

10th November 2022

Violence

**"We must learn to live together as brothers
and not perish as fools."**

Martin Luther King, *Speech at St Louis, March 1964*

A report on the BBC Sports' Website caught my eye. The headline read:

Ten players were sent off as Racing Club won a Champions Trophy final that ended early because Boca Juniors had only six players on the pitch.

Seven Boca Juniors players were dismissed, including two substitutes, when Racing Club were winning 2-1. Football regulations state that a game can't continue if one side has fewer than seven players. So the game had to be abandoned two minutes before the end of an extra-time period.

Racing Club's Carlos Alcaraz had scored what looked like the winning goal, and he and his teammates were celebrating in front of the Boca fans. Alcaraz's inflammatory behaviour caused him to be set upon by Boca players, who "surrounded him, grabbing him by the ear and throwing the ball at him", the news report tells us. The ensuing melee resulted in the referee red-carding one Racing and five Boca players, with a further two of the Boca team and one from Racing being sent off later.

I've touched on the theme of "passions" in recent times and instanced the importance of passion in facing societal ills: injustice; strife; inequality; discrimination; poverty, and the like. We need passionate people to encourage us to do what we can to bring about appropriate changes in society. But passions are not confined to "causes". As a passionate football supporter, I can think of no place where my passions are more aroused than on the Hampden terraces watching Scotland play.

But here's a message from the Boca Juniors v Racing Club football match. When passions move into inflammatory taunting, and taunting elicits an aggressive response, and such conflict leads to violence and destruction, we have a problem. Am I permitted to instance the storming of the US Capitol in Washington on January 6th, 2021? Well, I'm sure you know what I mean. Passions will always matter. But so does peaceful coexistence, to be "living together" and not to "perish as fools".

When Boca and Racing next face each other, I hope the match is played in such a spirit. If not, I wouldn't want to be refereeing *that* game.

A prayer for today

What fools we are if we believe that violence achieves anything good. Amen