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Sport: A Well Manicured Battlefield

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INTRODUCTION

Sport and subsequently sport events, hereafter referred to as sport, have been the unwitting messenger of numerous causes beyond idyllic Olympism: from militarized nationalism to raising awareness of social injustices. Take for example the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin which were called the “Nazi Games” (Wolff & Yaeger, 2002, p. 60), while the 1968 Olympic Games were used by U.S. sprinters Tommie Smith and John Carlos to highlight the injustice of racial discrimination when they accepted their medals: “each raised one black-gloved fist as an expression of frustration and solidarity over the appalling treatment of African Americans in the U.S.” during the award ceremony (Rayworth, 2014).

SPORT: WELL-MANICURED BATTLEFIELDS

Consider sport; it is whatever people choose to make of it. It can decide winners and losers, and valorize them both. It can be an anesthetic from the daily grind of life. It can be entertainment in the form of epic rivalries, and unbelievable physical feats. It can reveal strength and grace, and unite the world in a peaceful two-week party of glorified one-upmanship. The kicking of a ball can temporarily halt the productivity of nearly the entire world, as people collectively root for two teams to put said soccer ball into the back of a netted box (World Cup Finals). Sport is whatever a person chooses to make of it: fun, a career, a statement.

As idealistically envisioned by the founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, sport is a peacemaking event where people, cultures and nations meet (Beck, 2013, p. 87). The promotion of peace through sport is an enduring principle of the Olympics (Richards, Fussey & Silke, 2010, p. 1).

Conversely, sport has also been described as a highly visible battlefield, “war minus the shooting” and as ‘a theatre of war’ (Beck, 2013, quoting Orwell p.72 and Buruma, p. 87) and has been subsequently used as a vehicle for “political exploitation,” as “a tool to convey political statements” (Richards et al., 2011, p. 17; Galily, Yarchi, & Tamir, 2015, p. 1004).

When political or social objectives are pursued violently, it is sometimes called terrorism. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines terrorism as “the unlawful use of force or violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population, or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives” (Terrorism 2002-2005, p. iv). The Olympic Games and sport have been the victim of terrorism, most notably in 1972 in Munich, Germany. And as noted by Taylor and Toohey (2015), although infrequent, terrorism has generally been regarded as the number one security issue at large sporting events (p. 374).

This paper presents sport as emblematic battlefield, beginning with the 1972 Munich Olympic terror attack which has become the reference point for terrorist attacks on sport. Two bombing attacks on sport in the U.S. will then be briefly examined: the 1996 Atlanta Olympic bombing, and the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Then, the response to Boston, specifically security screening measures of the National Football League (NFL) at regular season games, will be explored. The 2015 Paris Stade de France attack will also be briefly discussed. The significance of the attacks and methodology will be considered in context to Munich.

1972 MUNICH SUMMER OLYMPICS

The 1972 Munich Olympic assault was a particularly violent and tragic example of a sport event being used to make a political statement. The Palestinian group Black September entered the athletes' Olympic Village and took Israeli Olympic team members hostage. One police officer and 11 Israeli Olympic team members were murdered: two at the Olympic Village, and nine on an airport tarmac during the rescue attempt (Galily et al, 2015, p. 999). After the attack, one of the Palestinian assailants stated, "we recognize that sport is the religion of the western world...so we decided to use the Olympics, the most sacred ceremony of this religion, to make the world pay attention to us" (Guttman, 2002, p. 3). Because the Olympic Games receives international television coverage, it was and remains a global reaching broadcasting system that Black September utilized to spread their message to about 800 million people who watched it as it happened (Galily et al, 2015, p. 999).

Prior to the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich, West German organizers asked police psychologist Dr. Georg Sieber to generate potential worst-case scenarios for possible incidents, and he came up with 26. As Wolff and Yeager wrote,

"The psychologist had submitted to organizers Situation 21, which comprised the following particulars: At 5:00 one morning, a dozen armed Palestinians would scale the perimeter fence of the Village. They would invade the building that housed the Israeli delegation, kill a hostage or two ("To enforce discipline," Sieber says today), then demand the release of prisoners held in Israeli jails and a plane to some Arab capital. Even if the Palestinians failed to liberate their comrades, Sieber predicted, they would "turn the Games into a political demonstration" and would be "prepared to die.... On no account can they be expected to surrender." (2002, p. 60).

The Olympic organizers asked Sieber “if he might get back to them with less-frightful scenarios--threats better scaled to the Games they intended to stage” (Wolff & Yeager, 2002, p. 61).

The failure in Munich was attributed to lax security (Boyle, 2014, p. 31; Richards et al, 2010, p. 1) and as Wolff and Yeager (2002) wrote, “To revisit the Munich attack is to go slack-jawed at the official lassitude and incompetence...” Reportedly, there were no police or armed guards situated at the Olympic Village or stadium entrances resulting in the members of Black September entering the Olympic Village unchallenged (Klein, 2007, p. 26). The West German security forces were ill prepared, and during their hostage rescue attempt at the airport, the police believed there to be only five assailants, so they deployed five snipers, when there were actually eight assailants. The snipers were inexperienced and undertrained and the German SWAT team that was to assist them was directed to the wrong part of the airport, missing the encounter all together. The shootout was a three hour affair, ending with five assailants, one police officer and all nine hostages dead and three assailants were captured (Richards et al, 2010, p. 2).

Munich was called a “watershed” event because of the security changes that resulted from it: the public has “submitted to security searches in airports, arenas and other public events -- and learned to live with the threat of terrorism” since the Munich attack (Bierbauer, 1996). “Munich is now widely regarded within security circles as a superb example of what not to do on almost every level when it comes to protecting major events such as the Olympics” (Richards et al, 2010, p. 1). After Munich, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) instituted strict security criteria for future Olympics (Boyle, 2014, p. 31). The Germans budgeted \$2 million USD for securing the 1972 Olympics; in comparison, Canada spent over \$100 million on security for the 1976 Olympics in Montreal (Wolff & Yeager, 2002, p. 62). In the span of four years’ time, security expenditures for a Summer Olympic Games increased nearly 500 percent.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MUNICH

Munich is *the* reference point for a terrorist attack on sport because it changed our perceptions about security for sport, and sport as a target of terrorism. Terrorism expert Brian Jenkins explained how the al-Qa’ida terrorist attacks against the U.S. on 9/11 changed our perceptions when he wrote “The 9/11 attacks redefined plausibility. Scenarios previously dismissed as far-fetched became operative presumptions” (2006, p. 11). For the world of sport, the terror attack on the 1972 Olympic Games altered our perceptions, Munich redefined plausibility. Seiber’s Situation 21 dismissed by the 1972 Olympic organizers, instantly became a new operative presumption.

The profound effect of the Munich terror attack was not lost on al-Qa'ida either, when captured al-Qa'ida documents revealed that they regarded the Munich attack as the second most important terrorist attack of the past 50 years behind 9/11 (Richards et al, 2010, p. 57).

1996 ATLANTA SUMMER OLYMPICS

A second attack on the Olympic Games occurred in the U.S. at the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. On July 28, 1996 at 1:25 am, Eric Rudolph, a member of the fringe Christian fundamentalist group called 'Army of God', left a 40 lb. home-made bomb concealed in a backpack with masonry nails in Centennial Olympic Park which exploded, killing one, and injuring more than 100, while a second person died later due to a heart attack (Richards et al, 2010, p. 3). In 2005, Rudolph said the purpose of his assault was to "confound, anger and embarrass the Washington government in the eyes of the world for its abominable sanctioning of abortion on demand" (Silke, 2010, p. 58).

For both Munich in 1972 and Atlanta in 1996, the attacks on the Olympics were meant to send a message, against either the hosting government or a participating nation. The sporting event was the target of choice because of the participating nations, and because of the publicity the sporting event received (Silke, 2010, p. 58).

2013 BOSTON: ONE HIGH PROFILE SITUATION

Taylor and Toohey (2015) point out that although infrequent, terrorism has generally been regarded as the number one security issue at large sporting events (p. 374). They explained that "While tens of thousands of sports events run each year without incident, it only takes one high profile situation, such as the Boston Marathon bombings... to increase public demand for 'better' security and safety" (Taylor & Toohey, 2015, p. 379).

At 9:00 a.m. on Monday, April 15, 2013, the 117th running of the Boston Marathon (26.2 miles) took place with 27,000 runners participating and nearly 500,000 annual spectators from all over the world, "making it one of New England's most watched sporting events" (DeCanio, 2013). It is an open course, non-ticketed, with public access and light security. The annual marathon which generates over \$130 million, is held on Massachusetts Patriot's Day which commemorates the April 19, 1775 Battles of Lexington and Concord. While marathons usually run a circuitous route through cities, the Boston Marathon runs through eight cities and towns, beginning in Hopkinton and heading towards the finish line on Boylston Street in downtown Boston (Fielding et al., 2014, p. 34).

Security measures for the 2013 Boston Marathon included: Air patrols, K-9 units, 824 law enforcement officers and civilians, 400 Massachusetts Army National Guardsmen, 10,000 volunteers, and a robust surveillance camera system. Before the race, the Boston Police Department Joint Hazard Assessment Teams (JHATs) swept for explosives several times before the race started. Areas surrounding the finish and start lines were screened for contaminants and devices several times during the race and are also patrolled by law enforcement. But those areas are “open to the public, are heavily populated, and no screening of persons or baggage is conducted” (Miller & Wilson, 2013; Fielding et al., 2014, p. 78).

At 2:49 p.m., a blast occurred at the finish line area, in front of the Marathon Sports store at 671 Boylston Street, and a second blast followed thirteen seconds later 180 yards up the course at 755 Boylston Street, in front of the Forum restaurant (Fielding et al., 2014, p. 4). The blasts were from two homemade improvised explosive devices (HMIEDs) made out of pressure cookers packed with BB-like pellets and nails, placed in backpacks that were left next to trash cans in “densely populated spectator viewing areas” near the finish line (Fielding et al., 2014, p. 37; “Boston Marathon terror attack fast facts,” 2016).

The blasts immediately killed three people. About 264 others were injured, of which 16 suffered traumatic amputations. A fourth victim, Officer Sean Collier of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Police Department, was fatally shot by one of the fleeing suspects as he sat in his marked police vehicle on the MIT campus in Cambridge (Fielding et al., 2014, p. 54).

Law enforcement identified brothers Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev as primary suspects and after an extensive search, tracked them to Watertown, Massachusetts. Tamerlan Tsarnaev, shot during the police encounter, was pronounced dead while Dzhokhar Tsarnaev fled but was apprehended the following day (Inspectors General, 2014, p. 1). In June 2015, Dzhokhar Tsarnaev was convicted and sentenced to death (“Boston Marathon terror attack fast facts,” 2016).

The 2013 Boston Marathon was televised by CBS Boston, with “wire-to-wire coverage” (“Event Information,” 2016). After 3:00 pm, nearly every channel in the country was carrying live coverage of the attack on the Boston Marathon which was then “telecast live internationally” (Taylor & Toohey, 2015, p. 389).

The Boston attack targeted both competitors and spectators and made an attack on a sporting event in the U.S. a reality. This high profile event caused several professional sport leagues and sport venues to re-evaluate their scheduled events and security screening measures (Ludwig, 2014). Security personnel reacting to the Boston Marathon bombing were trying to address the latest concern: HMIEDs concealed in backpacks. Whilst some venues “removed trash cans from the exterior of the venue; others changed bag policies, and some venues cancelled events altogether” (“Command, Control,” 2013, p.42). The London Marathon that took place on April 21st, was held in close proximity to Buckingham Palace drew

36,500 runners and 700,000 spectators, wasn't canceled, but the race directors decided to increase security (Estes, Cramer & Springer, 2013). "This incident in Boston is a reminder, a wake-up call. It lets us know that just because some time has passed, we're still vulnerable and the threats are still there" said John Power, Director of Security at International Speedway Corp., owner of Daytona International Speedway and other racetracks (Mickle, 2013, p. 1). Even Russian President Putin said that the security for the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics was influenced by the Boston Marathon bombing (Ludwig, 2014).

Al-Qa'ida terrorist group franchisee al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was quick to claim they had motivated and guided the Tsarnaev brothers ("Inspire Magazine," 2013). In issue 11 of their *how to be a terrorist* magazine, *Inspire*, AQAP wrote an article.

"...entitled "Inspired by Inspire," Editor Yahya Ibrahim touted the widespread attention Inspire received after the Boston bombings, and the issue also included several media quotes connecting the Tsarnaev brothers to the magazine. Second, the Yemen-based jihadist group is seeking to encourage other Muslims living in the West to emulate the brothers" ("Inspire Magazine," 2013).

Further, in a 2014 issue of AQAP's *Inspire*, they recommended sport venues as sites for car bomb attacks and included the U.S. Open tennis tournament and soccer stadiums of the Premier League (Spaaij & Hamm, 2015, p. 1023). AQAP stated the events would have international media coverage and advised would-be assailants to strike when spectators would be leaving the stadiums in large crowds (p. 1023).

THE NFL'S CHANGE

Several days after the Boston terrorist attack, NFL security leaders met in May to "draft a new security policy for its 32 teams" (Smith, 2013, p. 26). NFL Director of Strategic Security Ray DiNunzio, stated that the Boston Marathon bombing "attack completely altered the way we think about security at sporting events... Such an incident was no longer something that could happen; it actually did happen" (Smith, 2013, p. 26).

Subsequently in June 2013, the NFL revised its bag policy, stating "restrictions on specific bags, containers, and packages permitted inside stadiums were unanimously recommended by the NFL Committee on Stadium Security after discussion with all 32 teams" (NFL teams, 2013). Effectively, the new Clear Bag Policy allowed spectators to only bring clear bags and clutch purses with them inside the stadiums (Ludwig, 2014).

The 2013 Clear Bag Policy was designed as a way to help speed up security searches and to make it more difficult to conceal weapons and explosives (Smith, 2013, p. 26). Adequate screening of their spectators is an issue for the NFL because their security is “more stringent and time-consuming than in Major League Baseball (MLB) and can have the unwanted consequence of creating congestion at the gates” (Smith, 2013, p. 28). The length of time needed to screen NFL spectators may be caused by the fact that their stadiums hold twice as many spectators than the average MLB ballpark - and maybe not because their security measures are “more stringent”. Consider that the NFL has 16 games in a regular 17 week season and attendance size for regular season games averages from 60,000 to 82,000 per game (“NFL Attendance,” 2016), while the average attendance at a regular season MLB game in 2017 was 22,000 to 40,000 per game (“MLB Attendance,” 2017). Screening 60,000 to 80,000 spectators can take a lot of time and the Clear Bag Policy should help.

The NFL Director of Strategic Security, Ray DiNunzio stated that “the greater security at NFL stadia can result in dense crowds stagnating outside the walls...which exposes them to the kind of danger we saw in Boston, so anything we can do to speed up the process reduces the risk” (Smith, 2013, p. 28). According to DiNunzio, the policy does two things:

- 1) Creates a buffer zone outside the inner perimeter (the stadium gates and walls) and
- 2) Enables security to sight screen people passing through “this secondary perimeter without slowing down the flow...then we’ll conduct the more thorough searches before they enter the stadium” (Smith, 2013, p. 26).

The NFL’s Clear Bag Policy specifications are outlined on the NFL’s website complete with illustrations state (“Be clear,” 2013):

- Bags that are clear plastic, vinyl or PVC and do not exceed 12" x 6" x 12."
- Spectators can purchase NFL team logo clear plastic tote bags
- One-gallon clear plastic freezer bag (Ziploc bag or similar).
- Small clutch bags, approximately the size of a hand, with or without a handle or strap can be taken into the stadium with one of the clear plastic bags.
- Exceptions will be made for medically necessary items after proper inspection at a gate designated for this purpose.

The NFL’s creation of a “buffer zone” may be the more interesting and practical security measure to come from the Boston Marathon bombings. As one expert advised authorities now need to secure “potential targets outside their

venues” at areas immediately outside a stadium, where leagues set up ancillary events to reach more fans (Mickle, 2013, p. 1). These may-be fans never go inside the stadium, but still want to be a part of an event. Adding screening measures for those external sites may increase the overall security cost of the actual event going on inside the stadium. Reportedly, “teams, leagues and government organizations already spend an estimated \$2 billion on security in the U.S.” which has increased since 9/11 (Mickle, 2013, p. 1).

As far as determining what overall effect the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings had on sports security in the U.S., it is clear the NFL responded and adjusted their security protocols. A practical adaptation which may have trickled down to college football stadiums. In 2016 at Florida State University’s (FSU) Doak Campbell Stadium, home of FSU’s football team, a clear bag policy was implemented, and aside from the choice of logos on the bags, it closely resembles the NFL’s policy (“FSU Game Day Plan,” 2016).

The reality is that no venue can be kept 100% safe, 100% of the time, but the NFL’s implementing a Clear Bag policy is a practical, measured response to an act of terrorism. The policy enables security screeners to check items spectators are attempting to bring in before they enter the formal screening zone at a stadium. However, the next incident may not utilize the same method of attack: backpacks containing HMIEDs. As one official pointed out, “The next attack isn’t going to come from any of those things...if we get too fixated on them, we’re going to miss what the next delivery is” (Ludwig, 2014). Moreover, a clear bag does not keep out things that are easily disguised. Plastic explosives could potentially be concealed in a candy bar wrapper, where the candy bar is clearly visible in the clear plastic bag – which a magnetometer will not detect, because it is made of plastic.

Inevitably, someone will always take new security screening measures as a challenge and attempt to bring in something like repelling ropes. In November 2015, during a live broadcast of a Monday Night Football game, protestors repelled from an upper stadium deck at the Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina while the Carolina Panthers played the Indianapolis Colts. Images showed that the protestors who entered with tickets were not carrying a clear bag (Johnson, 2015). A similar event occurred in January 2017 at the new U.S. Bank Stadium in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Goessling, 2017).

2015 PARIS

In Paris during 2015, terrorists carried out a multi-pronged assault at several sites including the Stade de France.

“On November 13, French and Belgian nationals launched a series of attacks that killed 130 victims in and around Paris. Terrorists

working in three coordinated teams attacked the Bataclan concert hall, the Stade de France, and restaurant terraces in four locations in the 10th and 11th arrondissements of Paris. Seven of the attackers died in clashes with police or by detonating suicide vests during the attacks” (“Country Reports on Terrorism,” 2015, p. 111).

Three suicide bombers attempted to attack the Stade de France with explosive vests during an exhibition match between France and Germany with over 80,000 spectators in attendance: one detonated outside stadium Gate D after he was prevented from entering, another detonated outside Gate H, and later, the third bomber detonated outside a McDonald’s restaurant (Alderman, 2015).

DISCUSSION

Terrorist attacks against sports can be used as “a tool to convey political statements” (Galily, Yarchi, & Tamir, 2015, p. 1004), but in the U.S. we are more likely to find the assailant making the violent political statement alive, because self-preservation is more compelling than their cause. The 1996 Atlanta Olympic attack and the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing were carried out by assailants using HMIEDs they planted and left at the event. The assailants were willing to watch other people die for their cause. Whereas the 2015 Stade de France Paris attack was carried out by three suicide bombers wearing vests filled with explosives. And like the Munich terrorists, who Seiber said “would be prepared to die” (Wolff & Yeager, 2002, p. 60), the 2015 Stade de France assailants were willing to perish for their cause, even after they failed to access their primary target.

The Boston Marathon bombing claimed the lives of three people, bringing the number of murders at sporting events by terrorists to four. This includes three in Boston and one from the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Park bombing. Because no one else was injured during the blast, the 2005 suicide bombing 200 yards outside of the Oklahoma Sooners football stadium which was filled with 82,000 spectators is being excluded (Keating, 2013; Six events, 2014). Thus, in the U.S. from 1972 to 2016, over a time span of 44 years, three terrorists murdered four people at sport events using HMIEDs, and we caught all of them.

Besides being used to convey political messages, sport can also reveal strength, grace, and resiliency.¹ In response to challenges, adjustments have been made, new security screening procedures have been developed, as well as policies and exercises, even if hyper reflexive and mildly laborious.

¹ “Resilient adj. 1. Able to bounce back after change or adversity. 2. Capable of preparing for, responding to, and recovering from difficult conditions. Syn.: TOUGH. See also: New York City.” (“Plan NYC,” 2013, p. 2).

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