kent, par. 1-4).

Hooliganism is in most cases just about demonstrating manliness, and about showing who the better fan base is. In the NFL, hooliganism is not something which is rooted in their football culture. Although it is a phenomenon, which is slowly making its way to it even if not to the same extent like organized hooliganism. Primarily, the American sports media tends to like to use the term 'hooliganism' for danger caused by fans around the stadiums.

This is the term that the *Salt Lake Tribune* used when they wrote about football violence around the NFL. They claim that they no longer have the privilege to criticize European sports fans for having such people among their fan bases. A game between the Oakland Raiders and the San Francisco 49ers, for example, ended up in two men having been shot in the parking lot. (Lopresti, par. 10).

As for the NFL, we can more likely speak about violence among fans, and not about hooliganism, since these activities by NFL fans are not organized, and mostly appear during games inside the stadiums.

However it must be stated that violence is definitely there among NFL fans, as well, which is a similarity with EPL fans, even if there are different labels to it. Brutality was surely

there on a Sunday in September of 2014, when in two different states NFL fans flew at each other's throats. During a match in Arizona between the San Francisco 49ers and the Arizona Cardinals groups of female and male fans punched each other multiple times, which resulted in bloody injuries. One man of the security team also got into the middle of it as a victim, the consequence of which was that he was beaten and even suffocated. In another state during a match between the Washington Redskins and the Philadelphia Eagles, another innocent person was injured, when two groups flew at each other's throats inside the stadium. (Doyel, par. 6-7).

The 'bloody fan brawl', as it was called on the blog of The San Francisco *Chronicle*, was a fight between mainly drunken supporters. They were finally separated by about six security officials. The whole incident was recorded by cameras and then posted to the world's biggest video-sharing website, YouTube. In fact, as Glendale police Sgt. Jay O'Neill reported there were two different incidents in the stadium during the same match, but not in the same sections. The result of these events was that six people had been taken into custody, while thirty-nine people were expelled from the stadium during the match. (Sernoffsky, par. 2-5).

3.1.4 Comparison

The major difference between the fan base of the English Premier League and the National Football League in the question of hooliganism is that for the EPL it is something that is rooted in its history. It was already there in the late 19th century. It is still a problem there, even after the introduction of the restrictions like banning alcohol in the stadiums. As for the NFL even if the US media uses the term of 'hooliganism', it can only be an adopted phenomenon. The so-called organized hooliganism is not a common feature of NFL fan base, while in England it still exists even if not to the same extent as it was in the 1970s and 1980s. As for the NFL, we can more likely speak about spontaneous, out of rage football violence, as the articles about the fights between San Francisco 49ers and Arizona Cardinals, and between Washington Redskins and Philadelphia Eagles (see 3.1.3) showed.

One theory to the question why there is such a difference in hooliganism can be found if we involve geography. As for English hooligans it is not a problem to arrange fights, because the cities are not so far away from each other. English fans tend to travel to away-games from week to week. In the case of America, there are large distances between the towns. For them to organize a fight and then to work it out in some cases would involve travelling by plane. So it would not worth it to do so, since it would cost a lot. The previously mentioned article about the teams of San Francisco, Arizona, Washington and Philadelphia

(see 3.1.3) involved such incidents, which happened between those teams' supporters, the cities of which are just a few miles away from each other. This also shows that even if there are fights then the fans do not travel long distances just to get into one.

Another theory might be found in the circumstances of the clubs' foundations. As for the US, we can more likely speak about business as the center of the whole establishment. Clubs there are primarily handled as merchandises, which bring the profit. In Britain it is more complex. Naturally, today British clubs are also a matter of business, but there is more than that. When most of the clubs were founded in the late 19th and early 20th century, money was not the most important. In some cases ideologies and religion played part in the establishment. Take Celtic and Rangers³ as an example. Although they are not the participants of the English Premier League naturally, as two of the biggest British football clubs their history can exemplify further differences between US and British football culture when it comes to hooliganism. Celtic is associated with Irish people and with Scots of Irish ancestors, who were Roman Catholics. On the other hand, Rangers have a history with Scottish and Northern Irish Protestants. This conflict of religions can still result in the supporters' rivalry, including hooligan activities. Even if now this is not the main cause if such incidents happen, the core of these happenings is the religious difference. What I claim here is that a reason to the question why hooliganism is in Britain more prevalent compared to US might be that in the US it is at the most just about business and money, which is rather the owners' concern and not that of the supporters. On the other hand, in Britain the oppositions between clubs, including fans go back in history, which means that rivalry and frustration lies deeper, which can indicate that the degree of it is greater.

What should also be considered is that in most cases hooligan activities happen between such teams' fans, who belong to the same city. An example can be to that the previously mentioned incidents between the supporters of Millwall and West Ham (see 3.1.2 & 3.1.3), who both are teams of London. In the US, considering the NFL there is one team per one town. On one hand NFL fans do not meet with each other outside of the stadiums during an ordinary day that often as, for example, two different fan groups from the same British city can. On the other hand, they do not have to claim the town for themselves through violence, since it is all "theirs" already.

After having received some information about hooliganism and after having shown that not every sports league and fan can be associated with it directly in spite of a theory (see

³ Celtic FC and Rangers FC: The two biggest Scottish football clubs

2.1), the next step is to investigate the fan base even more closely. A fan base, regardless if we are talking about the EPL's or the NFL's one, is a diverse community. There are diversity in races, religions and genders, of course. The latter one is what the next phase focuses on. As it was already stated that nowadays sports are not primarily just for men (see 2.2.1 Interpersonal/Network Level of Identity), the second field I investigated was the number of female fans among the fan base of NFL compared to that of the EPL.

3.2 Fun for women as well

When speaking about sports, in this case two different types of football, many people would think that they are just games for men. In fact, it is not true. Throughout the years, both leagues tend to endear themselves not just to men, but to women, as well. It is a resemblance which can be noticed when it comes to the comparison of English Premier League (EPL) and National Football League (NFL). But which league would more likely win a competition for the hearts of women?

3.2.1 English Premier League

As a survey made by the Premier League in 2005/06 shows, on average 15 percent of EPL fans are female in the United Kingdom. In this research, almost 25,000 people were asked, which shows that approximately every eighth fan is a woman. This number was just slightly changed by the next season, as the study produced by the Premier League in 2007/2008 claims that about every seventh fan is a woman. (Premier League Fan Survey 7 & F.A. Premier League 7).

Another study was made on the question of attending matches. As the figures of the 2006/07 season shows more than 2 million women went to the stadium so as to watch football games live, which was with 500,000 more than what the previous season's statistics represents. (Thompson, par. 3).

If we want to focus just on the totals of fans attending matches in means of percentages, then the number of women out of all match-going fans would be 22%. (Commission of the European Communities 43).

3.2.2 National Football League

As for the National Football League (NFL), approximately 45% of about 150 million American fans are women, which means that nearly half of the NFL fan base in the USA is made up of female fans. In this case, it means that every second fan is a woman among the American NFL fans. (Harwell, par. 4).

When it comes to the figures of the TV viewing audience, then women are at 33 percent. (Broughton, par. 7).

Women tend to be active, as well, when it comes to going to the stadium. As surveys made by the NFL represents, the number of women who attend football matches is about 350,000 per weekend. A regular season of the National Football League contains 16 weeks, so after making a short calculation, this means that in a whole season approximately 6 million female fans make their way to the football stadiums. (Turner & Dabney-Henderson, par. 3).

But what about those TV ratings and figures? The most-watched TV programme in the United States of America among women in 2014 was not one of the award shows or TV series but rather Super Bowl XLVIII. Almost 45 million women decided to switch on the TV so as to watch the final of the NFL. All in all, in the United States over 60 percent of the women claims to be an NFL fan, which confirms the belief that football is no longer a game just for men, but there is definitely a football-fever among women, as well. (The Press, par. 1).

3.2.3 Comparison

First of all, let's look at the figures which show how many of all the fans are women. In this comparison, the National Football League definitely is the winner with significantly more female fans. Since 45 percent of NFL fans are women, and by the EPL in the season of 2005/06 it was on an average 15 percent, the figures compared to each other represent that with 30 percent there are more women among the total fan base of NFL than of the EPL. Since the number of those asked were not the same in the surveys, it is important to look at the ratios. In this case, NFL still wins, because among the NFL fan base every second fan is a woman, while by the EPL we can state that compared to the NFL "only" every seventh or eighth fan is female.

As a study made by Turnkey Intelligence shows, there is a difference in both leagues when it comes to the changes in the number of female fans too. The survey, which was prepared in December of 2012 with the involvement of 300 NFL fans living in the USA and 300 EPL fans living in the UK, already claims that there are more women among the NFL fans by 5 percent. This is, however, not a crucial difference. But the changes in the figures definitely distinct from each other. (Broughton, par. 12).

This study organized by Turnkey Intelligence in comparison with other previously mentioned surveys show that there is a difference in what amount do these numbers have changed. The Premier League's research of the 2005/06 season says that 15 percent of the fan

base are women, while the Turnkey's investigation, made 6-7 years later, claims that this data increased by 10 percent, namely to 25 percent. These figures by the NFL are from 30 percent to 45 percent. This may lead the reader to the conclusion that then there is no significant difference, because the changes are of no weight with 10 percent on one and 15 percent on the other hand. But the key is in the dates. For the English Premier League to make the figures grow from 15 percent to 25 percent took 6-7 years, but for the NFL these changes were done in 11 months. From December of 2012 to October of 2013, the data jumped from 30 percent to 45 percent.

A theory to these results, which show that more women tend to like NFL than EPL, might be that in the US the integration of women into the world of sports starts already at a young age. If we think about high schools, there are already football matches between the schools, in which the whole school takes part and it is not just cheerleading in which girls are active, but they are the same in the stands too. Watching a game with the whole school is an event of social bonding, out of which few would like to stay. As for British football culture, there are no such big tournaments between secondary schools, which means that a chance for integrating girls and boys, and the whole 'social bonding thing' are left out.

In 1972, a law called Title IX banning sex discrimination in any kind of educational program financed by the U.S. government was signed by the President of the US. (U.S. Department of Justice). This of course includes sport programs as well, so again it helps in the integration and in making women to love sports, which later on might result in huge numbers of women rooting for their favourite teams in the stands.

3.3 Devotion shown in money and time

What would decide the question of fans' devotion more if not money and time spent by them on the league and their favourite teams? These two elements of life are very precious not just in an everyday person's life, but naturally in a football fans' life too. This way they can express their devotion towards their beloved teams, and that is why they do so. But the main question is, which of these two fan bases open their wallets wider, and spend more time by seeking information about their favourite league? This is the third field I investigated in the comparison of the EPL and NFL. In both cases, firstly I analyse the amount of money spent by fans annually, and then the examination goes on to the question of time spent by seeking information, and finally comes the comparison.

3.3.1 Premier League

A Premier League fan survey issued in the season of 2005/06 revealed the amount of money spent by fans on consumable items per home matches and also on merchandise items per year compared to previous seasons. In both cases, an increase can be noticed. From the season 2002/03 to 2005/06 fans tended to spend more money by an average of £4 in the case of consumable items per home matches, and by an average of £9 on merchandise items annually. (F.A. Premier League 26-27).

Two years later, in the season of 2007/08 another survey was issued by the Premier League. In the case of consumable items per home matches there is not any difference between 2005/06 and 2007/08. In both seasons, fans spent an average £11. But when it comes to the merchandise items, then we can notice a rising tendency, meaning that fans spent £10 more in the season of 2007/08 than two years earlier. In the season of 2005/06 the amount was £117, while two years later it was £127 on merchandise goods. (Premier League Fan Survey 46-48).

When it comes to time, the fans of the English Premier League seem to be active, as well. From the season of 2003/04 to 2007/08 the number of those who never use the internet for seeking information reduced, while the number of those who once or more than once a day search after news about football increased. The 'once a day' category grew by about 10% within 4 years, while the latter one by 25%. The tendencies are approximately the same when it comes to visiting the official club websites. (Premier League Fan Survey 59-60).

3.3.2 National Football League

In 2008 a survey was made for the fans of the NFL including questions mostly about their devotion towards the league and their favourite team. Among these questions was one which was about their spending habit. The result shows that an NFL fan's spending on its beloved team is \$483 per year including everything from merchandise to matchday expenditure. Their love towards the game is also shown in the amount of money they would spend on a trip to a Super Bowl if their favourite team got there. They would be willing to pay approximately \$694 for the final. (Leahy, par. 2).

A survey issued in 2012 by Turnkey Intelligence shows that 44% of those asked NFL fans seek information daily about football and favourite team during season, while the amount of those who do the same but "just" several times a week or weekly or less often are approximately at the same level with 29% on one hand, and 26% on the other hand. Fans spend almost 10 hours per week by searching information about their favourite teams, and

over 12 hours to do the same about the league. During off-season NFL fans tend to spend less time by searching after information about their favourite teams. The number of those who do it daily dropped by 19% while the amount of those fans who seek news weekly or less often increased by 22%. (Broughton, par. 8).

3.3.3 Comparison

The first aspect in which the two leagues can be compared is the annual spending of the fans. In the Premier League if we see the data of the season 2007/08, we can notice that fans spend average £336 (~\$540) annually on their favourite team. As for the NFL fans, this amount is approximately \$483 (~£301) per year. So the competition of spending is won by the fans of the English Premier League by spending by an average of £35 per year more than the NFL fans. This result becomes more interesting if we involve the aspect of GDP per capita. In the past five years, according to the data of the World Bank, the rate for the US was greater by approximately \$13,000. As for the UK, in this period it never reached \$40,000, while the US showed an increase from about \$47,000 to \$53,000. This shows that the spending power of US consumers is greater than the UK's one. It means that in fact UK consumers have less to spend, but still they spend more money on sports products compared to the US consumers. So the question remains that how comes that in Britain fans spend more than American supporters, providing that the scale of GDP per capita is much better in the US. An answer might be in the details. One Premier League season is by approximately four or five months longer than an NFL one. This indicates that British fans have to buy more consumable items per matches and tickets if they want to attend as many of them as possible. Another reason might be that in the Premier League the teams change their kits every season, which make the fans buy the new shirt from year to year. This also costs a lot of money each year. As for the NFL fans, they are free from this "obligation", since the kits do not change that often, so there is no need to buy a new one before each season.

The survey made by Turnkey Intelligence in the December of 2012 also investigated how much of the fans' monthly income is spent on football. By the EPL fans only 17% spend nothing on the favourite team, while the percentage for the NFL fans in the same question is at 24%. 6% or more of the monthly income is spent by 51% of the EPL fans. Among NFL fans 11% less, so 40% of them spend the previously mentioned amount of the monthly income. Here again, we can notice that the EPL fans are more active in spending. (Broughton, par. 5).

When it comes to time spent by fans, the same survey shows that by EPL more than half of the fans asked spend time daily both during season and off-season by searching news about their favourite team. In contrast, as for the NFL the amount of those who search daily never reaches 50%. When it comes to hours spend, then again EPL fans tend to take more time out of their week by seeking news about their favourite team by approximately 2 hours compared to the fan base of the NFL. These results show that fans of the English Premier League are more interested in searching after news about their favourite teams both during season and off-season compared to NFL fans. (Broughton, par. 8).

To these results, which show that EPL fans tend to spend more, another reason might be rooted in the differences of the minimum wages. In the US, it differs from state to state, but it is approximately between \$7 and \$9 (~£4 and £5) per hour. As for the UK, the minimum wage over the age of 21 is £6.50 (~\$10) per hour. (U.S. Department of Labor & UK Government). This would indicate that among EPL fans we can find more people from the lower and upper middle class, who can allow themselves to buy the kits every year and also other merchandising goods.

IV. Conclusion

The main aim of this thesis was to find out in what means differ the English Premier League and the National Football League from each other involving such aspects like hooliganism, the number of female fans, and the fans' devotion shown in money and time. Although fan violence exists in both leagues, women are not rare in either of these leagues' stands and both of them have enthusiastic fans, when it comes to the details differences can be found.

First of all, considering hooliganism it can be stated that it exists in both leagues to smaller or greater extent. As for the English Premier League, hooliganism is a phenomenon that is rooted in its history. It goes back to the 1970s and 1980s, when hooligan activities were at their height in British football. Although multiple precautions were taken in Britain in order to remove hooliganism from football, organized football hooliganism is still a 'disease' there. In the NFL, violent behaviour or hooliganism is an adopted phenomenon. They do not have a history with it, but it is a new threat and problem for their football culture. Organized football hooliganism, however, have not made it to the US, yet. All we can speak about is violence and fights among rivals during matchdays. Sometimes there is a reason, for example, the influence of alcohol. In most cases in America it is just spontaneous. Multiple causes of the differences in how hooliganism appear in US and Britain can be found, when we include such aspects as the differences in how teams are founded, distances between towns and the number of teams in one town.

In the question of which league would win more likely the hearts of women, the winner is the NFL. Almost the half amount of supporters are women. In America every second fan is female, while in the Premier League "just" every seventh or eighth fan is a woman. In the way the numbers changed from year to year, the NFL still wins. The amount of NFL female fans increased by 15% in less than one year. In the Premier League, the changes needed more time. To increase the number of women in the fandom, for the EPL it took 6-7 years. This change was almost the same amount, namely from 15% to 25%. The differences can be caused by the way how women are integrated into sports in the US compared to Britain. America tends to assimilate girls already with the help of education, including sporting events held between high schools, which is a major place of social bonding, out of which few would like to stay. The US also introduced a law in 1972 to abolish discrimination among sexes in federally financed education programs, including sports.

The third field was the question of devotion shown in money and time. In both cases, the supporters of the English Premier League finished at the top. EPL fans tend to spend more money annually on their favourite team including merchandise products and matchday expenditures than NFL fans do. As for the time, among Premier League fans we can find more people who seek information about the league or teams once or more than once a day, while NFL fans spend less time by doing the same both during season and off-season. The reasons why these differences occur between NFL and EPL might root in such aspects, like the length of a season, the frequency of new kits' appearance, the various amounts of GDP per capita spent on sports products, and the differences between the amounts of minimum wages.

All in all we can state that smaller or bigger differences can be found between the NFL and EPL. Like their football, their fandoms are also not the same even if they both can be put into the category of sports fans. This comparison showed that violence is not something that is in the DNA or history of every fandom. It also showed which league has more female supporters, and has more devoted fans, when it comes to money and time. Furthermore, explanations were also given, in order to indicate why these differences might occur between the NFL and EPL.

V. Summary

EPL and NFL. Two abbreviations which would immediately make a sports fan think about two of the biggest leagues in the world, the English Premier League (EPL) and the National Football League (NFL). Both leagues on their own have their own fan base, which consists of millions of people. Similarity in them that they all are very passionate about football. The question is which football, who they are, and how passionate and loyal they are. These are the main aspects I investigated in order to make a comparison.

One thing is for sure, being a fan is kind of a lifestyle. In that sense, there is no difference in being a fan of the Premiership or a fan of the NFL. People who are in love with these sports take a lot of time in their lives so as to catch up on team news, matches or other information. My main aim primarily was, however, to show in what aspects these fans are not the same. I wanted to look a little deeper into their habits.

First of all, it is necessary to define what we call 'sports fan' or in this specific case 'football fan'. Then we can make the comparison among fans. I examined multiple aspects of what it is like to be a football fan of one league compared to the other one. These fields include the distribution of genders, money spent by the fans for products related to their beloved team or for example the fans' activity on social media platforms.

Now the question which is possibly asked by many is that why would a woman choose a topic which is mainly associated with men. Well, since my childhood I am very fond of sports, primarily European football. This is why I was so curious in finding out more about the nature of these leagues' fans. During the process of the examination I came to know more about my companions who are just as much passionate and fascinated by these sports as me if not more.

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VII. Appendix

No. 1

ARRESTS LEAGUE TABLE

Football arrests by club supported 2012/13

- Newcastle United 175
- Manchester United 145
- Leeds United 101
- Manchester City 95
- Chelsea 92
- Nuneaton Town 87
- Sunderland 71
- Millwall 67
- West Ham United 67
- Wolverhampton Wanderers 56
- Birmingham City 55
- Bristol City 54
- Arsenal 53
- Aston Villa 51
- Bolton Wanderers 46
- Everton 44
- Middlesbrough 44
- Walsall 42
- Oxford United 39
- Nottingham Forest 38
- Scunthorpe United 38
- Liverpool 36
- Sheffield Wednesday 35
- Stoke City 32
- Tottenham Hotspur 32
- Blackburn Rovers 31
- Burnley 31
- Crystal Palace 31
- Coventry City 29
- Derby County 29
- Peterborough United 29
- Sheffield United 29
- Barnsley 28
- Cardiff City 26
- Shrewsbury Town 26
- Bristol Rovers 25
- Hull City 25
- Brighton & Hove Albion 24
- Southampton 23
- Leicester City 22
- Bradford City 21
- Watford 21
- Lincoln City 20

BANNING ORDERS LEAGUE TABLE

Total number of banning orders against risk supporters of each club

- Cardiff City, 121
- Chelsea, 110
- Manchester United, 91
- Leeds United, 72
- Millwall, 65
- West Ham United, 65
- Bradford City, 62
- Arsenal, 59
- Newcastle United, 58
- Birmingham City, 57
- Bristol City, 56
- Tottenham Hotspur, 56
- Middlesbrough, 52
- Manchester City, 48
- Hull City, 47
- Huddersfield Town, 47
- Leicester City, 46
- Aston Villa, 44
- Swansea City, 44
- Grimsby Town, 41
- Southampton, 41
- Liverpool, 39
- Sunderland, 38
- Scunthorpe United, 38
- Swindon Town, 37
- Oxford United, 35
- Sheffield Wednesday, 34
- Sheffield United, 33
- Derby County, 32
- Wolverhampton Wanderers, 32
- Crystal Palace, 31
- Coventry City, 30
- Nottingham Forest, 30
- Burnley, 29
- Everton, 27
- Stoke City, 26
- West Bromwich Albion, 25
- Chesterfield, 23
- Exeter City, 23
- Luton Town, 21
- Blackburn Rovers, 20
- Bolton Wanderers, 20

- Oldham Athletic 20
- Queens Park Rangers 20
- Huddersfield Town 19
- Port Vale 19
- Rotherham United 19
- Wigan Athletic 18
- Chesterfield 17
- Portsmouth 17
- Grimsby Town 16
- Luton Town 16
- Preston North End 16
- Doncaster Rovers 15
- Bury 14
- Charlton Athletic 14
- Gillingham 14
- Wrexham 14
- Carlisle United 13
- Swansea City 13
- Mansfield Town 12
- Norwich 12
- Tranmere Rovers 12
- Blackpool 11
- York City 11
- Newport County 10
- Swindon Town 10
- West Bromwich Albion 10
- Crewe Alexandra 9
- Fulham 9
- Hartlepool United 9
- Morecambe 9
- Northampton Town 9
- Reading 9
- Stockport County 9
- AFC Wimbledon 8
- Hereford United 8
- Barnet 7
- Bournemouth 7
- Macclesfield Town 7
- Exeter City 6
- Southend United 6
- Aldershot Town 5
- Plymouth Argyle 5
- Brentford 4
- Burton Albion 4
- Ipswich Town 4
- Cheltenham Town 3
- Woking 3
- Yeovil Town 3
- Barrow 2
- Crawley Town 2
- Lincoln City, 19
- Queens Park Rangers, 19
- Portsmouth, 17
- Torquay United, 17
- Bristol Rovers, 16
- Brighton & Hove Albion, 16
- Plymouth Argyle, 16
- Crewe Alexandra, 15
- York City, 15
- Stockport County, 15
- Brentford, 14
- Rangers (Scotland), 14
- Hartlepool United, 13
- Port Vale, 12
- Barnsley, 11
- Charlton Athletic, 11
- Doncaster Rovers, 11
- Mansfield Town, 11
- Newport County, 11
- Wigan Athletic, 11
- Hereford United, 10
- Norwich City, 10
- Preston North End, 10
- Rotherham United, 9
- Rochdale, 9
- Wrexham, 9
- Aldershot Town, 8
- Bury, 8
- Darlington, 8
- Dagenham & Redbridge, 8
- Oldham Athletic, 8
- Walsall, 8
- Alfreton Town, 7
- Carlisle United, 7
- Bournemouth, 7
- Chester City, 7
- Gillingham, 7
- Leyton Orient, 7
- Halifax Town, 7
- Shrewsbury Town, 7
- Tranmere Rovers, 7
- AFC Telford United, 6
- Ipswich Town, 6
- Peterborough United, 6
- Blackpool, 5
- Crawley Town, 5
- Northampton Town, 5
- Reading, 5
- Southend United, 5
- Fulham, 4

- Leyton Orient 2
- Notts County 2
- Rochdale 2
- Stevenage 2
- Colchester United 1
- Kidderminster Harriers 1
- MK Dons 1
- Torquay United 1
- Alfreton Town 1
- Accrington Stanley 0
- AFC Telford United 0
- Braintree Town 0
- Cambridge United 0
- Dagenham and Redbridge 0
- Dartford 0
- Ebbsfleet United 0
- Fleetwood Town 0
- Forest Green Rovers 0
- Gateshead 0
- Hyde 0
- Southport 0
- Tamworth 0
- Wycombe Wanderers 0
- Kidderminster Harriers, 4
- Nuneaton Town, 4
- Watford, 4
- Macclesfield Town, 3
- Accrington Stanley, 2
- Barnet, 2
- Colchester United, 2
- Barrow, 2
- Fleetwood Town, 2
- Notts County, 2
- Kettering Town, 2
- Cheltenham Town, 1
- FC United of Manchester, 1
- Fredrikstad (Norway), 1
- Milton Keynes Dons, 1
- Morecambe, 1
- Lyon (France), 1
- Stevenage, 1
- Rushden & Diamonds, 1
- Salisbury City, 1
- Wycombe Wanderers, 1
- Schalke 04 (Germany), 1
- Yeovil Town, 1
- Sparta Prague (Czech R.), 1
- Staines Town 1
- Utrecht (Netherlands), 1
- Zenit St Petersburg (Russia), 1
- AFC Wimbledon, 0
- Burton Albion, 0