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Sport.... At war?

Sport... a universal communion, beyond political regimes, religions...

The transferal of players from one continent to another, first from North Africa then from sub-Saharan Africa, the call, thanks to Spain and Portugal, of South America, while players from the Far East, China, Japan, or South Korea now join European soccer clubs, enriching English, French, German or Italian clubs with their talent.

And then, sometimes sparked off by national political clashes, and also now by confrontations between States and Nations, these translate in violent demonstrations, seemingly unrelated to each other.

The most recent example took place on the “black” Saturday evening of October 28, 2023 in Marseille, where tragedy was narrowly averted^[1].

This climate of civil war, fostered by irresponsible people between two conurbations which should be concentrating their efforts on every front, by combining their efforts economically to make them, in the so beautiful and so accurate words once used by Jean-Jacques Servan-Schreiber, the “California of Europe”, makes us fear the worst if we do not address the situation without further delay...

The Federations, in this case the French Soccer Federation and the French Professional Soccer League, have a major responsibility, i.e., to severely punish dangerous acts bordering on homicide, independently of the penalties provided for by the French Criminal Code under the jurisdiction of the judges of the Marseilles

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Judicial Court.

I chaired the Ethics and Disciplinary National Committee of the French National Soccer League from 1987 to 1992.

This Committee was abolished with a stroke of the pen, without any communication to my brilliant collaborators (several of whom went on to reach the pinnacle of their careers at the *Cour de Cassation* - French Supreme Court)!

In the meantime, hooliganism had been fought and defeated by exemplary English leaders!

“O tempora, o mores”!^[2]

I then chaired the Legal Committee of the French Professional Soccer League for twelve years, under the happy and wise chairmanship of Frédéric Thiriez, a lawyer authorized to appear before the *Conseil d'Etat* (French Administrative Supreme Court) and the *Cour de Cassation* (French Supreme Court), and with the enlightened and learned assistance of Vincent Ponsot, and we did not at that time detect any serious deviation or culpable failure in the application of then-current regulations.

The Disciplinary Committee, itself composed of qualified members and chaired without fail or fuss, was neither alerted to the excesses we have witnessed on several occasions in recent years: violence, homophobic slurs, or anti-Semitic provocations at times...

It is true that current international conflicts, confrontations in Eastern Europe and the Near and Middle East, and jihadist activities in sub-Saharan Africa, are giving rise to oppositions, initially through words, which cannot be a lasting substitute for the laws and duties of respect for human beings and democracy.

It is therefore essential, outside the exercise of regalian powers, that the Federations and their delegations (in particular the Leagues) apply their disciplinary texts without hesitation or fear.

Sport is a school of education and merit: This is the price of life.

^[1] On October 28, 2023, the Lyon soccer team bus was pelted with stones while making its way to the Velodrome stadium in Marseille before the match between the two Ligue 1 rivals. Lyon coach Fabio Grosso suffered a facial injury that required 12 stitches. Buses of Lyon soccer team fans were also targeted by the attack.

^[2] Literally ““Oh, the times! Oh, the customs!”

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