

2<sup>nd</sup> September 2009

Mr Adrian Van Klaveren  
Controller of Radio 5 Live  
BBC Television Centre  
Wood Lane  
London W12 7RJ

Dear Mr Van Klaveren

I am writing following Radio 5 Live's coverage of the incidents surrounding the West Ham v Millwall Carling Cup tie on 25<sup>th</sup> August.

In my capacity as Chairman of Millwall Supporters Club I was invited by your producers and participated in discussions on air relating to football hooliganism, on 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> August, both during the Victoria Derbyshire programmes. I agreed to do both broadcasts in the hope that I would be able to at least give the coverage some balance, some reasoning and to ensure that the voice of 'normal' Millwall fans is heard.

The background was that 1. prior to the match there was disorder outside the stadium involving '1970's style football hooliganism' which, despite being widely predicted, was not contained by the policing arrangements, and 2. there were three major pitch invasions by West Ham supporters inside the stadium. The news coverage on Radio 5 Live reported the events accurately.

The first broadcast on 26<sup>th</sup> August was reasonably balanced with a contributor from each of the clubs involved, which would have been satisfactory but for Victoria's negative comments about Millwall. She did not make any such remarks about West Ham or the police. You may be amused to know that our members complain to us, Millwall Supporters Club, about BBC broadcasts! We had numerous complaints about this aspect of the broadcast.

On 31<sup>st</sup> August you ran a long piece featuring a self-styled football hooligan, "Tony", who claimed to be a Millwall fan, whose words were spoken by an actor. Not surprisingly he was condoning criminal activity. What justification can you give for broadcasting this, and indeed making it the centrepiece of your morning show giving it a sustained level of focus and substance rarely heard on Radio 5 Live? This entirely negative spotlight on Millwall, to the exclusion of pretty much all other football clubs, cannot be justified, especially in the aftermath of the events at Upton Park. Having discussed this with one of the show's producers I was able to make this point on air and my fellow participant Hamish, the ex-policeman, agreed with the points that, firstly, this was all being blown out of all proportion, and secondly, that running all these negative stories about Millwall is entirely unreasonable, misrepresents what Millwall FC is, and ignores the disorder that occurs around Premiership matches every week. Whether it was being done consciously or not, this implied an anti-Millwall agenda at the BBC, and Victoria's comments during this part the show support this view. As I said on air, running all these negative 'stories' (which is what 'Tony's' interview was) can destroy our 3<sup>rd</sup> Division football club, because neither potential new fans nor new sponsors will want to be associated with us. These are the new fans and sponsors that 3<sup>rd</sup> Division football clubs always need just to survive.

A further item was run at 7 p.m. on September 2<sup>nd</sup> featuring the Chief Constable of British Transport Police. I found this piece was entirely reasonable, balanced and indeed interesting!

We participate in your programmes in good faith and welcome the opportunity to do so. However, our faith in your radio station has been seriously compromised by the last ten days broadcasting.

Yours sincerely

Bob Asprey  
Chairman – Millwall Supporters Club