

MONETARY FINES ON GREEK FOOTBALL CLUBS AS A CONSEQUENCE OF HOOLIGANISM

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Abstract

Aim of paper

The aim of this paper is to investigate the economic cost of hooliganism for Greek football clubs of the first division in the form of monetary fines. Fines are calculated per year and club for a 23-year period revealing the direct financial burden of fan misbehavior on Greek football clubs.

Background

Football hooliganism is the spectator disorderliness that takes place in football-related contexts and embraces verbal violence, throwing of missiles at players and officials (ranging from various objects as coins and broken seats to fireworks and crude incendiary devices), pitch invasions deliberately engineered to halt the match or attack players, vandalizing of club, private and public property, fights between opposing fans or with the police in, around or far away from football stadia, attacking vehicles carrying rival supporters, dodging in and out of moving traffic, etc. (Dunning et al., 1988). A considerable amount of literature has been devoted to the sociological study of hooliganism, while there are limited studies regarding the economic cost of hooliganism on sports and society. Although hooliganism has been tackled to a satisfactory extent in other European countries, it is persistent in Greek football.

Acts of spectator violence have direct and indirect costs on football clubs such as damaged stadia, financial fines to clubs imposed by the Sports Court, loss of ticket revenue because of closed-door games and bans on fan travel to away matches, and a negative effect on football demand (Avgerinou & Giakoumatos, 2011; Avgerinou, 2010). According to the Sports Law and the Disciplinary Code, teams are obliged to take precautionary measures against actions of their players, coaches, and fans that "damage the reputation of the football game" (Disciplinary Code, 2010). The most frequent punishments on clubs failing to

control their fans' behavior are monetary fines.

Methodology

Our data on hooliganism and monetary fines imposed on football clubs are investigated through the decisions of the Sports Court regarding matches of the Greek First National Division from 1986-87 to 2008-09 (23 seasons) (EPAE Sports Court Files, 1986-2006; Super League Sports Court Files, 2006-2009). We analyze 1,430 decisions on 4,426 incidents of fan misbehavior, ranging from swearing to violent clashes in the vicinity of stadia, recording the incidents of fan misbehavior, upon which the cases against the clubs were built, and the respective fines imposed on clubs.

Results/Discussion

Our data reveal that in 23% of the matches played during this period, Greek football clubs receive a monetary fine for the misbehavior of their fans. The average fine per affected match is 7,109 euros (in current prices), with a rising trend in the last five years. In season 2008/09 Super League clubs paid 1.396,351 € in fines. The big five clubs (Olympiakos, Panathinaikos, AEK, PAOK and Aris) receive the majority of the fines, with PAOK being the champion. PAOK fans create incidents in 33.7% of the matches that result in 7,116€ per affected match, while Olympiakos fans create incidents in 40.8% of the matches that result in 5,587€ of fines per affected match. Until 2006, fines were redistributed equally among the 16 clubs, succeeding only a transfer of funds from trouble-making clubs to more peaceful clubs and not an effective measure against hooliganism. Since 2009 only 30% of the fines is redistributed to the clubs while the rest 70% goes to the Football Federation.

The current financial crisis in Greece is expected to affect the main revenue sources of football clubs. Average attendance in season 2010/11 is already 10.64% lower than in the 2009/10 season. The media market is facing financial problems, as advertising budgets have declined dramatically. This is expected to affect TV rights paid to football clubs. Subsidies are also expected to decrease if the state-controlled betting company, OPAP, is sold as part of the privatization scheme for the repayment of public debt. Our findings imply that there are direct financial gains from a more effective control of spectator violence that could be useful to clubs in the midst of the financial crisis.

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