



POST- CRISIS REVIEW

Football match- England and Germany

BMTP6020

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Introduction

The simulated scenario focused on managing a high-profile football match between England and Germany at the Principality Stadium, Cardiff, incorporating multiple simultaneous risks that challenged operational decision-making. These included heightened terrorism alerts, potential chemical or hostile attacks, extreme weather, transport disruption due to fallen trees, and complex crowd control challenges involving rival supporters. The presence of the Royal Family in the stadium's Royal Box added a further layer of operational complexity, requiring heightened security and careful coordination with multiple agencies.

The Bronze operations team was tasked with implementing tactical measures on the ground, including managing fan ingress and egress, queue control, ticketed entry verification, and monitoring crowd behaviour, while liaising closely with police and security teams. The scenario demanded rapid and adaptive decision-making in response to unexpected delays, storm conditions, ticketless spectators, and crowd agitation. This reflective review critically examines the team's preparation, immediate crisis response, and recovery, using Crisis Management Theory (Fink, 1986), Dynamic Risk Assessment (Arbon, 2014), and the Swiss Cheese Model (Reason, 1990). Guidance from the Green Guide (HSE, 2018) and Martyn's Law (Home Office, 2023) is also considered to evaluate performance and identify lessons learned. The review aims to move beyond description, focusing on critical analysis and reflection of operational effectiveness, risk mitigation, and human factors.

Evaluation of Team Preparation and Planning

Preparation and planning are fundamental to effective operational response in high-risk events. The bronze operations team conducted risk assessments and contingency planning prior to the match, focusing on potential hazards such as crowd density, fan aggression, transport disruption, extreme weather, and VIP security. Measures were implemented to separate rival supporters, strategically allocate stewards, and ensure authorised entry at gates. English fans, arriving on match day, were prioritised due to anticipated impatience, while German supporters, already staying in Cardiff, were escorted along controlled routes using horse-mounted police to prevent clashes.

The team applied dynamic risk assessment, recognising that risks are fluid and evolve rapidly (Arbon, 2014). The Swiss Cheese Model (Reason, 1990) informed the layered safety measures: stewards, barriers, police presence, signage, and communication channels were aligned to prevent minor lapses from escalating into major incidents. Pre-event actions included removing loose objects, reinforcing security checks, and preparing staff for adverse weather. Communication protocols were pre-established to advise fans of delays, ticket requirements, and route guidance.

Planning was informed by Martyn's Law, ensuring that stadium security for VIPs and high-alert terrorism conditions met statutory requirements. Coordination with transport authorities and local police was critical to manage both expected and

unforeseen delays. Crowd control strategies drew on Fruin's crowd flow theory (1993) and Green Guide guidance, ensuring safe separation of rival supporters and appropriate monitoring of crowd density.

Despite thorough planning, some critical risks were underestimated. The likelihood of ticketless fans entering the stadium and the intensity of fan frustration during delays were not fully accounted for. According to Fink's crisis management stages (1986), pre-crisis planning should anticipate human behavioural responses to disruptions, including impatience and potential aggression. Scenario-based thinking could have improved preparation by modelling these behavioural outcomes. This gap illustrates the importance of adaptive planning, where dynamic contingencies are prepared in advance, alongside robust resource allocation and real-time decision support.

Critical Review of Crisis Response (Immediate Actions and Decision Making)

During the event, the bronze operations team faced simultaneous crises. The kick-off was delayed from 5 pm to 6 pm due to storm conditions and transport disruption, creating heightened fan frustration, particularly among English supporters. Concurrently, protesters and rival fans posed potential risks, while ticketless spectators entering the stadium created safety and operational challenges.

Immediate response actions included maintaining situational awareness through radio communication, direct observation, and liaison with stewards and police. Crowd control measures ensured physical separation of English and German fans, using horse-mounted police to guide German supporters along controlled routes while English fans were prioritised at stadium gates. Gate staff monitored authorised entry, with additional stewards deployed to manage pinch points and prevent bottlenecks.

The team applied dynamic risk assessment principles (Arbon, 2014) and the Swiss Cheese Model (Reason, 1990) to identify where multiple risk factors could converge, such as crowd density, agitation, and adverse weather. Tactical decisions included rescheduling the kick-off, reallocating staff for delayed arrivals, and rerouting fans to reduce congestion. Communication with spectators, via public address systems and messages, helped reduce frustration and anxiety, consistent with Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2014).

Coordination with police, transport, and security personnel exemplified JESIP principles (2021), which emphasise co-location, shared situational awareness, and unified operational response. Nevertheless, the incident of 300–400 ticketless fans entering the stadium highlighted vulnerabilities in pre-event screening and operational checks. The team responded by isolating these individuals in controlled areas and escorting them to bars or out of the stadium, demonstrating adaptive problem-solving.

This scenario also emphasised the importance of understanding crowd behaviour. Fans delayed by transport or adverse weather exhibited impatience, minor aggression, and heightened emotional responses, which could escalate into violence

if unmitigated. Applying crowd psychology theory, the team recognised that visible authority, clear instructions, and calm communication can reduce panic and aggression, ensuring safer operations (Fruin, 1993; Still, 2014).

Overall, the team's crisis response demonstrated effective decision-making under pressure, multi-agency coordination, and crowd management, while highlighting the need for anticipating human behavioural responses and integrating flexible operational contingencies.

Crisis Recovery - Evaluation and Lessons Learned

Post-event recovery focused on evaluating team performance, restoring normal operations, and extracting key lessons for future planning. The team successfully restored order, managed fan egress safely, and addressed ticketless spectators, demonstrating that tactical interventions can be effective even under high-pressure, multi-risk conditions.

A significant strength was multi-agency coordination, with bronze staff, police, security, and transport authorities aligned to guide fans safely and prevent clashes between rival supporters. The team also demonstrated adaptation to unexpected events, including rescheduling the kick-off and reallocating staff to manage delayed fans, consistent with adaptive crisis management principles (Boin et al., 2005). Communication strategies, including PA announcements and proactive messages, successfully calmed frustrated fans, confirming the practical relevance of Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2014).

Nevertheless, several areas for improvement were identified. Ticketless fan management could be strengthened with enhanced pre-event screening, technology checks, and contingency staffing to reduce unauthorised entry. Behaviour prediction remains a challenge; anticipating the effects of delays, weather, and crowd dynamics could improve pre-crisis planning and reduce agitation. Post-crisis documentation and analysis of incident logs, crowd density data, and staff deployment records should be undertaken to support continuous improvement, consistent with Green Guide recommendations (HSE, 2018).

Lessons learned emphasise the importance of flexible resource allocation, allowing stewards, police, and medical personnel to be redeployed dynamically in response to emerging risks. Enhanced multi-channel communication to spectators-using PA systems, social media, and on-site messaging-can reduce confusion and mitigate frustration. Furthermore, scenario-based contingency planning should be embedded in preparation to address multiple simultaneous risks, including terrorism threats, extreme weather, transport disruption, and fan disorder.

Finally, reflection on the exercise demonstrates that the bronze operations team performed effectively within a complex, multi-risk environment, yet critical learning points emerged. Integrating structured post-event evaluation, reflective practice, and academic theory into operational planning can strengthen resilience, decision-

making, and adaptability, ensuring safer and more controlled outcomes for future high-profile sporting events.

Beyond the operational successes and identified areas for improvement, the post-crisis analysis highlights the importance of embedding a structured reflective learning process into future event planning.

The scenario demonstrated that, while immediate tactical responses were largely effective, long-term resilience depends on systematic evaluation of both successes and near-misses. For example, analysing crowd movement patterns, response times, and communication effectiveness could reveal underlying vulnerabilities, such as pinch points that may not have caused an incident this time but could do so under slightly different conditions. Integrating risk and crisis models, such as the Swiss Cheese Model (Reason, 1990) and dynamic risk assessment frameworks (Arbon, 2014), into post-event evaluation allows teams to identify where multiple small failures could align to create major risks.

Additionally, lessons can be drawn on human behaviour under stress, including how delayed entry, adverse weather, and heightened security measures influence crowd frustration and aggression. By formally documenting these behavioural trends alongside operational data, future training scenarios can be designed to better anticipate and mitigate these risks. Multi-agency debriefs should focus not only on what happened operationally but also on how communication, leadership, and staff adaptability contributed to outcomes, aligning with principles outlined in Crisis Management Theory (Boin et al., 2005).

Embedding these insights into continuous improvement processes, with updated contingency plans, staffing models, and communication strategies, strengthens the capacity of bronze operations teams to respond effectively to complex, high-pressure events. This reflective approach ensures that lessons learned are transferred into practice, increasing the likelihood of safe, controlled, and coordinated outcomes for future major sporting events.

References

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