# Scottish football faces urgent call to tackle rising violence and drug-fuelled disorder



In recent weeks, the increasing disorder within Scottish football has reached alarming levels, underscored by a series of harrowing incidents, most notably the injury sustained by Aberdeen defender Jack MacKenzie during a match at Tannadice. MacKenzie was struck by a chair thrown by one of his own club's supporters, a stark reminder of the persistent violence and disorder that has seeped into the sport. This incident follows a distressing trend characterised by violent clashes and the use of dangerous pyrotechnics, suggesting a crisis that warrants immediate action from football authorities.

The atmosphere around Scottish football matches has been marred by episodes of crowd violence, with recent weeks highlighting a worrying increase in such disruptions. Not long before MacKenzie’s injury, Partick Thistle reported that several young fans were injured due to a pyrotechnic display during a play-off match against Ayr United. Similarly, during an earlier Scottish Cup semi-final against Celtic, a St Johnstone supporter suffered a medical emergency linked to the chaos surrounding a pyro incident at Hampden. These incidents reveal a troubling trend where fans are subjected to unsafe conditions, prompting calls for urgent reform from many stakeholders involved in the sport.

Celtic fans, celebrating their recent league victory, displayed their disregard for public safety as they gathered in large numbers in the city centre, prompting chaos that resulted in business closures. Videos circulating on social media depicted sectarian chanting and anti-social behaviour that overshadowed the celebration. The rising levels of disorder have led many, including the Scottish Football Supporters’ Association, to voice serious concerns regarding fan safety, suggesting we are teetering on the brink of a catastrophic incident. Alastair Blair, the Association's Director of Operations, articulated the gravity of the situation, stating, “Nobody should ever go to a football match and not make it home.”

The analysis of the current state of fan culture reveals more alarming trends. In particular, the increasing use of cocaine among matchgoers has emerged as a significant factor contributing to the rise in violence. With reports indicating that 30% of fans have witnessed drug use at matches, it’s essential to recognize the interplay between substance abuse and fan behaviour. Geoffrey Pearson, a scholar in criminal law, noted that for some attendees, the match is merely one aspect of a broader social event defined by heavy substance use and a search for a transgressive experience.

As concerns grow regarding the potential for fatalities tied to these behaviours, football authorities in Scotland are increasingly urged to adopt a model of strict liability, which would hold clubs accountable for the actions of their fans. This is seen as a necessary step to mitigate risks and safeguard the integrity of the sport. Calls for action are mirrored by observations that diminished policing at matches has created an environment ripe for disorder. The Scottish Police Federation has stressed time and again that relying solely on stewards is insufficient in deterring troublemakers.

Moreover, the broader socio-economic context cannot be overlooked. With the cost of living crisis biting deep, some experts fear this may lead to an uptick in hooliganism as frustrations among fans manifest in violent behaviour. Former First Minister Henry McLeish highlights the potential for economic pressures to spill over into football-related violence, stressing that economic discontent could drive individuals to seek release through anti-social activities.

The compounding issues of drug use, inadequate security measures, and escalating violence suggest a systemic problem that requires comprehensive solutions. The time for dismissive attitudes from authorities is long past; immediate and robust action is essential to safeguard fans and players alike. Acknowledging the reality that most supporters wish to enjoy the game without fear, a united front is crucial. This means engaging in honest conversations about fan culture, adopting strict liability, and enforcing regulations to eliminate pyrotechnics and violence from the sport.

As Scottish football confronts these challenges, the ultimate goal must be to restore safety and enjoyment to matches. Ensuring that everyone who attends a game can do so without the fear of violence or intimidation is non-negotiable. The stark warning from supporters’ groups that a fatal incident could soon occur should serve as a desperate call to action, compelling authorities to rethink their approach to maintaining order within the beautiful game.

### Reference Map

1: Paragraphs 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8
2: Paragraph 2
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7: Paragraph 7

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-14728581/We-heading-point-going-killed-inside-stadium-Scotland.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/rangers-condemn-shotgun-banner-during-old-firm-derby-2025-05-05/> - Rangers Football Club condemned a controversial banner displayed by their supporters during the Old Firm derby against Celtic on May 4, 2025. The banner depicted former manager Graeme Souness holding a double-barrel shotgun with the message 'Take aim against the rebel scum.' The club criticized both the banner and a supporter who threw a glass bottle near Celtic's goalkeeper, emphasizing that such behavior has no place at their stadium and promising to identify and take action against those responsible. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/sports/soccer/rangers-condemn-shotgun-banner-during-old-firm-derby-2025-05-05/?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62zd50e21ko> - Violence and disorder erupted in Glasgow city center ahead of the Scottish League Cup final between Celtic and Rangers on December 14, 2024. Footage showed large groups of fans setting off flares near shoppers, with police using batons to control the crowd. Missiles were thrown, windows smashed, and officers were authorized to use stop and search powers. The disturbances led to the closure of several roads and a significant clean-up operation. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c62zd50e21ko?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gl8yx10keo> - First Minister John Swinney condemned the 'completely unacceptable' violence before the Scottish League Cup final in Glasgow on December 14, 2024. A minority of fans charged along Argyle Street, setting off flares near Christmas shoppers. A police officer was injured after missiles were thrown, and a 26-year-old man was seriously assaulted. Swinney emphasized the responsibility of clubs to ensure proper behavior from their fans. ([bbc.com](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c4gl8yx10keo?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-rise-hooliganism-scottish-football-27888005> - Former First Minister Henry McLeish expressed concerns that the cost of living crisis could lead to a surge in hooliganism at Scottish football matches. Following incidents of violence after Premiership and Championship games, McLeish warned that economic pressures might drive individuals to seek outlets for their anger, potentially manifesting in football-related violence. ([dailyrecord.co.uk](https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/fears-rise-hooliganism-scottish-football-27888005?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/sport/football/24157677.reduced-policing-blamed-rising-crowd-unrest-scottish-football/> - The rise in crowd disorder at Scottish football matches has been attributed to reduced policing levels inside stadiums. Clubs are warned that stewards alone may not deter potential troublemakers. Incidents include missiles thrown at players during matches and the use of pyrotechnics by fans. The Scottish Police Federation highlighted concerns over the adequacy of current security measures. ([heraldscotland.com](https://www.heraldscotland.com/sport/football/24157677.reduced-policing-blamed-rising-crowd-unrest-scottish-football/?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.scotsman.com/sport/football/scottish-football-authorities-warned-a-spectator-could-be-killed-as-fan-group-demands-pyro-clampdown-4614790> - The Scottish Football Supporters’ Association has called for a crackdown on the use of pyrotechnics in stadiums, warning that a spectator could be seriously injured or killed if the law is not enforced properly. Incidents include a 10-year-old Dundee fan being scarred during a match against St Johnstone. The SFSA emphasized the need for stricter enforcement to prevent potential fatalities. ([scotsman.com](https://www.scotsman.com/sport/football/scottish-football-authorities-warned-a-spectator-could-be-killed-as-fan-group-demands-pyro-clampdown-4614790?utm_source=openai))