

Opinion: Disarming the hooligan fans among us

By Andy Brooks and Steve Weber

On any given Sunday, you never know who will win an NFL game.

But if you've been to the 'Stick or many other stadiums this year, you know one thing: Fans' actions toward the opposing team's fans will go beyond just emotional or angry to sometimes threatening and even violent.

And it's not just in the United States: A riot after a soccer game in Egypt this week left 74 dead when local fans chased the supporters of the visiting team with knives, clubs and stones up against a locked gate at an exit.

Is the behavior at U.S. football stadiums hooliganism in the making? That's what the British called the unruly behavior that came to dominate their soccer stadiums in the early 1980s. Police in riot gear had to escort each team's fans to and from games. At the stadium, a wall of riot police stood between opposing fans. A game meant tear gas obstructing the field, homemade explosives lobbed at opposing fans and players, and racist chants.

Things have improved in the United Kingdom since then. But is this the NFL's future?

Andy Brooks is a doctoral student at UC Berkeley's School of Information and grew up rooting for the 49ers and A's. Steven Weber is a faculty member at the same school, but devotes his life to the New York Giants and the Yankees.

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