

Case #12. F.C. Baník Ostrava Has Control Problems

Although the city of Ostrava was recently recognized with an award as a “Czech City of Sports,” it is facing a long-term problem at odds with this award related because there is an opposite side of the local Ostrava sport scene. Fans of local football club – **F.C. Baník Ostrava**-- may be more famous than the club they are cheering. This fame is not due the impressive sport atmosphere of an A-class football club or the enthusiasm of the fans, but fear of a segment of the fans, local hooligans known as the “Chachars (Tartars) of Ostrava”.

Team History

FC Baník Ostrava was established in 1922 and initially called SK Slezská Ostrava. It started in a third football league then fought its way up to Extra League. On its way to become one of the best Czech teams, a new stadium was built in Ostrava by the **team owners** known as “Bazaly.” Today, together with hundreds and thousands of football fans there evolved a group of fans that seem to prefer fighting other fans more than watching the game. These fans proclaimed themselves the new “Hooligans,” inspired by the original ones in the UK. (See hooligans.cz)



Those hard-core Hooligans provoke many fights both home and at matches in other cities, creating a very bad image of FC Baník Ostrava. As a result, many fans are afraid during the matches and have stopped coming to Bazaly, afraid for themselves and their families or being “collateral damage” in some fight.

Eventually, **City municipal authorities** were asked by Ostrava citizens to help restore a peaceful atmosphere at Bazzly during the matches and even after them. However, according to Czech law, the Police are not allowed to assist unless fights have already begun. Because **FC Baník Ostrava** is privately owned, securing the safety for fans is partly seen as the responsibility of the stadium owners.

Nevertheless, **City municipal authorities** decided to react on these Hooligans and required police to be present for each match at Bazaly and to have riot police and horsemen to be ready for counteractions against the Hooligans. As **owners** of the stadium, **FC Baník Ostrava** accepted the main responsibility to keep the fans in line, and hired a **private security firm** for this purpose. However, given Czech law, the **private security firms** were not able to forbid some of the known Hooligans from entering the stadium as is done in UK and other countries. There were almost no possibilities to prevent those “ultras fans” to attend the matches. Further, most employees of the security agencies are not professionally trained and organised but often were recruited just for these occasions like football matches and in some ways are of a very similar mindset to the “ultra fans.”

So far, there have been no discussions about creating new, more effective Czech laws concerning these issues. It has been suggested that the situation concerning the ownership and management of the F.C. Baník has troubled its fans for some time. Current **F.C Banik Ostrava** management appeared to lack the skills and will to promote the club and control its Hooligan fans.

The **Czech football union** complains that football clubs do not have enough revenue to pay for installation of effective camera systems for the stadiums and making reliable records of the faces of hooligans, despite the fact that football in the Czech Republic draws far more revenue than any other sport.

In 2013, there was an incident at a match between FC Banik Ostrava and Viktoria Plzeň. It was an important match in the Extra League, deciding about the league position of these two clubs, but the event became part of the history of Czech football for a totally different reason. In 17th minute of the game, Hooligans ran around the stadium, and using the higher ground above the area for visiting team fans, started to throw rocks, bricks and even pyrotechnics on the Viktoria Plzeň fans. Soon after this, visiting fans reacted and started to fight back. Fights were held also outside the stadium. more F.C. Banak fans, not only ultras, joined the fight and many left the stadium to help aid the Hooligans, not only against the Viktoria Plzeň fans that were already outnumbered, but also against the Police. Using more and more pyrotechnics, smoke bombs and firecrackers, they provoke the Police to

counteraction and they were pushed back by the horses. But the fights were far from over.

As more and more fans came out of the stadium to join the fray, Police officers in charge decided to use tear-gas grenades. The amount of the gas was so enormous that when the wind blew it covered the entire stadium. The game had to be stopped and the players sent to their locker rooms. People trying to exit the stadium found the gates locked in order to prevent more fans entering and joining the fights. They were trapped, and had to cover their faces with scarves and cloths. Ambulances had to be called in for multiple injured people, including small children and women. When the teargas finally cleared the match continued, but so did the fights all around the stadium and later even inside the city.

The match ended with several cars damaged, injured men, women and children who had just came to watch and support their sport club, and injured policemen and horses. 12 people were arrested and faced possible charges for vandalism and violence against public officials. The 0-2 loss for FC Banik was the least memorable of all the events that happened that day.



Case Questions

- 1. Should providing stadium security during football matches be part of the social contract and responsibilities of F.C. Banik Ostrava? Explain why or why not? If not Banik, who?**
- 2. There were many incidents after the match in the city outside football stadium. Does F.C. Banik have any responsibility for what goes on outside the stadium? If not Banik, who does?**

- 3. Draw a scenario that would lead to (a) passage of a law enabling football teams and stadiums to use pre-emptive measures to prevent hooliganism at matches as in the UK, and (b) team owners the Czech Football Union being forced by the Czech government to budget for extensive crowd control at football matches.**
- 4. Since continued violence in the stadiums represents a risk to stadium attendance and thus the financial viability of the Czech Football Union (CFU), what can the CFU do to bring the violence under control?**

[Where appropriate, reference Module 12 in your answers to Q's 1,2 and 4.]

This case was prepared by Martin Klega, a student at the Technical University of Ostrava, under the direction and with the assistance of Professor Earl Molander. It has been modified from the original.