



EMERALD POINTS

**CONTRADICTIONS IN
FAN CULTURE AND
CLUB OWNERSHIP
IN CONTEMPORARY
ENGLISH FOOTBALL**

The Game's Gone

**CHRISTOPHER McMAHON
PETER TEMPLETON**



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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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PREFACE

In English football, there is always one underlying assumption: that football is the game of the people. Existing academic work has gone some way to problematise this notion, but anyone who has spent any time in a football stadium, or following a game online, will recognise the power the notion retains even in contemporary fan discourse. However, in an era of buyouts from consortia and sovereign wealth funds, where football clubs become secondary to the financial and political advantages owning them brings, the relationship between football clubs and their fan communities has never been under such strain. Nevertheless, fans continue to turn up games in their thousands, signing up to goals and objectives with which they ostensibly disagree.

We consider the fan – or at least, the idealised image of the fan that suffuses the discourse of English supporter culture – as the underlying foundation for the ideological structures of football. Necessarily grounded in the class concerns that, due to its unique history, underpin the attitudes of the majority of football supporter discourse, successive chapters tackle the dynamic by which football organisations, as global businesses, often operate in ways contrary to the perceived *essence* of the sports club at the heart of their operation.

Providing insight into different notions of football club ownership, specifically the Public Limited Company, the ‘remodel’ and asset stripping, the benefactor model sometimes thought of as a ‘billionaire’s plaything,’ and the sportswashing project, the authors raise significant issues faced by football club fandoms. How do fans who are forced to accept, as part of their club, ramifications that run so counter to their own histories and identities continue to turn up every week? And for the rest of us, even in less contentious cases, does the unifying entity that is the football club that holds a significant place in the hearts and minds of individuals and communities even *exist* anymore?