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***'Messing about on the river.'* Trenton Oldfield and the Possibilities of Sports Protest.**

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In April 2012 Trenton Oldfield disrupted the annual Boat Race between Cambridge and Oxford Universities by going for a swim in the River Thames. For some, Oldfield's timely swim in a public space was an imaginative and well executed act of peaceful, civil disobedience which achieved maximum exposure and caused minimal damage. Live television coverage of the event and his use of social media allowed him to promote his manifesto 'Elitism leads to Tyranny' with Oldfield's actions an example of individual, autonomous political activity. This chapter consider the opportunities that a large sport event, here the Boat Race, offers to such individual autonomist protesters and how new forms of digital web-based media are changing the dynamic between sport, media and protest. Discussion focuses on response to Oldfield's protest by sections of the English media and UK government who, upset to see their sporting pleasures disrupted, sought to deport him from the UK.

In carrying out his direct action against what he saw as elitism and an increasing division in British society, Oldfield targeted the highly symbolic event – commonly known as 'the Boat Race.' This event, held annually since 1856, is between the heavyweight men's eight crews from the universities of Cambridge and Oxford is a non-ticket event which takes place between Putney Bridge and Chiswick Bridge (Mortlake) on the River Thames. Since its beginning it has drawn huge crowds with the audience increasing when the BBC first broadcast the event in 1938. In 2012 Trenton Oldfield, originally from Australia, stopped the race for the first time in its 158-year history. He was immediately arrested and later convicted of causing a public nuisance, sentenced to six months in prison. Following the direct involvement of the Home Office minister, he was then threatened with deportation (back) to Australia.

The discussion draws from a number of sources, primarily the British news media and other web-based material. As will be shown there was an array of responses to Oldfield's action ranging from the centre-ground Guardian and Independent newspapers to the right-of-centre Daily Mail who gave extensive coverage to the event. It uses Trenton Oldfield's protest as an entry point to examine the emerging predilection for autonomous individual protest. What

was notable about Oldfield's protest is that it took place in a public space (that is, the banks of the River Thames), rather than at a closed, ticketed event which often has its own increasing strict security measures in and surrounding the venue. By targeting this particular event Oldfield increased the chances of gaining a significant TV audience and illustrates the changing relationship between sport, media and protest created by 'new' media tools and platforms. The chapter explores how concerns were raised that Oldfield's actions would inspire others to protest at the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. However, it did not, due in part to the legal and security measures that now surround most major sports events. The chapter concludes with consideration on the fragmented nature of the contemporary protest movements and the reluctance of the sporting audience to see their pleasures disrupted.

Sport as platform for political protest

Non-sports fans have used sports events as a platform to protest, with activity taking place during, or surrounding, live events and securing sports events against unwanted intrusion having become increasingly important. The neophyte, lone protestor is potentially more able to avoid the security measures, particularly at non-ticket events, and use the element of surprise to their advantage. Arguably some of the most high profile sporting protests have surrounded the Olympic Torch relay (Horne and Whannel, 2010; Panagiotopoulou, 2010; Tarantino and Carini, 2010). One of the first post-World War II sports protests was in 1957 during the Wimbledon tournament when a woman occupied the centre court during the men's double final waving banner in her campaign for a new world banking system (Aldred, 2012). In 1975, supporters of the 'Free George Davis' campaign destroyed the Headingley cricket pitch by digging holes and spreading engine oil with the final day of the final match abandoned, thus preventing England from (potentially) winning 'the Ashes' (Wilkes, 2011). One of the most active disruptors of sports events in recent years has been Neil Horan, a laicized Irish Roman Catholic priest (BBC, 2005; Mirror, 2009; O'Connor, 2010). However, Horan's actions were not political protests, but rather a consequence of his poor mental health. In 2012 John Foley handcuffed himself to the goalposts during an English Premier League game in protest against the employment practices of Ryanair, whose Chief Executive was watching the match (Hough, 2012). Described in the media as a 'known professional protestor' Foley was arrested for 'pitch encroachment,' fined £665 and banned from attending

Everton games for three years. He later received an ASBO¹ banning him from attending sports grounds hosting an event to which the public has to pay to gain admission (Liverpool Echo, 2012). Foley has protested at other sporting events including during the final day of England versus Australia cricket match (Brown, 2009), and the Cheltenham horse racing festival where he ran onto the racecourse and waved a banner during the Ryanair Chase (Rossington, 2011). Staff at Cheltenham claimed they did not have any information suggesting additional security was required for the Ryanair Chase and that 'we get good intelligence from the police if something might happen' (Rossington, 2011). However, none of these protesters attracted the level of media attention, and notoriety, achieved by Trenton Oldfield.

While traditional forms of resistance have not disappeared as Harvey, Horne and Safai (2009: 399) suggest 'new historical conditions are creating new forms of resistance.' Academic interest has been stimulated by the qualitative changes of protest which have been created by social media and their influence on the new social movements, such as that found around campaigns linked to sport and environmentalism (Harvey and Houle, 1994; Stoddart and MacDonald, 2011; Wheaton, 2007; 2008). Informing these changes has been developments in digital web-based media which have altered the dynamic between sport, media and protest with the 'DIY' factor creating new opportunities to disseminate messages quickly, widely and cheaply (Earl and Kimport, 2011). The internet has created a medium for protestors to provide information directly to a wider public and thus reduce the traditional gate-keeping role performed by the mainstream mass media (Jenkins, 2006) – something Oldfield used to his full advantage.

Trenton Oldfield and the 2012 Boat Race

At the time of his protest Trenton Oldfield was 35-year old London resident. Educated at a private school in Australia he later transferred to a state school. Although Oldfield rowed whilst at the private school, he did not make mention of his status as a rower to frame his protest action. He moved to London where he studied for an MSc in Contemporary Urbanism at the London School of Economics and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. He then worked for the Thames Strategy group with responsibility to regenerate the river landscape from Kew to Chelsea (Pearlman, Evans and Hough, 2012).

The annual 'Boat Race' takes place on a Saturday afternoon at the end of March / beginning of April between the Boat Clubs from Oxford and Cambridge University (specifically, the heavyweight men's eight). The first race took place in 1829 and was one of many sporting events organised between the universities. Neither the River Cam (in Cambridge) nor River Isis (in Oxford) were sufficiently wide or straight enough so the first events were held on the River Thames at Henley, beyond the tidal river. The Boat Race course is 4.2 miles (6.8k) and takes place between Putney Bridge and Chiswick Bridge (Mortlake). From the outset the event was a commercial enterprise and drew huge crowds, with the BBC first broadcasting the event in 1938. There are other boat races between the universities (i.e. women's, lightweight eights), but these take place during the Henley event (usually a week earlier). Since 1976 the race has been sponsored by a betting group, a gin manufacturer, an outsourcing company and a financial services business. Although the most recent sponsors did not disclose a figure for its five-year deal, Wigglesworth (1992) identified that during the 1990s the two clubs received £70,000 each annually from their sponsors and the BBC.² Stereotypically 'English' with the River Thames as the arena and the London skyline as the backdrop, the Boat Race is a well-established fixture in English sporting calendar along with Royal Ascot, the Ashes, the Grand National, Wimbledon and the FA Cup Final.³ That it attracts a large spectator audience and significant television audience was one of the reasons why it was chosen by Trenton Oldfield.

According to press reports, Oldfield was first spotted approximately ten minutes into the 17-18 minute race by the assistant umpire, four-time Olympic Rowing medallist Matthew Pinsent. The race was immediately stopped because Oldfield was swimming directly into the path of the boats and could have been severely injured if struck by an oar or part of the race boat. Oldfield submerged himself as the boats passed safely overhead. He was then pulled onto an official race boat and arrested by the river police. The event was restarted after a 25 minutes delay.

The Manifesto: Elitism Leads to Tyranny

As discussed earlier there has been a change in the dynamics and relationship between sport, media and protest brought about by new forms of digital media with political activists successfully exploiting digital media. Given his protest was contentious, it was important that his 'message' was unmediated and directly and immediately available to the widest possible

audience; he would therefore need to circumvent the traditional mainstream media to avoid his message being distorted or diluted. At the same time, it provided ‘instant copy’ for the mainstream media. Shortly before his carrying out his protest, Oldfield posted online his manifesto. His intention was to enable those using social media to find out about this protest by selecting key words that could be used by internet search engines. The full title of his manifesto *Elitism Leads to Tyranny (Boat Race Swimmers manifesto)* carried a sub-heading ‘*Performance upon Thames*’ and was accessed via the Indymedia website (Oldfield, nd). Once his manifesto was located, it was possible, via twitter, for his name to quickly spread and thus negate those who might seek to deny him the ‘oxygen of publicity.’

In his manifesto Oldfield declares how “*This is a protest, an act of civil disobedience, a methodology of refusing and resistance*” before offering a brief history of capitalism, although this particular term is not used. He then identifies his use of guerrilla tactics: local knowledge, ambush, surprise, mobility, speed, detailed information and decisiveness. He explains the location of the protest as not only one of natural beauty, but also one replete with elitist establishments, including Fulham Palace, Chiswick House, St Paul’s School (and other fee paying schools), as well as being the home of Nick Clegg (the Deputy Prime Minister). Oldfield explains this particular sporting event was chosen because it was a symbol of class elitism, partly informed by the event programme which lists the (private) schools the rowers attended before they ‘went up’ to Oxbridge. On his release from prison Oldfield stated that he chose the Boat Race because it would have ‘limited impact’ on working people, affect a very small group of people, but a profound and symbolic impact (Radio 5 Live, 2012).⁴

In his manifesto Oldfield states his desire to create a climate in which individuals were no longer ‘victims’ but set the agenda, placing the ‘elite’ on the back foot, increasing their costs, causing confusion, fermenting internal distrust, and creating embarrassment and frustration. The current conditions in society were ‘disorganised’ and he offers a list of various suggestions on how protesters could exploit these conditions, including,

- Security guards setting off fire alarms in buildings where people work (at strategic times – for example when there is a meeting in which cuts are to be discussed).
- Work slowly, make mistakes, lose documents, send large emails to clog up accounts.
- Taxi drivers: take passengers on the slowest and most expensive route.

- Plumbers: create problems when called to office of a right wing think tank.
- Tow truck drivers: park in front of Clegg / Cameron's drive / tow their car away.
- Bike riders: chain your bike to the corporate bikes (in the absence of bike racks).
- Cleaners: don't put toilet paper in the toilet / bathrooms of the elite.
- Restaurant workers: serve the food cold – or the wrong food.
- Builders: repairing a house and bug it and share the footage / audio online.
- Call centre workers: find customers the best / cheapest deal possible.
- Let off stink bombs at events.
- Ask lots of questions to delay a decision / remove essential cables at conferences.

The list ends with a special appeal to security guards: 'the elite depend on you.' Oldfield concludes his manifesto by inviting others to follow in his (and Emily Davison's) footsteps by inviting them to disrupt and destabilise the forthcoming Olympics. The manifesto is linked to Oldfield's website 'This Is Not A Gateway,' a not-for-profit organisation calling for critical investigation into how modern cities are run.⁵ Funded by Oldfield and his partner from private income, it has received financial support from the Arts Council, Tate Britain and the Institute for Contemporary Arts. Seeking to problematise agreed meanings and calling for critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996; 2001), its steering group (comprising artists, architects, urban planners, curators, photographers and software developers) organises salons and arts events, offering advice to charities and private businesses on how they cause, or perpetuate, inequalities.

Reponses to the protest

According to media reports of the trial, Oldfield's protest caused great mental and physical stress to the rowers (Robinson, 2012). Some of the rowers took to social media to vent their anger with the President of OUBC tweeting: '*my team went through seven months of hell. This was the culmination of our careers and you took it from us*' (Petre, 2012). Oxford crew member Zeng offered a philosophical series of tweets:

When I missed your head with my blade knew only that you were a swimmer, and if you say you are a protestor then no matter what you say your cause maybe, your action speaks too loudly for me to hear you. I know exactly what you were protesting, you were protesting the right of 17 young men and one woman to compete fairly and honourably, to demonstrate their hard work and desire in a proud tradition. You were protesting their right to devote years of their lives, their friendship, and their souls to the fair pursuits of the joys and hardships of sport. You, who would make a mockery of their dedication and their courage, are a mockery of a man.” (Petre, 2012)

Perhaps the most surprising response to the disruption came from Matthew Pinsent (ex-Eton, Oxford and four times Olympian) who was acting as assistant umpire in the race. In his reflection of the race Pinsent offers a classic liberal response in stating how he wants “*to live in country where protest is possible. However unwelcome it was, I still value the freedom to do that*” (Pinsent, 2012). This position uses the protest to exalt ‘Western’ freedoms, at the same time as these ‘freedoms’ are being severely eroded in order to ‘protect’ sports events (as will be discussed below).

The mainstream British press reported the disruption in a fairly predictable manner. Daily Mail newspaper columnist Melanie Phillips, well-known for her right-wing, reactionary hyperbole, had evidently read his manifesto when she expressed concern that the Internet and social media had ‘the potential to transform every crank, narcissist and bully into an instant celebrity.’ Describing Oldfield as a ‘grudge guerrilla’ she chose to focus on his privileged upbringing rather than his ‘unorthodox political views’ (Phillips, 2012). In the same newspaper Petre (2012) briefly mentioned the protest but that ‘it was not the only drama to affect the race.’ Much of the article focused on a snapped oar, the collapse of a rower at the end of the race and the ‘quick witted’ Oxford female cox and her bit-part acting career.⁶ By contrast, the centre-ground Guardian focused on criminalisation of protest (Power, 2012a) and whether rowing was elitist (Cross, 2012); those sympathetic to his protest had to go to social media and news-sites such as Indymedia⁷.

Oldfield was initially detained under Section 5 of the Public Order Offence, namely, behaviour likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress. This was ‘upgraded’ from a minor public order offence (which had no custodial option and usually incurred a small fine) to one of ‘public nuisance.’ Informing this ‘upgrade’ was Michael Ellis (Conservative MP and member of Home Office Select Committee) who wanted a more substantial punishment given

the forthcoming London Olympics and the need to deter ‘lone-wolf’ protesters. This intervention by politicians in the legal system was seen by some as analogous to the ‘Russian Pussy⁸ riot’ when the Russian government sought to influence the legal process (Criado-Perez, 2012; Godwin, 2012).

In October 2012 Oldfield faced a short court case. As outlined above, his protest was peaceful and non-violent and, after hearing the case, the jury asked for the judge to show leniency with the probation officer recommending a non-custodial sentence (Mair, 2013). In spite of this, in what was clearly a ‘deterrent sentence’ the Judge’s stated that Oldfield’s actions were dangerous and disproportionate and his *"decision to sabotage the race [was] based on the membership or perceived membership of its participants of a group to which you took exception."* She stated that every individual and group of society was entitled to respect and that in *"a liberal and tolerant society [...] no-one should be targeted because of a characteristic with which another takes issue."* This is not the place to question the Judge’s clearly worded statement in which she claims there is no social class or group that does not have a label and therefore requires judicial protection from interference and possible offensive; however, can Oldfield’s actions properly be seen as a ‘hate crime’ against the elite? What the judgement does reveal is an increasing tendency to criminalise protest and undermine protest against legitimate causes, such as inequality. The Judge advised Oldfield that he should have limited his protest to the unfurling of a banner on the riverside and shown more clearly what he was protesting against. Oldfield was convicted of causing a public nuisance and jailed for six months and fined £750. He was released with an electronic tag after serving seven weeks.

In June 2013 Oldfield was refused leave to remain in the UK with the Home Office minister, Theresa May, recommending his deportation to Australia.⁹ Nine months earlier May had given a ‘rabble rousing’ speech at her party conference in which she vowed to ‘deport foreign criminals first, then hear their appeals’ (Chorley, Slack and Chapman, 2013). In December 2013, Oldfield went to the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to challenge against the Home Office’s decision to deny him a spousal visa that would mean he could stay in the country.¹⁰ During the court case the Home Office argued that Oldfield had defied British law in what was a dangerous protest. Lawyers for the Home office stated that,

The appellant, in an act of utter contempt for the law, abused his right to protest in a very public way, he endangered himself and other in the process. The whole nation

saw this and there is a need to be firm against this type of behaviour. Those who come to the UK must abide by our laws. We refused this individual leave to remain because we do not believe his presence in this country is conducive to the public good. (Booth, 2013)

Oldfield submitted a file containing over 100 letters highlighting the positive impact of his community work, including ones from an Oxford professor and the head of Central Saint Martins College of Arts and Design (Bland, 2013). Oldfield argued that the visa refusal was disproportionate and that it breached article 8 of the European convention on human rights, which guaranteed the right to a family life. The appeal judge agreed with this and stated there was "a public interest in providing a platform for protest at both common law and the European Convention on Human Rights" (Mair, 2013).

The threat of deportation experienced by Oldfield was one shared by thousands of migrants that year. However, most of those facing deportation did not have the cultural capital (white, male, educated, hetero-sexual, able-bodied) and support network from which he was able to draw upon. He was punished because his was a high profile case; but because it was high profile, he was able to garner wider support. The state's reaction to protest has, arguably, become increasingly repressive with a decision made to 'make an example' of Oldfield. Seen by many, including Oldfield, as 'a vindictive decision, very political and very much an overreaction' (Mair, 2013), Oldfield's successful challenge (to his deportation, if not his initial conviction) undermined the attempt to deter those, including migrants, who might consider engaging in political protest.

Individual protest and new social movements

In this section I suggest that Oldfield took inspiration for his protest from the Situationist movement in the 1960s and explore how his action chimes with the politics of contemporary protest. As a piece of theatrical political activity, Oldfield sought to achieve maximum exposure and cause minimal amount of damage and, at the time of his protest, he was not linked to any wider political group. Although Oldfield did not explicitly link his protest to inspiration from this movement, one can infer that he was aware of, and took inspiration from, the 1960s Situationist International and the US Yippies (Buiani and Genosko, 2012). Indebted to Surrealism, Bakhtin, Lefebvre, the Dada-inspired Lettrist International (Gardiner,

2000), and based around the cult / personality of Guy Debord (Barnard, 2004), the Situationist International was an exclusive, theoretical, theatrical grouping that saw the contemporary 'spectacle' of global capitalism as a fake reality which masked the denigration of human life (Kaplan, 2012; Rasmussen, 2004). Based in Paris, their focus was art, architecture, urban planning, political theory and artistic radicalism (Debord, 1995). All forms of social life, including sport, were viewed as becoming increasingly spectacularised, banal, passive and unfulfilling offering pseudo-fulfilment, something they sought to undermine by 'raising incendiary beacons heralding a greater game' (Barnard, 2004: 115), a core tactic being acts of sabotage, pranks or publicity stunts designed to subvert / destabilise the capitalist system (St John, 2008). However, as a project of purely propagandist politics it achieved limited success. Although claimed to be anti-hierarchical, it was based around the cult of Debord and, since it was unwilling to organise or build beyond their own intellectual elite group, it gained little widespread support and ultimately fragmented.

As noted earlier new protest movements have become adept at using social media to promote their cause, as demonstrated by Oldfield in promoting his manifesto. While there is criticism of the hyperbole surrounding how the internet is effecting social change (Morozov, 2012, 2013), the '*clicktivism* / *slactivism*' nature of activity has informed changes in protest with an increase in internet-based activity, campaigns and petitions, exemplified by the 'Anonymous' collective and Avaaz organisation (Eordogh, 2013; Gitlin, 2013; Jones, 2011a; Kavada, 2012; Sarigollu, 2011). Extensive debate is taking place amongst those protesting against capitalism as to which tactics are appropriate with much of the debate centered on the relationship between the individual and the organised political party. St John (2008) suggests that the 'protestival' has emerged as a creative response to traditional political rituals of the organised political left: of marching from A to B with permits and police escorts followed by a mass rally and speeches from the leaders.¹¹ More direct forms of action based on diversity, creativity, decentralisation and horizontal organisation has, depending on one's political position, sought to complement or replace the 'old-fashioned' style of protest with Hardt and Negri's (2000) text on autonomism, anarchism and direct action an important reference point in the genealogy of protest against global capitalism, social and economic inequality (see also Johnston and Laxer, 2003; Byrne, 2012; Chomsky, 2012; Mason, 2012). Penny's (2010) individualistic, no hierarchy / no leaders approach to political activity can be challenged by those who suggest that leaders will emerge (in the absence of a hierarchy), leaders who are unelected and potentially unaccountable, leading to a tyranny of the structureless.

Although not identifying himself with the Occupy movement, there are links between Oldfield, Occupy and the 2012 Olympic Games. The London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) were very concerned that protestors would ‘spoil their party’ with Lord Sebastian Coe noting how ‘one man's protest can destroy someone else's dream’ (Gibson and Walker, 2012). LOCOG and the British state were primarily concerned with a ‘terrorist attack’ (deploying the Army and placing missile system on residential tower blocks in East London); they were also conscious that the Games were taking place one year after extensive rioting in various London boroughs. In the intervening year, social and economic conditions deteriorated, with the authorities increasingly concerned that the Games might be subject to disruption. The custodial sentencing of 2011 rioters thus became opportunity to set a strong deterrent to potential Olympic protestors (Casciani, 2011; Davey, 2012). Illustrative of the UK state’s response to any potential protest was the treatment of Occupy ‘participant’, Simon More who received what was believed to be the first pre-emptive Olympic anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) requested by the Metropolitan Police; the ASBO restricted him from going within 100 yards of Olympic venues, participants, officials, spectators and the torch relay route (Walker, 2012).

Making a splash?

Making an assessment of the effectiveness of Oldfield’s protest depends on what criteria are used. In terms of gaining media attention and creating a profile Oldfield was very successful and, echoing a Situationist methodology, carried out an imaginative, peaceful act of civil disobedience. His planning and execution were very effective and shows the potential media impact if the ‘right’ event is chosen. The use of social media to publicise his message to wide audience was also effective. Oldfield called for protestors to ‘do something similar to Emily Davison’ during the London 2012 Olympics; However, his calls were not heeded. Oldfield differed radically from Davison in that she was part of a bigger movement, one that had a clear objective (i.e. votes for women); in contrast, Oldfield was not evidently part of anything bigger than himself and is more appropriately linked with the individualistic approach to contemporary political action.

All the ingredients were available for London 2012 to be a significant site of protest. The Games took place twelve months after serious civil unrest and a few months after a successful occupation in central London, with an unpopular government continuing to

implement economic policies that were hurting many people. However, when the Occupy movement dismantled their tents and physically disbanded, the lack of coordinated planning contributed to its failure to remerge during London 2012. Gitlin (2013) and Calhoun (2013) have argued that the Occupy movement produced clever theatrical events, but the absence of an extended strategy, experienced networks and a stabilising organisational structure, meant they could not parlay small victories into action with longer-term potential. They also suggest that its ability to operate horizontally was limited because too much frictional energy was spent in self-maintenance. Even so-called 'spontaneous organising' requires unglamorous groundwork, an ordering of priorities and tasks, planning and coordination if it is to be effective. 'Spontaneous' can, in practice, mean 'ephemeral,' with social media lending itself to a lack of accountability and commitment. Gitlin (2013) and Calhoun (2013) also note that direct action can drive a wedge between protestors and liberals sympathetic to many of the movements' messages, as can be seen in the field of sport. The 'new' individualistic (for some unaccountable) approaches to protest can be criticised for being primarily about protesting ('against everything'), and lacking a coherent, forward-looking strategy. Those seeking a coordinated, centralist approach do not see this as elitist, but rather as facilitating accountability, responsibility and commitment.

Questions have been asked as to whether such theatrical events are the actions of a movement or a moment? (Gitlin, 2013; Calhoun, 2013), and in this vein, one can question whether the 'dramatic performance' such as that enacted by Oldfield was just that, and offered little in terms of a tangible legacy or forward momentum. As Calhoun (2013) and Gitlin (2013) have noted, Occupy is better seen as a 'moment' rather than movement. For Calhoun (2013) the absence of centralised leadership made it hard to negotiate forward planning, with no agenda of tactics to take the place of the occupation. This left many seeing Occupy as a gesture, the idealist moment, the performance rather than permanence, less an organisational effort (i.e. a movement), more a dramatic performance. However, Oldfield, Occupy, and those who did protest in during 2012 have contributed to the debate on capitalism. Consciousness-raising is an important element in any political action; one can point to how the Greenham Camp peace camp against US cruise missiles in the 1980s drew constant attention to the missile presence, even if the camp was dismantled long before the missiles were removed. Similar consciousness-raising was an important element within the British Suffragettes campaign, the US civil rights movement and the South African anti-apartheid struggle.

Conclusion

What this chapter has shown is that although daring and resourceful gestures like Oldfield's are still possible, their likelihood is increasingly being restricted by the legal and security measures that surround major sports events, coupled to the fragmented nature of contemporary protest. Demonstrating at sports events are unlikely to engender sympathy from the wider public with the mainstream media reporting such actions (and by default, the motivation) as little more than 'silly stunts'. Such actions are effective publicity stunts, but can remain just that if they are not connected to a wider political movement. Although his protest was against elitism, it was perhaps too random for many people to identify with. Therefore care needs to be exercised to avoid enacting the politics of the spectacle, which does little to encourage others to get involved and become part of a wider, more inclusive movement. Atomising protest and leaving individuals to decide what stunts / action they should take, risks undermining the tactic of coordinated unity, strength and accountability. At the heart of the matter is one's political philosophy and how this informs protesting against an organised, coordinate 'enemy' – in short one's views on the role of the individual and a centralised organisation.

Prior to London 2012 the organisers were very concerned the events would be the attractive site for protest, be this large or small. In addition to the visible deterrent, the British state sent a clear message to potential protesters in the sentences given to those associated with the 2011 summer disturbance and the pre-emptive use of ASBOs. What is evident is the increasing criminalisation of protest in the UK (Gilmore, 2012; Power, 2012b), and not just restricted to major sports events (Graham, 2012). In considering sporting events, what is manifest is how rarely they have been the site of, and for, protest. Although Trenton's protest was 'successful', the response of the mainstream media and UK government, coupled to the lack of activity around London 2012, identifies a reluctance amongst the sport-media audience to see their pleasures disrupted. However, the low levels of protest at sporting events cannot be due to the security and state jail sentences alone. Little protest takes place at sports events because it more likely to alienate people and lose them support. What is evident is the power of the corporate world and media to promote and frame sports event, and undermine those with a different agenda. Disrupting a sports event can also have a direct, negative impact upon individual athletes rather than the organisers, sponsors or the wider system. Coordinated action between the media, sponsors, organisers and athletes creates a powerful sporting ideology in sport is seen as a non-political arena and an activity that is 'off-

limits' for protest. In this chapter I have suggested that even though sports events are potentially significant sites for protestors to gain media attention, there is very little public support for those using sports events as a platform for protest. This is especially the case when the protest is conducted by an individual unaffiliated to a wider political organisation and lacking a clear agenda; disrupting sports events with a seemingly random, ad hoc interruption is likely to undermine the cause and leaving one looking like a spoilsport.

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¹ An *ASBO* is an Anti-Social Behaviour Order issued by UK courts to people who behave in a persistently unacceptable manner. They were subsequently replaced by Criminal Behaviour Orders, and similar to ASBOs, aimed at stopping anti-social behaviour before it escalates.

² Topolski (1990) states that in 1986 the commercial sponsor, Beefeater Gin, paid £330,000 to the two boat crews for three years.

³ The Boat Race is not one of the so-called ‘Crown Jewels’ of listed sporting events which must be broadcast on free-to-air television. In 2004 organisers sold television rights to ITV after decades of the race being shown on the BBC, although BBC resumed coverage 2010 April. In 2015 BNY Mellon (men's) Boat Race and the Newton Women's Boat Race will take place on the same afternoon over the same course.

⁴ This is not the place to consider whether rowing is elitist, but clearly there is a widespread perception that it is, along with polo and golf. The public’s perception of rowing was not helped when the 2012 Olympic rowing events were held at Eton Dorney, a private boat lake owned by one of Britain’s most exclusive private schools. The composition of the Boat Race crews, between 1829 and 1992, contained 16 oarsman (out about some 1600) from a non-private / independent school (Wigglesworth, 1992). Similarly, as to whether Oxbridge is symbol of elitism divides opinion. Despite various attempts Oxbridge remains elitist in terms of its recruitment of students and a consistent over-representation of students drawn from the elite, private schools provide in comparison to state schools (The Sutton Trust). This over-representation is carried forward in terms of Oxbridge alumni entering elite levels within the civil service, finance, the judiciary and mainstream politics.

⁵ The name of the organisation is explained by Oldfield as a self-reflexive critique drawing on Magritte’s painting ‘This is not a pipe,’ and Foucault’s book of the same name. (See also Bauman’s 2012 text ‘This is not a diary’).

⁶ *Plus ça change*. After the Emily Davison incident, the King referred in his diary to ‘a most disappointing day’ whilst Queen Mary sent the jockey concerned a telegram wishing him well after his “sad accident caused through the abominable conduct of a brutal lunatic woman”.

⁷ One footnote to the typically reactionary coverage of the *Daily Mail* and the immediacy of social media was the online publication by the newspaper which linked Oldfield with one of the ‘bête noires’ of the paper, Abu Hamza. Maxfarquar (2012) identifies how the *Daily Mail* was the victim of a ‘sting’ when they published an online article that linked Trenton Oldfield to Abu Hamza. The origin of the information (i.e. their source) was the @TrentonOldfield twitter account, which turned out to be a spoof account. The original *Daily Mail Online* article was subsequently removed.

⁸ ‘Pussy Riot’ is the name of a Russian feminist punk rock collective, who staged a protest against President Putin in a Moscow cathedral in February 2012. Several members were subsequently imprisoned, with Putin claiming they had insulted the church.

⁹ In 1788 the British Empire English state began to use Australia as a penal colony. Transportation of English prisoners officially ended in 1868 but this narrative continues to feature in Anglo-Australian relations.

¹⁰ Oldfield had originally held a Tier One visa which is given to highly skilled migrants.

¹¹ Although this form of protest is not entirely dead, as demonstrated by recent protest in southern Europe and North Africa the recent years.