Introduction

Sports-related violence is considered a problem of some urgency in many countries. In Canada, ice hockey is the sport on which the problem is focused. In England and much of Western Europe, soccer forms the backdrop for fighting between rival groups of fans. Rioting at soccer matches in Latin America, Asia, and other countries is a not infrequent occurrence. In the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., the continuation of professional boxing is debated periodically in political and medical forums. As noted in several of the articles in this special issue of *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews*, sports violence is not a new phenomenon, nor is the vocal concern expressed by politicians, the press, or social scientists only recent.

The relationship between the extent of sports-related violence and the amount of commentary on that violence does not appear to be a strong one. Whatever the trends in the incidence of sports violence may be—and it is by no means clear that the relative amount of such violence has changed very much over the last few hundred years—commentary on the subject by the public, public officials, the mass media, and by those who study social phenomena appears to be cyclical. We are presently in a period of much activity by governmental bodies, the press, and social scientists, all of whom have placed sports-related violence on their agendas. The appearance of this special issue of *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews* is itself one aspect of this heightened interest. Only a few years ago, when I was editing a book on sports violence (Goldstein, 1983) there were so few active researchers in the world that it was possible to invite nearly all of them to contribute. One of the greatest difficulties in putting together this special journal issue was in choosing a few from among the now numerous scholars who devote attention to the topic. Why has there been such an increase in scholarly activity surrounding sports and aggression? Has violence in sports increased so much in the same time period to warrant this upsurge in interest?

How sports and violence and their interconnection are construed vary from time to time and place to place. Accordingly, I have invited articles for this special issue of *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews* from several sociologists, who comment not only on the phenomenon of sports violence itself, but also on discourse about sports violence. The importance of considering not only the phenomenon but scholarly communication about the phenomenon became clear to me during the past year, when I met with many of the European researchers studying soccer violence. In Spain, I learned that violence by soccer fans was seen by many as a symptom of a neo-Fascist resurgence. In Belgium, an international community and headquarters of the EEC, fighting among soccer fans was considered to be the result of an international conspiracy among groups of Dutch, English, and Belgian football supporters. In Holland, the concern was voiced repeatedly that football violence resulted from the society's failure to provide meaningful lives and hopes for young men. In the

England of Margaret Thatcher, with its emphasis on individualism, it was individual riff-raff who were seen as the troublemakers, soccer hooligans whom the football clubs are now going to absurd lengths to identify. Is soccer violence merely an ambiguous phenomenon, like a Rorschach inkblot, on which social scientists and others project their preexisting views of adolescents? Perhaps it is worth examining not merely the phenomenon of sports-related violence, but what we, as social scientists and citizens, have to say about this violence.

This Violence in Sports issue of *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews* brings together essays, critiques, empirical research, and reviews. Because violence associated with sports is perceived to be a social problem of international proportions, I have invited contributions from researchers in Belgium, Canada, England, Holland, and the United States. Following a historical and theoretical critique by Joe Maguire is a series of articles on the mass media and sports violence, by Kevin Young and Michael Smith, Gordon Russell and his colleagues, and Jay Coakley. Peter Donnelly examines the cyclical nature of critiques of boxing. Tim O'Brien traveled with English football supporters for a season and here reports on his participant-observation study by focusing on the fans' beliefs and statements about football.

The Spring 1989 issue of *Current Psychology: Research and Reviews* continues the special focus on violence in sports. In that issue will appear the only available summary in English of the recent reports by Kris Van Limbergen, Carine Coalers, and Lode Walgrave, prepared for the Belgian government as a result of the 1985 Heysel Stadium disaster. Likewise, Jaap Rabbie presents an English-language summary and critique of a recent Dutch book on the Heysel "drama," by 't Hart and Pijnenburg. Jerry Lewis, long a student of sports crowds, applies Smelser's model of collective behavior to the Heysel Stadium riot. He also provides us with a review of two books on English football hooligans that come from the Leicester University group.

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