

Chapter 7

Aggressive Behavior of Soccer Players as Social Interaction

Amélie Mummendey and Hans Dieter Mummendey

Much has been written about aggression in sports, and seemingly for good reason. If aggressive behavior is conceived of as a kind of behavior that intentionally or unintentionally is directed against a person, or is performed to set other persons at a disadvantage, or even leads to the injuring or hurting of an opponent, sports seems to be a suitable field for the observation of aggressive behavior, and for the empirical investigation of its antecedents and consequences.

Soccer as a Field for Studying Aggressive Interaction

As soccer is the most popular sport in Europe, it has attracted much attention from European psychologists and sociologists writing about aggression in sports. A good deal of the empirical results considered by a research group of the German Federal Institute for Sport Science (Projektgruppe "Sport und Gewalt" des Bundesinstituts für Sportwissenschaft, 1982) is based on studies (e.g., Schmidt, 1978) of European football (soccer), although there seem to be more empirical investigations on the aggressive behavior of fans, spectators, and hooligans than of actors interacting in sporting events (e.g., Gabler, Schulz, & Weber, 1982; Weis, Backes, Gross, & Jung, 1982).

That which is known about factors influencing the aggressive behavior of players is classified by the research group (Projektgruppe, 1982) as follows:

1. Structural factors: e.g., systems of rules due to the specific sport discipline.
2. Situational factors: home or away game, state of play (i.e., how many goals already scored by each team), importance of the result of the game, class of game (i.e., 1st or 2nd division, etc.), how many minutes already played, position of player, task of player, referee, trainer, where the foul occurred.
3. Understanding of norms and rules: e.g., informal concepts of norms that allow more aggressive behavior than is allowed by the rules.
4. Interactions of players' and audience's violence.

European football certainly seems to be a promising field for the study of aggressive behavior since, compared with everyday behavior routines, there seem to be many aggressive acts resulting in numerous, often severe, injuries. There is also much public interest and discussion in the media about players' hurting and damaging each other, and this seems especially true for the professional football leagues. A tendency toward increased aggression is implied by the apparently high level of physical injury in professional football. While the publicly discussed level of physical aggression and violence in football appears to be extraordinary to some observers, there are other interpreters who consider football aggression to be only a special case of instrumental aggression that seems to prevail in industrial societies (see Volkamer's 1971 study of football players' aggressive tendencies, interpreted in the framework of competition-oriented social systems).

Since sports are taken as a field for the scientific study of aggression, psychological studies in this field will be only as valid as the psychological theories and concepts of aggression are. If we look at books about aggressive behavior written or edited by psychologists we find no homogeneous perspective, no uniform way of dealing with the problem of what is called aggression. Consequently, authors of books on aggression normally present collections of different ethological and psychological approaches including, for example, catharsis-oriented views of aggression, learning-theory oriented interpretations, and so on. Aggressive behavior in the field of sports seems to be discussed first of all in a kind of *functional* manner: What function has competition in sports for the competing individual? What are the effects of aggressive competition in sports on the individual engaged in that particular competition? What are the effects on the spectators observing aggressive competition in sports either from their seats or on television? As for the catharsis-learning controversy: Are players or spectators more or less aggressive after their engagement in sporting competition? Are there types of sport that lead to more or less aggression in athletes or spectators? Are there different positions in a team with respect to aggressive behavior and are there relations between the respective roles and the personalities of the players?

We think that it can be noticed that all these different approaches toward aggressive behavior and violence in sport have two features in common: First, aggressive or violent behavior is treated from an *individualistic* perspective; second, the whole field of sporting activities, especially matches between individuals or teams is dealt with as if these activities were something *extraordinary* and different from normal everyday activities and interactions.

An individualistic perspective implies that psychologists are mainly concerned with the occurrence of certain *individual acts* that can be defined as aggressive. Here the interest lies in the conditions for the varying probability of the occurrence of those acts, the question of how many individuals show aggressive acts, and how often they do this. Apparently sporting activities are considered as being *special* with respect to the problem of aggression and violence—at least in the context of certain kinds of matches, such as football, soccer, ice hockey—in the sense that participants, and more and more often audiences, too, engage in extraordinarily intense and frequent aggressive behavior which seems to differ from the way people behave in other situations (e.g., in the supermarket or on the bus).

In the following considerations we argue for a more *social psychological* perspective on aggressive behavior; that means aggression and violence are conceptualized as a certain kind of *social interaction* between at least two individuals which takes place in a defined social context, the appearance and the process of this interaction are dependent on certain characteristics of the surrounding social context. Sporting matches are seen as only one example out of a larger number of contexts or *behavior settings* which all can be described with respect to common aspects having some impact upon the regulation of aggressive interactions.

Aggressive Behavior as Social Interaction

When we talk about aggressive behavior we describe incidents, in which, for example, a child hits another in order to gain possession of a favored toy, a person is wounded or killed by another's use of violence, or a football player is offended and severely hurt. What do these apparently differing incidents have in common?

There are always at least two people, or identifiable social units, taking part in the events. For one of these two people (the victim) the incident is unpleasant. Additionally, the victim maintains that the action of the protagonist is either unjust or inappropriate to the antecedent or prevailing situation, and hence considers himself justified in holding the protagonist responsible for any resulting damage. The protagonist, however, proceeds on the assumption that his action is justified by the given circumstances, and appropriate to the previous behavior of his interaction partner. In regard to the incident in question, he does not take the viewpoint of the victim into consideration. Thus, we can identify three typically conflicting positions: that of the victim, that of the protagonist, and that of any possibly available witnesses.

Although there may be agreement over what is "aggressive" in general, one can see a number of conflicting interpretations as to whether a specific incident involves aggression or not. It could be, for example, that in a dispute over the possession of a toy, one observer sees it as an aggressive quarrel, and another as harmless and just part of a game. What one person considers a swear word another may consider to be effective jesting or teasing. A militarily occupied country can consider the occupation to be an aggressive enforcement of unauthorized territorial claims, or desired assistance with internal difficulties, and this can also be directly criticized as unauthorized meddling in internal affairs. Even an apparently unequivocal fact, such as the killing of a person, can be judged in different ways. For a revolutionary, the successful assassination of a dictator is considered to be the appropriate and legitimate way to change unbearable social conditions. On the other hand, from the opposite viewpoint, the assassination is a crime, is aggressive to the highest degree, and calls for suitable punishment.

Thus, it appears to be of great interest to assume that the character of aggressive behavior is not in itself without problems. Therefore, *the final goal is not so much the descriptions of definitely identifiable behavior, but more, the final interpretation of specific interactional processes leading to the label "aggressive."* In the course of the following argument, aggressive behavior will be specified as confrontation

between people. "Social interaction" will be preferred as a unit of analysis to "individual behavior." Since an aggressive act is regarded as a social interaction between individuals or groups in a specific social situation, for an adequate description and analysis of aggressive behavior it is not sufficient to confine oneself to morphological aspects (such as intensity or directedness in a behavior-theoretical sense) or criteria of inner psychic processes (such as annoyance) or aggression as a dispositional assumption. Supplementary aspects of the normative context must be interposed with, among others, *ecological* aspects of the setting. The individual construction of this social situation can be seen as determined by the observed meaning of the ecological conditions. The choice of appropriate behavior alternatives would follow from this. Such behavior regularities in interaction can be regarded as necessary preconditions to the observation of *norm disturbance*. A deviation from normative appropriateness may under certain circumstances to be investigated be judged as aggression. In such a case, the victim will, from his perspective, perceive offense to a norm. He then desires vindication and provokes reactions which may possibly be labelled as "aggression" by the new victim (the former protagonist). The reactions of the victim are influenced by the nature of the *norm offense relative to the situational context*, and by the possibility that he will interpret this in accordance with his social motivations, personal standards, his view of himself, his ideas of justice, and so on. The concept of aggressive behavior as a social interaction between various persons in a certain situation is supported by several authors (DaGloria & DeRidder, 1977, 1979; Felson, 1981; Leyens, 1977; Tedeschi, Gaes, & Rivera, 1977).

What is interesting about aggressive interaction is the rough description of sequences of reciprocal ways of behaving, namely, continuation, escalation, breaking off, or compensation for damages. The description of these phenomena requires consideration of the temporal progress of an aggressive episode. At definite times in this progression, one may recognize an aggressive quarrel through the typical opposing positions drawn up by those taking part. These positions are principally interchangeable. A protagonist and a victim interact at a definite point in time during the episode. At the same time, a third person may witness the sequence of events. Certainly, the classification of the persons involved in a concrete exchange, either in the role of the victim or protagonist, is dependent on their individually intended judgments. However, independent of this fact, there is always a protagonist position, and a related victim position, in an interaction sequence which is described as aggressive.

The circumstances in both of these positions can be regarded as a conflict like that, for example, described by Feger (1972): "Conflict behavior is directed towards either the destruction, wounding, damaging, or exerting of control over, the other party or parties. Conflict relationship exists when it is possible for one party to make (relative) gains at the expense of the other" (p. 1600; our translation).

In the case of an aggressive interaction both protagonist and victim have by definition incompatible interests. The victim wishes to avoid the consequences of the action that the protagonist provokes. Thereby, interest should be understood in the broadest sense of the given goal orientation of each person involved. It may concern itself with "conflicts of interest" as in the meaning given by Sherif (1966) or "conflicts of values" as in Tajfel (1978).

The deciding factor for the conceptualization of "aggressive" behavior is certainly not the direct or indirect harmful interest that is shown, in fact, by the protagonist, but is more the interest that the victim *imputes* to the protagonist. The victim can throughout arrive at the assessment that one of the ways of behavior to which he is object is aggressive, while at the same time the protagonist is convinced (though he may not state this as a justification after the event) that he had no intent of causing harm (Riess, Rosenfeld, & Tedeschi, 1981). Indeed, the protagonist himself may state that his goal is prejudicial to the victim, but in contrast to the victim, he judges his action to be relatively appropriate to the given circumstances, and with this assessment, stands opposed to the victim. The present conflict relationship which is judged here as an aggressive social interaction implies (at least current at the time of the choice of action) a divergence between victim and protagonist in the judgment of the action, regarding its situational normative appropriateness. Thus, a social interaction is classified as aggression if, in addition to causing injury (or assumed intent to injure), there exists with respect to situational normative appropriateness, an actual dissent between victim and protagonist.

The concept of aggressive behavior as a specific form of social interaction suggests four fundamental aspects: *mutual interpretation*, *situational context*, *divergence of perspectives* depending on specific positions (victim, actor, or observer), and *temporal progress*.

Mutual Interpretation

Aggressive interactions are, like all social interactions, conveyed by the valuations of the interaction situation and by the expectations of the persons concerned (Tajfel, 1972; Tajfel & Fraser, 1978). The interaction partners interpret and judge the respectively evoked reciprocal behavior and choose their own responses as a result of their respective definitions of situations and actions. The interpretation of an action as aggressive determines the progress of subsequent interaction. The result of such an interpretation is that the victim, corresponding to the norm of negative reciprocity, considers it his right to respond to this aggressive behavior in an "aggressive" manner, "to pay back the same with the same" (Lagerspetz & Westman, 1980). The protagonist who is judged to be aggressive is not only rejected, but must also contend with corresponding reactions and sanctions (Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1976; DaGloria & DeRidder, 1977). A protagonist who shows repentance, and supplies reasons for his behavior, does not have to face sanctions (Mallick & McCandless, 1966; Schwartz, Kane, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978).

Injury, intention, and norm deviation have been established as the leading interpretational criteria to define aggressive behavior (cf. Löscher, Mummendey, Bornewasser, & Linneweber, 1982).

Injury. Aggressive behavior is distinguished from any other social behavior by its apparently injurious consequences for at least one of the persons concerned. The observer's description of it as either injurious or harmless is not only based on obvious behavior and its observable consequences, but draws upon supplementary information from the whole situation (Schott, 1975). The judge draws inferences to describe an incident as injurious from many different sources. An offense such as

rape would be classified as more or less injurious, depending on the social group to which the victim belongs (Jones & Aronson, 1973), or the sort of attitude held by the judge (Malamuth, 1981). In order to describe an incident or stimulus result as injury, the judge must have standards that enable him to determine deviations from norms. The perception of injury, and the definition of behavior as aggressive, is a judgment process which, along with descriptions, also involves attributions and valuations (Tedeschi & Riess, 1981). The goal or purpose of an injurious action is an essential part of the description of the critical behavior. Since the aims of a behavior, or the motives of a protagonist, cannot always be directly observed in his behavior, they must be integrated by the judge and attributed to the protagonist.

The injury variable has been considered as a substantial part of scientific definitions and operationalizations of aggression (Berkowitz, 1962; Buss, 1961). Inquiries into the perception of aggressive behavior have established that, beside other definition criteria, the factor of injury is significant (Rule & Nesdale, 1976). The willingness of judges to impose sanctions is clearly influenced by the extent of injury that has occurred (Nesdale, Rule, & McApa, 1975; Shaw & Reitan, 1969).

Intention. In a definition of critical behavior, it is not only necessary to consider whether it is possible to identify a perpetrator or producer of injury but also whether this perpetrator can be held responsible for his actions and their consequences. If a protagonist is regarded as the responsible cause of a negative action sequence, this does not mean to say that he can be held responsible for it. He may have caused the incident unintentionally or through unforeseen ways. With respect to intentionality, much is determined through attribution processes (cf. Harvey, Ickes, & Kidd, 1976, 1978). The attribution of cause is not to be equated with that of responsibility (Heider, 1958). The choice of counteractions or sanctions from the judge's point of view, and therewith the further course of the interaction, is dependent upon the perceived intention of the perpetrator of the injury. Also, when an actual injury does not take place, perhaps because the protagonist's action is without success, the behavior may be defined as aggressive because of the protagonist's intent, and hostile counteractions may follow (Greenwell & Dengerink, 1973; Nickel, 1974; Schuck & Pisor, 1974). The attribution of the actor's responsibility or guilt is a necessary requirement for the imposition of counteractions or sanctions (Dyck & Rule, 1978; Shaw & Reitan, 1969). Intended aggressive behavior is judged to be more objectionable than justified aggressive acts (Briscoe, 1970; Ferguson & Rule, 1980).

Norm deviation. In prevailing debates in the realm of attribution research, it is increasingly emphasized that attribution, as a basis for deciding on appropriate counteraction, involves much more than the localization of causal factors, namely, reasons and justifications regarding social norms and rules (Buss, 1978; Pligt, 1981; Zuckerman, 1979). It has been found that action has to violate norms and rules shared by the judge in order to be defined as aggressive. Tedeschi and co-workers managed to establish in several experiments that a protagonist who intends to cause injury is only judged by witnesses to be aggressive when his behavior is also judged to be antinormative, that is, not in accord with situationally valid rules. The norm

of negative reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) may be regarded as an important regulating standard for aggressive interaction (Lagerspetz & Westman, 1980). If an "intent to injure" constitutes a reply to a previous provocation, then the protagonist is not assessed as aggressive. If the counteraction exceeds the preceding deed, if, for example, revenge is excessive, it is judged as inappropriate and aggressive (Brown & Tedeschi, 1976; Carpenter & Darley, 1978; Kane et al., 1976; Rivera & Tedeschi, 1976; Stapleton, Joseph, & Tedeschi, 1978). Perceptions of the justification or legitimacy of a frustration, applied to situationally valid standards, effect a decrease of aggressive behavior, while assaults which are interpreted as inappropriate and arbitrary increase aggressive counteractions (Burnstein & Worchel, 1962; Pastore, 1952).

Injury, intention, and norm deviation may be regarded as essential definition criteria for aggressive behavior (Tedeschi, Brown, & Smith, 1974). The abovementioned criteria determine the interpretation of behavior in reciprocal ways. For example, the extent of actual damage is irrelevant to the definition of the critical act when the judge has distinct indications of the existence of intent on the part of the protagonist, and/or the norm-offending character of the action in question. If a behavior distinctly deviates from valid norms, and the judge has unequivocal information as to the protagonist's intent to injure, then as a result it will be certain that the critical action will be defined as aggressive (Löscher et al., 1982; Mummendey et al., 1982). As norms and values exercise no continual influence on interaction, but receive situation-specific activation (Pepitone, 1976), and as in interaction situations, competing sets of norms hold validity and relevance, there are diverging judgments of the appropriateness of an action possible that are dependent on the very context in which the critical action is embedded.

Situational Context

Aggressive social interaction does not take place in a vacuum (see Tajfel, 1972; Weinstein, 1969), and for that reason should not be conceived as such. Aggressive interactions are bound to situational contexts which may be described by analogy, for example, Barker's (1968) "behavior settings" or Stokols and Shumaker's (1980) "places," in regard to their spatial and temporal dimensions. The situation context reveals whether, and in what measure, single or multiple criteria are fulfilled with regard to norm deviation. The context of a critical interaction is here defined as the network of social, spatial, normative, and temporal circumstances, and those concerned with the development of interaction. These circumstances are brought by a judging individual into the (psycho)logical context (Mummendey & Linneweber, 1981). Context aspects are accentuated in the judgment of the incident (cf. the concept of "environmental props," Forgas, 1978). It is, therefore, more the context than the behavior itself which determines the definition (Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976). Norms and rules are made available by the surrounding social system. They are codified (e.g., as explicit behavior instructions, orders, etc.), or they exist as implicit conceptions, expectations, and so on. The actual context of a particular interaction thereby exists as subjective representations, constructions, and a selection of objective factors. These certainly stand not in an arbitrary but in an analyza-

bly regulated relationship to reality. A particular interaction is consequently judged not in an arbitrary manner, but by criteria of appropriateness specific to the situation, that is, by normative criteria which are superindividually considered to be valid in the specific situation (cf. Linneweber, Mummendey, Bornewasser, & Loschper, 1982).

Divergence Between Protagonist's and Victim's Perspectives

The particular judgment of a behavior in respect to its situational appropriateness, and more extensively, to its aggressive character, is thus variable but not arbitrary. The specific perspective of a judge may be regarded as an essential determiner of appropriateness judgments. It is assumed that with aggressive interactions, a divergence arises in perceived appropriateness between the protagonist and the victim. The victim maintains that the protagonist's way of behavior is inappropriate, for instance, in regard to standards that are subjectively considered to be valid. He comes to this opinion by assessing the preceding interaction and by considering the conceivable behavior alternatives. At the time of his choosing to act, and actually executing his action, the protagonist makes a positive judgment of them, adequate to his definition of the situation. He considers his action to be appropriate (or he would not have executed it).

Investigations of attribution theory show a divergence in attributions of cause between victim and protagonist (Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, & Maracek, 1973; Storms, 1973; Regan & Totten, 1975). Contradictory attributions of cause characterize and promote conflict (Forsyth, 1980; Horai, 1977; Orvis, Kelley, & Butler, 1976). Aggressive interactions are not distinguished by a consensus of opinion, but by a conflict of interpretations and situation assessments. Corresponding to this, hints are found in several investigations of aggressive behavior—just as in everyday life—that there is a basic divergence between protagonist and victim in the judgment of critical actions (DaGloria & DeRidder, 1977; Felson, 1978; Tedeschi et al., 1974). Hamilton (1978) emphasizes that attributions of responsibility always contain a comparison of the action in question with valid behavior expectations and standards. Buss (1978) offers the theory that protagonists not only deal with situational attributions, but always deliver explanations for their own behavior which represent a justification in regard to the social norms and rules of social behavior. In the protagonist-observer divergence, it is increasingly evident that evaluative or motivational processes are efficacious, especially for the attributions that deal with socially undesirable or negative behavior (Pligt, 1981; Zuckerman, 1979).

Aggressive Interaction as a Process

A social-psychological perspective on aggressive interactions rejects a static approach in favor of a process-oriented one. Aggressive quarrels are characterized by the fact that the victim and the protagonist, at a given point in time, diverge in the judgment of the critical incident. Thus, interaction sequences may be understood as the linking together of separate segments in which the respective positions of victim and

protagonist, and the corresponding situation definitions, change. Segmentation, corresponding to taking a particular position, may be worked out, not only from the point of view of (scientific) observers, but the persons involved also structure and punctuate the course of the interaction (Newtson, 1976). In reply to the victim's biased interpretation of the protagonist's action as aggressive, the interaction may be continued and possibly escalated, stopped, or compensated by the protagonist himself. The different types of progress, breaking off, continuation, escalation, or compensation, result from different subjective balance developments. For instance, the breaking off of an interaction chain is to be expected when both the involved interaction partners come to a unanimous judgment of the situation as being not unpleasant and well balanced, or from the viewpoint of the person who is at that particular time in the role of victim, his personal counteraction would be unsuitable or too expensive with regard to the present social and personal standards (Mummendey, Bornewasser, Loschper, & Linneweber, 1981).

Aggressive Interaction and Its Evaluation in Professional Soccer: Two Case Studies

Above we have outlined some principles or aspects according to which a social interaction is classified as more or less aggressive. In the following we shall give some examples for our assumption that interpretations and evaluations of interactions in soccer follow the same principles. By this it will be shown that violence in sports can be regarded as being as relative to judgmental conditions as violent acts in other areas of everyday life.

For this purpose we looked at a selection of recent sentences passed by the Federal Court of the German Football Confederation (members of this court are professional judges doing this kind of work honorarily). As examples two typical sentences are selected and partly quoted below. Each case is concerned with the judgments made at appeal proceedings: In each case the accused had made an appeal against his conviction by a sports court. The real names of football clubs and players have been changed.

Case 1

In the spring of 1981, S-town football club played at home against H-town football club in a round of the football league championship. The guests were favored to win, as S-town were placed in the lower half of the league table. Unexpectedly, S-town won the game. The national player, A, was positioned as center forward for H-town. His opposite was the practically unknown S-town defender, B. The game was played into the second half without the occurrence of any unsportsmanlike fouls. Also, the referee saw no grounds whatsoever to admonish or caution player B because of unfair play towards player A. As the game was drawing to an end, H-town's defeat became increasingly probable. Player A wanted to take advantage of a free kick awarded to his team in order to score a goal. To achieve this, he had to get rid of his "marker," player B, who up to now had always successfully pre-

vented him from shooting a goal. After having once again futilely tried to get past player B, player A positioned himself with his back in front of player B during another prolonged break in the game made necessary because an S-town player stayed too close to the ball while it was placed ready for a free kick. While player B unsuspectingly gave his attention to the correct strategic possibilities of the free kick that were being attempted by the other players and the referee, player A decided upon an apparently more favorable position. He then struck out with his right arm, and drove his elbow backwards with full force into the stomach region of the completely unsuspecting player B's abdomen. While player B collapsed on the field, nerve-paralyzed like a boxer hit in the solar plexus, and was in a state of shock with acute suspension of breathing, player A, unmarked and free, ran past him in order to take personal advantage of the further development of the game. After treatment lasting some minutes, and recuperation, player B was able to resume play.

The accused player A admitted to the objective fact of the assault. He at first claimed to have hit out with his left arm, "as a blow with the right elbow could have had disastrous consequences." After being shown the television recording, during his interrogation by the supervising committee, he admitted to having struck out with his right arm. He claimed however that he had only struck out because player B had physically obstructed him.

The assault made by player A is exceptionally reprehensible. It exceeds average unsportsmanlike behavior that is on occasion characteristic of an assault. In its gravity and degree of blame, it is typified by brutal violence, pronounced ruthlessness, and malice. The accused player A, who is evidently superior to the injured player B in terms of body size, weight, and strength, struck out, and in a calculating manner took full advantage of the effect of a pointed elbow joint.

The extreme danger of injury to his fellow player left him cold. Apart from the disruption of the function of the solar plexus, the related suspension of breathing, and the general shock suffered by player B, such a blow to the abdominal region as was made by the accused, brings with it a real and dangerous possibility of a ruptured liver or spleen, and stomach surgery. As a result of shock, and the suspension of breathing there is also the danger of disturbed circulation in the brain, with the consequence of brain cell damage.

It is also widely known that liver or spleen ruptures, and also stomach surgery, are dangerous. The fact that the injured player B recovered directly, and eventually could rejoin the game, takes nothing away from the accusation of brutal violence in regard to the assault made by player B.

The claim made for previous fighting between the two players cannot be justified. The event here being tried took place during an interruption of play, and it is not necessary to take previous episodes of play into account.

The assault committed by player A shows behavior of criminal nature (brutality, dangerousness, malice, and ruthlessness). In addition, there is also the circumstance that the act took place during an interruption of play and behind the back of the referee. Thereby the act is particularly reprehensible, showing a low level of decent and moral behavior, and while taking part during a sporting activity, blatantly adverse to the ideals of sport.

Injury. The injuries that B sustained as a result of A's actions (nerve paralysis, suspension of breathing, real danger of serious internal injury, and danger of disrupted blood circulation in the brain), are impressively described in the court's verdict. In this situation, the court, as observer, takes the perspective of the victim. The actor first describes his action as being one particularly designed to avoid a serious injury. When this interpretation can no longer be maintained, he offers another interpretation that no longer tries to qualify the degree of injury.

Harm intent. The harm intent (A, having not been able to get rid of his bothersome "marker" by fair means, wants to do so with an aimed blow when no one is watching him) is portrayed in such a way that the court takes the viewpoint of the victim. The verdict does not prove whether or not the actor denies the intent of his action.

Norm deviation. The behavior of A is defined by the court not only as a serious violation of football regulations, but also as even criminal and immoral, in that A, unprovoked and only for his own advantage, had inflicted a potentially serious injury on a defenseless person. The actor, on the other hand, interpreted his behavior as a reaction to unfair behavior by B (obstruction), that is, he justified his behavior with the aid of a norm of negative reciprocity or retaliation so that his behavior appears to be comparatively suitable.

Situation context. H-town and S-town were playing in a round of the football league championship. H-town team were favored to win, but in the course of the game their defeat became more and more probable. As center forward, A's special task was to shoot goals. The free kick awarded to H-town gave A a particularly favorable chance to score a goal. The task of shooting a goal was of the greatest importance from H-town team's point of view.

Perspective divergence. The above cited arguments of the court against player A clearly reveal that it takes the perspective of player B, that is, the victim, as its own, and considers the behavior of the accused to be extremely unsuitable. The verdict says very little about the opinion of the accused A. Nevertheless, the fact that A had made an appeal against the first judgment that had been unfavorable to him, supports the notion that he has a more positive view of his action.

Process characteristics. The game had proceeded without any exceptionally unfair play up until the moment of the critical action. In particular, B did not conspicuously make any unfair play in regard to A or any other members of the H-town team. The court considers that the blow that B received from A was for him as victim, unexpected and unprovoked, that is, A is seen as the initiator. On the other hand, the actor identifies his behavior as being a result of unfair behavior by B.

Case 2

In the 85th minute of a football league championship game between B-town and H-town in February 1979, player X, by committing a foul, caused player Y to fall down. The referee stopped play, and awarded a free kick to H-town. In his fall,

player Y rolled against the legs of player Z, entangled himself with him, and thereby became involved in a tussle with player Z, from whom he felt himself to be injured. As he picked himself up, he consequently hit player Z in the face with his left hand. Apart from the fact that player Z felt the blow, no injuries were sustained. Player Z immediately took his revenge by kicking player Y's feet. This was witnessed by the referee who ordered player Z off the field. The referee had not seen the directly antecedent behavior of player Y towards player Z. These facts were accepted as proved by the court through the defense statement of player Y as far as this could be taken into account, by the statements of the witnesses, player Z, and the referee, as well as a television recording of the proceedings.

The defense of player Y, that he had wanted to make a conciliatory gesture to player Z with his left hand, was considered by the court to be disproved by the evidence, and therefore an implausible evasive defense. Player Z had, according to his credible statement, felt without doubt that player Y's left hand darted out very quickly, and that player Z reacted just as quickly in an attempt to jerk his head out of the way. Such behavior is not an expression of a conciliatory attitude, but rather of an aggressive attitude, or an attitude anticipated to be aggressive.

The court is of the opinion that player Y should receive no subsequent punishment for his offense, although he had committed an assault when he hit his opponent in the face, and the referee would possibly have sent him off if he had noticed the assault. It is the conviction of the court that, as shown by the situation of the game, it is indeed, from the point of view of intent and consequence, a comparatively light blow that obviously can be explained by the player's annoyance with the injury he had sustained, and it is not to be interpreted as if it were a calculated intent to injure the opponent player Z. For beforehand, player Y was so irregularly assaulted by his opponent player X that he fell down, and because of this the referee interrupted the game. Only because of this foul, did player Y get involved in the tussle with player Z that drove him to the blow. Player Y's assault thus took place in direct association with the events in the game, and is therefore not to be seen as an exceptional case that should subsequently be punished for being particularly reprehensible, without due consideration of the setting of the offense.

Injury. For both court and victim (Z took his revenge by kicking Y's feet) the injury consisted of a perceivable, but relatively light blow to Z's face. On the other hand, the accused Y appears to have received absolutely no recognizable injury.

Harm intent. In the opinion of the victim Z, the intention of Y to injure Z is suggested by Y's gesture, Z's reaction, and the situation as a whole. In the opinion of the court, there is no direct intent to injure Z, but rather a rash reaction of Y to X's behavior. On the other hand, the accused Y attributes a completely different prosocial intention to his action.

Norm deviation. The court certainly regards the behavior of Y to be unsportsmanlike, and therefore unsuitable. However, it interprets the behavior as understandable in the sense of the norm of retaliation. On the other hand, the actor perceives no deviation whatsoever in his behavior (in his opinion a conciliatory gesture).

Situation context. The critical event took place close to the end of a championship game. The critical action was part of a sequence of hostile interactions. The referee had already interrupted the game because of X's assault on Y.

Perspective divergence. Both victim and court perceive Y's gesture as an assault, while the actor perceives it as a conciliatory gesture. With regard to the assessment of suitability, the court partially takes the perspective of the accused.

Process characteristics. In the opinion of the accused, the victim, and the court, the accused had first of all been unfairly attacked just before the critical action, and then subsequently could have felt himself to be encroached upon by the tussle. In reaction to the critical action, the victim attacked the new victim by kicking him. This action was punished by the referee.

In case 1, the high court of the German football league dismissed player A's appeal, and imposed an 8-week suspension and a fine. In case 2, player Y's appeal was granted, and the previous court sentence (a suspension for six games) was reversed. Both cases dealt with behavior that was against the rules. However, the courts' judgments turned out very differently. The justification for very differing judgments was clearly made with reference to the criteria for judging an action to be aggressive that have been introduced here. While in case 1 the critical behavior was interpreted as unprovoked, intentionally injurious, and so forth, the behavior in case 2 was construed to be provoked, not carried out with intent to injure, and so on. Because of these different interpretations, totally divergent actions are thought to be suitable.

The Referee's Power of Interpretation

Those incidents in football that are conspicuous because of their aggression (e.g., blows to the stomach or face), are obviously identified in accordance with the same judgment patterns that are effective in other less spectacular areas of everyday life. Unlike many other areas of life, however, there is always in football a person who has "power of definition": the referee. Only the referee's interpretation is decisive as to whether behavior is aggressive and against the rules or not. Referee's interpretations, however, are laid down in a generally binding catalog of regulations that are above individual interpretation. There are 17 main regulations, and a few dozen special ones, for football (compare Ebbersberger, Malka, & Pohler, 1980). The main parts of this catalog serve to specify and differentiate among the categories "forbidden play," "dangerous play," and "unfair play." It is thereby noticeable that intent to harm functions as an essential criterion for this differentiation. "Intention" means here thoughtlessness, inconsiderate play, lack of foresight and prudence, and so forth (and thus is used in a broader sense; a behavior is called "intended" if the player is seen as responsible for it, e.g., if he hits another player instead of the ball).

In this way it becomes clear that in football, unlike many other areas of behavior, there exists a good precondition for classifying ways of behavior as "aggressive" and sanctioning them. As this is possible in a way that is less "fuzzy" than in other areas

of behavior, it may be a reason for the fact that in football there is a greater unanimity over what sort of behavior is unsuitable and needing to be sanctioned. On the other hand, the fact that the referee, as a single individual, possesses the power of interpretation in the concrete situation, is a guarantee that the decision on whether behavior is aggressive and needing to be sanctioned, remains the result of subjective interpretation processes. This in turn provides sufficient flexibility for divergence of judgment, as the referee favors only one out of several possible perspectives.

Conclusions

It is continually pointed out that in soccer football there is an extraordinarily high number of spectacular assaults that often lead to serious injury. Which conditions are responsible for aggressive behavior in football is a question that is being continually reflected upon. In our opinion it is meaningful to describe such aggressive behavior as a specific form of social interaction. Such interactions are characterized by the following fundamental aspects: mutual interpretation of the critical act, surrounding situation context, differences of interpretation and evaluation from specific positions (actor/victim/observer), and temporal interaction processes. Examples from football jurisdiction show that those judgment and assessment processes effective for the definition of behavior as unsuitable and sanctionable agree with the same processes that have been worked out for other areas of everyday life. Unlike other areas of life, football is mostly concerned with physical interactions, so conflicts are settled predominantly by physical means. Therefore the total level of conflict settlement between the interaction partners appears to be far more spectacular. It nevertheless becomes apparent that the use of criteria for the differentiating judgments of such conflicts, as is undertaken by members of the social system "football," agrees well with those criteria used in everyday life. In this way it could, for example, happen that a blow to the face would be considered to be a comparatively unimportant assault, though this is a judgment that would not necessarily be accepted in other social contexts.

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