

Hearts to close part of Tynecastle in response to fans misbehaviour

Hearts

have announced they will close part of Tynecastle for the final two home games

of this season following another outbreak of fans misbehaviour.

During last

Saturday's game with Hibernian, pyrotechnics, coins and even a coconut were

thrown on to the Tynecastle pitch.

In addition, a man has been charged with

hate crime and there were three other arrests.

Hearts

owner Ann Budge has taken decisive action. She issued the following statement on the club's official website:

As we all know, barely a week goes by at the moment without

the headlines on the sports pages screaming out about the latest incidents at football matches...and, of course, they are rarely talking about the football performance! The media has no shortage of material with which to paint a pretty bleak picture of what to expect if you attend a football stadium to "enjoy" a hotly contested fixture.

By saying this, I am not criticising the media. They are simply doing their jobs. I am, of course, criticising the supporters who carry out the actions, which provide the headlines...actions such as singing sectarian songs...thereby inciting trouble; abusing players...whether verbally or physically; setting off pyrotechnics, endangering lives in the process; or causing stadium damage, etc, etc. Stadium rules have for years listed many forms of unacceptable behaviour which are stated to be "prohibited" ...and yet this behaviour goes on and is seemingly on the increase. So simply listing what is unacceptable is not enough. We have to work together to stamp out these unacceptable behaviours. The government, the police, the football authorities, the clubs, the supporters...we all have a part to play.

Since getting involved in football, I have been hugely impressed by the effort made by clubs to try to ensure unacceptable behaviour is, ideally, prevented from happening, or at worst, dealt with...albeit often retrospectively. However, we have to do more!

At Tynecastle, we have worked hard over the last few seasons to strengthen our security processes and practices, and we continue to do so. Nonetheless, during the course of last Saturday's Derby against Hibernian, no less than 7 pyrotechnics were discharged / thrown onto the pitch....4 from the Hearts area and 3 from the Hibs stand. In addition,

there were instances of coins being thrown, cups, some containing hot drinks, being thrown and even... a coconut being thrown onto the pitch. Every single instance could have resulted in injury to an individual and in the case of the pyrotechnics, this did result in damage to the pitch...a pitch which, with the financial support of our fans, we have recently put down at a cost of £1 million! Why would our own fans want to damage this? It beggars belief!

To add to this, we have seen an appalling example of racist abuse, by a Hearts "supporter" to a Hibs player, circulated on social media. I am pleased to report that an individual has now been charged by Police Scotland in relation to this incident. Yes, I have also received reports of Hearts players being racially abused by Hibs "supporters!"; just because it happens both ways, in no way, condones it.

I have also received reports of sectarian comments being made by Hearts supporters. On the day, thanks to CCTV footage, and indeed thanks to supporters reporting incidents of unacceptable behaviour, 4 Hearts supporters were ejected and 3 were arrested. Other matters are still being followed up with Police Scotland.

I have said before that we will continue to take action to drive this behaviour out of Tynecastle Park... and I know that I have the support of all fair-minded Hearts supporters in our efforts to

eradicate this behaviour. Since a number of the incidents mentioned above emanated from lower section G of the Wheatfield Stand, I have given instructions to close this Section with immediate effect. Season ticket holders within this Section will be offered seats elsewhere in the Stadium for the remaining 2 games of the season. I apologise to any "innocents" who are caught up in this.

I want to stress that this is not something we do lightly. This will impact close to 200 season ticket holders and as such, will cost the club financially. We have already lost income by closing corner sections of the Roseburn Stand in recent games. That we are having to reduce available capacity at games...when we have worked so hard to increase our capacity through building our new stand... is nothing short of ludicrous. As ludicrous as having spent £1 million on a state-of-the-art pitch, which some of our own fans are willing to risk destroying. To counter this appalling behaviour, I have already committed to spending another £100,000 in upgrading our CCTV system. This will be implemented during the close season. There are so many other things we could be doing with that money!

Our supporters have been magnificent in their financial backing of the Club...so we cannot sit back and allow a small group of mindless individuals undermine our achievements. Thanks to this kind of behaviour, the costs associated with

providing a safe, secure and family friendly environment for supporters to enjoy the game they love, are escalating. Please work with us to stamp this out! I would encourage all supporters to text us confidentially to report incidents of unacceptable behaviour on the Fan Reporting Service number, which can be found on the club website. Help us to protect the reputation we have fought so hard to re-build.