

„Ano, jsem rasista! A co?“ Neschopnost hegemonního diskurzu českých médií reflektovat rasismus ve sportu

“Yes, I am a racist! So what?” The incompetence of hegemonic discourse of the Czech media to reflect racism in sport

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Abstract:

The paper presents results of discourse analysis focusing on the representation of racism in the news and online discussions dedicated to the case of the football team SU Junior Roma. This team was boycotted by other teams in the league. They did not want to play with them, referring to the alleged aggressiveness of players with Roma ethnicity. After analysing related articles and reader's posts, the paper reveals a discrepancy between the representation of racism in sport by media and discussing readers. The findings support our hypothesis that discussions under articles allowed people to spread racist thoughts and build the resistance towards others. On the contrary, the journalists used hegemonic discourse, which the racism theme set aside or avoided it entirely.

Abstrakt:

Článek prezentuje výsledky diskurzivní analýzy, která se zaměřuje na reprezentaci rasismu ve zprávách a online diskuzích věnující se kauze fotbalového týmu TJ Junior Roma. Tento tým čelil bojkotu zápasů ze strany ostatních týmů v lize, kteří s ním nechťeli hrát s odkazem na údajnou agresivitu hráčů romského etnika. Analýza souvisejících článků a komentářů čtenářů odhalila rozpor v reprezentaci rasismu ve sportu mezi médii a diskutujícími čtenáři. Výsledky potvrdily, že diskuze pod články umožňují lidem šířit rasistické ideje a vytvářet nenávislné postoje k ostatním. Naopak novináři se drželi hegemonního diskurzu, který téma rasismu upozaduje nebo se mu zcela vyhýbá.

Key words:

Sports journalism, sports fans, discourse analysis, racism, football

Klíčová slova:

Sportovní žurnalistika, sportovní fanoušci, analýza diskurzu, rasismus, fotbal

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INTRODUCTION

Racism can be found in various forms in the human society and, unfortunately, is not avoiding a sport. In the Czech Republic, racism plays an irreplaceable role on the sports stadiums and also in the media. Due to this fact, repetitive incidents occur, and some matches turn into manifestations of intolerance. Images of these events in the media vary from hype through irreverent reconciliation to silent disregarding. While sports articles are often indifferent, discussions of fans and readers reveal pieces of evidence of undeniable racism. We often witnessed on the Internet heated debates full of racism, intolerance and hatred.

Growing interest of the academics emphasizing the importance of media as a vital platform for strengthening and shaping the discourse about racism in sport brought us to the idea to raise the main

research question whether there is a difference in representation of racism in sport between journalists and the football fans and readers respectively.

Racism is, unfortunately, an essential part of the football fans' identity. Hegemonic public discourse denies it in many ways, but Czech society is being more and more radicalized not only in the field of sport. We currently observe an increase in the number of racially motivated actions, such as anti-Roma marches or banners with hateful slogans against Islam on sports stadiums. For the purpose of this article, we focus on the case of the team SU Junior Roma (TJ Junior Roma), which will be described in a bigger detail below.

Racism and sports journalism

The concept of race is one of the most difficult terms to explain. Therefore, we use only key aspects of the complex issue as described by reputable researchers to show the basics of racism. Stuart Hall depicted race as the 'floating signifier' (Hall, 1996). An illusion of race is maintained according to Hall in the media and popular culture through images of 'them' and 'us' (Hall, 1996). Barker (1999) assumes that race does not exist outside representation but is formed in and by it in a process of social and political struggle. Farrington et al. (2012) highlight that concept of race distances itself from raw biological connotations, but they still seem to exist to some extent within popular discourse. (Farrington et al., 2012, p. 30). Authors use the concept of 'race' as an ideological construct in relation to power and subordination. They perceive it as a myth based on socially constructed ideas about human skills and abilities that are incorrectly assumed to be biological.

Generally speaking, racism is a hostile attitude towards people of different race or ethnic group, which is considered as a race. It can take on a fanatic form and overgrow into an ideology and also a systematic terror. (Linhart et al., 1996). According to Van Dijk, racist discourse is "*a form of discriminatory social practice that manifests itself in text, talk and communication, together with other (non-verbal) discriminatory practices, racist discourse contributes to the reproduction of racism as a form of ethnic or 'racial' domination.*" (Van Dijk, 2004). In the 21st century we are still facing and painfully fighting racism and its new forms, such as causal racism, accidental racism, symbolic racism, institutional racism, etc. (see Farrington et al., 2012, p. 17).

The presence of racism within the football culture has been the subject of scholarly research for many decades (Burdsey, 2007; Cleland & Cashmore, 2013; Garland & Rowe 2001, etc.). For example, the United Kingdom as a cradle of European football faced the growing hostility against black players by founding an antiracism organization „Let's Kick Racism Out of Football“ in 1993 (renamed in 1997 to just „Kick it Out“). The main goal was to stop racism and the use of racist language in football. (Cleland, 2014, p. 416). Research shows that a sport reporting has the power and ability to shape people's opinions on contentious topics such as 'race', racism, ethnicity, nationalism and belonging (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). The main problem is, that sport offers nations and 'races' a chance to combat stereotypes while also reifying them (Bernstein & Blain, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Brookes, 2002; Ruddock, 2005).

Moreover, the introduction of online discussions and social media offered a new opportunity for spreading and communicating racist thoughts anonymously there. The readers in most of the cases do not have to register to view and read comments under articles, and they predominantly use pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. They feel safe to promote hate speech when nobody knows their identity. According to Cleland (2014, p. 417), racism is never static and online media allowed old racial schemes to be broadcasted in new social settings anonymously via smartphones and computers. We can also find several other analyses supporting our results, e.g. Faulkner and Bliuc (2016) who analysed online discussions considering three notable racial incidents that happened in Australia. Faulkner and Bliuc (2016, p. 15) concluded there are many people expressing that is OK to be a racist in online discussions.

Football on the field and screen

Football is one of the most popular sports in the Czech Republic. Football Association of the Czech Republic has circa 325,000 registered football players. Although the Czech football achieved the greatest success in 1996 and 2004 at the European Championship (in 1996 placed second and third eight years later), the interest in this sport is still very high.

Václav Stříteský (2015) in his article „Selected Perspectives on Attitudes of the Czech Population towards Sport“ measured the viewership of Czech sport on TV. The research showed that the ice hockey is the most watched sport and football ranks second (measured in the representative sample of more than 15,000 people aged 12–79). Football places first for the male population. In this case, football won, but ice hockey is still close behind (by only 0.4%). Football is also among men the most popular sport to watch in a live game.

The Czech Republic football league system distributes football teams in several divisions. The highest levels are national professional championship (1st Division and Czech National Football League), followed by provincial leagues (Bohemian, Moravian and Silesian), county leagues (4th Division: A, B, C, D and E) and below them are 14 regional divisions.

Sport on TV, radio or in the press is an important component of the mass media activities. It would be difficult to retain an economic success for the media without spectators, listeners and readers. The newspaper used the sports news about soccer, cricket, racing or rugby to advertise these events, and also to capture readers already since the 19th century (Blain & Boyle, 1998). Football is the world's number one sport, both regarding the number of football players and active or passive spectators. The global impact of football could be expressed in the following statistics. For example, the Football World Cup 1998 attended 173 nations, and FIFA registered 120 million players as amateurs or professionals. Moreover, 8 of the 10 most watched global sporting events were TV football matches (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 1999). Therefore, football is number one also for sports journalists which means that football coverage makes up an enormous part of sports news in the Czech media. Football reports are an important component of the discourse of printed and online media.

Media image of the Roma ethnic and SU Junior Roma

There are circa 300,000 (3%) Roma in the Czech Republic. Analysis of Czech media coverage of the Roma ethnic group revealed that the Czech media report in most of the cases about the Roma in connection with negative events (see Goral, 1998; Nečas, 1999; Sedláková, 2007).

The research of Renáta Sedláková (2007) focused on the image of the Roma ethnic group in TV news. She confirmed that in the majority of cases the Roma are thematically associated with crime, emigration and social problems. Moreover, they receive less space in the news for expressing and presenting their attitudes and views in comparison with the representatives of the majority. In short, the stereotypical representation of the overall image of the Roma in the media looks like this: they do not work, have many children, live from the state money, are noisy, messy, thieves, criminals, idlers, and parasites (Sedláková, 2003).

The situation is very similar also abroad. For example Rougheri (1999) analyzes images of Roma in the Greek press. Results show that the Roma are depicted as social parasites, people who despise work and exploit their children. Frequently, in press reports, Roma are pictured as trouble-makers. Rougheri (1999) found out that in most cases newspapers refer to Roma as lawbreakers and criminal suspects without making any attempt to contextualise criminality within social marginalisation and poverty. In most articles concerning Roma, there is an absence of any analysis of the reasons that push Roma into crime.

Another research was conducted under the auspices of the Helsinki Committee in Slovakia. Benkovič and Vakulová (2000) determined that 85% of Slovak journalists prefer simple description of Roma issues and events and pay no attention to the causes, consequences and alternative solutions to these problems. The overall image of Roma in the Slovak media tuned mainly negative and core information about Roma minority prevalent crime and social issues.

We focus in our paper on the case of the football team – SU Junior Roma. They come from Děčín, which is a city in the north of the Czech Republic where a sizable Roma minority lives in. This team played in 2014 the lowest football competition, and it consists of players from the Roma ethnicity. The problem was that nobody wanted to play against them because of the allegedly aggressive game style (but disrepute related to previous team from Děčín). Therefore, the Roma Club won without having kicked the ball and lead the table for a while.

METHODOLOGY

The discourse analysis (as e.g. Fairclough, 1995; 2013; and Fowler, 1998 conducted it) was the natural choice for our research. We were not interested only in media content but in the whole „milieu”, so called discourse, because it is not just about „what is written in the news and discussions”, but more about „how is the racist behaviour reflected within news and discussions”. We took a social constructivist approach (e. g. Hall, 2001). We believe the social reality is constructed by the media and language used in them can reinforce the stereotypes.

Since we chose the cases where ethnic minority was involved, it was also important to think about the power relations, an important part of the discourse analysis. When considering who is writing the articles, we can say those people are 100% white journalists. There was no Roma (or other nationality or ethnicity) journalist writing about these issues in Czech media. Even though we cannot say it with 100% certainty, but can guess from the ethnic homogeneity of the Czech population, the participants of these discussions, as well as social media users interested in these topics, were almost exclusively white Czechs (mainly male). As Fairclough (2013) and earlier Foucault (1993) reminded, positions within discourse are strongly connected with social power, so people with a better social position (usually those from a social majority) have a better access to the social life and, of course, media communication. They are more likely „to be heard“ than people from social minorities.

When analysing any content, not just the media one, it is crucial to analyse both the salient topics within the articles and discussions, and the topics not presented at all. As Fairclough (1995) distinguishes, there are several levels of presence of the topic or the actors within the text. Fairclough (1995, p. 106) distinguishes „a scale of presence, running from ‘absent’ to ‘foregrounded’: absent – presupposed – backgrounded – foregrounded”. According to Fairclough (1995), each text is a combination of something that was really said and something that is implicitly supposed by the author.

He also points out there is a difference between representing and represented discourse, in other words – e.g. if subjects of news are allowed to speak about themselves, or if someone else (usually a person from the social majority) is speaking about them. (Fairclough, 1995).

We were interested in all these aspects in our analysis, trying to deconstruct the approaches of both journalists and discussion participants through the language they used. The discourse analysis was used for both selected articles and discussions related to them (see also Faulkner & Bliuc, 2016; Billig, 2001; Weaver, 2012). The recommendations made by Hughey and Daniels (2013) for the researchers of racist comments at online news sites were considered.

Sample

We analysed ten articles and 2,108 comments about SU Junior Roma football team in the period between 1st September 2014 and 30th September 2014 in the online news (see Table 1). In this period, there was a total of 55 reports about this topic (newspaper, radio, TV, internet). We have used database Newton media for the search using the following keywords: SU Junior Roma, Děčín, football, Roma players, Roma football players.

This topic has appeared in 31 online articles, the rest (24 articles) were in different media types. We selected a sample of 10 online articles that best represent the full media coverage of the issue for deeper analysis. Other articles (from other news websites) simply repeat the content of the source articles (by Alice Klaubenschalková from www.iDnes.cz) and there were no new information.

Therefore our sample of 10 articles covered all important themes related to the researched topic and so it is representative with respect to given circumstances.

The one of the most visited news server iDnes.cz devoted the attention to this issue in the regional section, not in the sports part. It proves that this issue was not important primarily in terms of sports results. It was more a social problem than a sports story.

Table 1: Table of analysed articles

Date	News website	Title	Form of discussion	Number of comments
2. 9. 2014	Facebook iDNES	The Roma Club wins without having kicked the ball. Opponents refuse to play against them	With Facebook profiles	49
2. 9. 2014	iDNES.cz/ Ústí	The Roma Club wins without having kicked the ball. Opponents refuse to play against them	Registration with „real“ name or FB	879
3. 9. 2014	Extra.cz	Racism in practice: Roma club leads the third class football league in the Děčín region with a zero score without even kicking the ball! No one wants to play against them!	Discussion connected to FB (comments of comments)	51
4. 9. 2014	iSport.blesk.cz	Racism? The Roma Club leads the table without even kicking the ball. No one wants to play against them!	Registration with „real“ name or FB	9
7. 9. 2014	Sport.lidovky.cz	The feared Roma team played for the first time. The match was without any incident	No discussion	0
9. 9. 2014	iDNES.cz/ Ústí	As a protest, the staff of embassies will challenge the rejected Roma footballers	Registration with „real“ name or FB	608
21. 9. 2014	iDNES.cz/ Ústí	The Diplomats defeated in a friendly match the Roma team that nobody wants to play against	Registration with „real“ name or FB	320
22. 9. 2014	Rozhlas.cz	The Diplomats won a friendly football match against SU Junior Roma Děčín	No discussion	0
25.9. 2014	iDNES.cz/ Ústí	The Roma team did not persuade the opponents, just three clubs will compete with them on the football pitch.	Registration with „real“ name	192
25. 9. 2014	Decin.cz	Soccer officials want to convince the clubs in the Děčín region to play against SU Junior Roma	No discussion	0

RESULTS

Analysis of online news

The headlines of the analysed articles deal at the beginning of September mainly with the fact that the Roma football team won without playing. Authors identically describe the situation of the Roma club that leads the third class football league with a zero score because of the boycott by others clubs, which refuse to play against them. The reasons why opponents skipped the matches differ depending on who is talking.

“I think it is pure racism that nobody wants to play with us today. Nowhere in the world has happened that teams refused to face an opponent who has a different colour of skin. The general

mood in the Czech Republic is negative against the Roma, 'said the angry coach of SU Junior Roma Pavel Horváth."

iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014

On the other hand, there were voices by deputies of boycotting teams such as Františkov nad Ploučnicí or Rybníště. They strictly denied racism as the reason for rather paying the fine than playing against SU Junior Roma. They referred to the problematic audience as justification for skipping the match.

"The management of clubs had concerns about possible conflict among the spectators. Nobody is afraid of the players, 'said Šefčík."

iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014

After this quote, we can find the doubts about the credibility by author Klaubeschalková, who wrote about gaps in this way of reasoning. She argued that the organizers should foster for a calm situation in the stands and moreover, that clubs themselves made no secret of the fact, that the main reason is the Roma ethnicity of the players. For expressing this point of view, she used citation:

"Nobody can imagine, how aggressive and vulgar their playing style is. We would rather pay a fine than play against them, 'said Jaroslava Fišerová, a secretary of the football club in Rybníště."

iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014

The Roma are not mentioned in the citation but because of the common picture of Roma as aggressive criminals the complaint is for readers inevitably linked to Roma ethnicity of the players. There is no salient evidence of „aggressive Roma players”, but it is clear that this is something, which is not mentioned (in Fairclough words) but still present in hegemonic discourse. However, a deputy from Dolní Habartice football club said, that they never had a problem with the SU Junior Roma team despite numerous friendly matches between their clubs.

The tabloid press is more critical and straightforward and uses the word ‘racism’ in the headlines. It uses sensational style and often shocking headlines to attract the attention of readers. Czech tabloids fulfill the definition of the yellow press as unreliable, unchecked, cheap and vulgar (Osvaldová & Halada, 1999). Both tabloids presented in our sample illustrated it perfectly with their headlines:

"Racism in practice: Roma club leads the third class football championship in the Děčín region with a zero score without even kicking the ball! No one wants to play against them!"

Extra.cz, 3. 9. 2014

"Racism? The Roma Club leads the table without even kicking the ball. No one wants to play against them!"

iSport.blesk.cz, 4. 9. 2014

They were more expressive also in the body of their articles. They were not afraid to be more speculative in the text.

"There are no racial reasons behind the strange behaviour of the opponents... which is, at first glance, Mr. Secretary will forgive me, a blatant bullshit."

Extra.cz, 3. 9. 2014

The authors also play the racial card by showing almost ironic sympathy for the Roma, who do not have an opponent to play against. The following quote illustrates perfectly the position of the tabloid journalists who want to appeal to their readers and to meet the mainstream perception of the Roma

as people who just pretend to be poor fellows. This cheap picking on them, clumsily hidden behind the ironic statement corresponds to presupposed presence describe on Faircloughs' scale. The text implicitly supposed that readers will understand that Roma is not poor at all.

“Poor Roma from Děčín, who like football and they do not have an opponent to play against...”
Extra.cz, 3. 9. 2014

The whole story moved then in the media further to the friendly match, in which the Roma team played with the representatives of embassies. They reacted to the published articles and decided to show their sympathy with the team this way.

“‘Discrimination and prejudice are a problem of the whole Europe. Countries face them in all areas, and sport is no exception. We will issue the red card to racism by playing this friendly match,’ said Annika Jagander, the Swedish Ambassador.”

iDnes.cz, 9. 9. 2014

While the journalists of serious newspapers were very cautious about the topic of discrimination and racism in all previous articles related to the case of SU Junior Roma, suddenly there was a clear link to racism. Representatives of embassies were quite clear about this matter that illustrated banners with slogans „No to racism“ or „Give racism the red card“. So finally, journalist started to write about racism, but still carefully, most often with the use of actors' quotations.

“The Diplomats made it clear to the local teams that racism does not belong to football.”
“... ‘And I don't care if the opponent is black or white, it does not belong to the sport,’ said Lassen after the game.”

iDnes.cz, 9. 9. 2014

The interesting thing is that the article also mentions at the same time that the team does not consist entirely of Roma players, which sheds a different light on the whole problem. Particularly with regard to the fact that most of the discussions, as we show below, assumed that the entire team consists of players with Roma ethnicity, which aroused great emotion among them.

“‘We wanted to give a hand to the white people not only here in the Děčín Region. They rejected it, and that made me very sorry. And I'm even sorrier that this is happening in the sport,’ added coach Pavel Horváth, whose team also includes five white players.”

iDnes.cz, 9. 9. 2014

The journalists have been tirelessly asking about the reasons why clubs didn't want to play against SU Roma. At the beginning, it was particularly about possible violence on the pitch and in the stands. For example, the article on Decin.cz mentioned that clubs are referring to potential violence coming from Děčín players. The teams refusing to play against SU Junior Roma also refer to three years old incident of the former team SU Roma, which SU Junior Roma is the successor of. Nevertheless new team consisted with one exception from new players. Herák was the only player that played in the previous team and played for SU Junior Roma too. His participation served for some representatives of clubs as an excuse to boycott the game. However, Herák played in the competition also for Heřmanice football club, where nobody has a problem with him. The absurdity of the whole case is further deepened. One of the reactions suggests that there are more variables in this game.

“‘I accept that some teams don't want to play, but we are not scared, and everyone has to get a second chance. I have to be honest; we don't even have the money to pay the fine for the match we did not play,’ said Martin Pilecký from the Prysk team.”

iDnes.cz, 25. 9. 2014

The honest statement of Mr. Pilecký suggests that this is maybe more about the missing money than pure interest in playing with SU Junior Roma. It is an example of *backgrounded information* according to Fairclough scale.

As the case was more and more visible, it was finally addressed also by representatives of the football authorities.

“Clearly this is not about racism and discrimination. I hope that we will explain it at a meeting. The situation will clear up and all of the other teams will participate in the competition. I am convinced that it will be like this,” believes the Head of the District Executive Committee Libor Šimečka.

rozhlas.cz, 22. 9. 2014

The Football Association tried to sweep the whole case under the carpet at the moment when it attracted the attention of foreign media thanks to the friendly match with the representatives of embassies, according to the information of the Klaubenschalková from idnes.cz. This response indicates that too:

“Miroslav Pelta claimed that the exemplary punishment will be necessary if racism proves to be the reason for boycotting the team. He invited the participants to a meeting and the Association then issued a statement that the boycott does not have a racist subtext.”

iDnes.cz, 21. 9. 2014

One of the excuses that clubs started to use lately, as a reason for skipping the matches, was unfair financial support of team SU Junior Roma by the city.

“Representatives of the clubs initially claimed that it is because of the aggressiveness of the Roma. Now they changed their opinion, and now they mind mostly that the Roma Club is allegedly supported by the city that finances it,” said the Head of the District Executive Committee, Libor Šimečka.

iDnes.cz, 21. 9. 2014

Positive discrimination of the team TJ Junior Roma was also an interesting topic for the debaters. The discussions also started reflecting this:

“No wonder they refuse to play against the professionals. Regional Championship is an amateur competition, in which guys play in their free time after work. SU Roma is a professional club paid by the state so that they can have training even three times a day.”

Balajka Roman (iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014, 210 likes)

Analysis of discussions below articles

Most of the discussions were full of open racism, insults, and vulgarities. Some news sites introduced a rule that people in discussions must register with their own name and with a readership account. „Maybe we can find there hundreds and thousands of posts nicknames and names of discussing people, but it is only a little fraction of real users.“ (Čížek, 2012) Website www.iDnes.cz confirms that people who participate in the discussions are only a small part of the readers group. According to their internal research, only three percent of visitors with a readership account write comments under the articles (Čížek, 2012).

While authors of serious news try to stay decent, clear and honest, the discussion is open to all types of inappropriate, obscene, abusive and untrue information.

“Yes! I’m a racist!!!”

Tomáš Starosta (iDnes.cz, 9. 9. 2014)

The author with a name or nickname Tomáš Starosta was not afraid to express his attitude in the discussion under the article The Roma Club wins without having kicked the ball. Opponents refuse to play against them. This article appeared in the regional part of iDNES.cz and aroused a great interest of readers. The topic was brand new, and the response corresponded to it. A total of 879 comments were posted.

The post by an author who wonders about the very existence of a club based on belonging to an ethnic minority received most of the likes. Although the author is not attacking and he avoids offensive reactions, his remark about the „temporary majority“ clears his position. He strongly disagrees with the existence of the club and expresses his outrage toward so-called ‘upside down’ racism:

“I can’t explain how it is possible that some Roma football team can even exist. How is it possible that there may be a team established based on the ethnic, national, racial or religious origin of players? No one would allow the existence of a club, which only members of the majority (SO FAR the majority) could join and which would exclude a priori the Roma. Who can explain to me that it is possible the other way round?”

Slavomír Beneš (iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014, 183 likes)

Other comments with most likes under various articles were also indicating a similar problem. The language and means of expression were often rawer and harsher. The following posts show few of them which represent the attitudes of commentators.

“Fucking racists. If I set up FC White Far Heights, I would have problems with all kinds of human right defenders. Or I’d end up in court... But FC Gypsy Děčín, this is ok.”

Josef Chlouba (iDnes.cz, 25. 9. 2014, 50 likes)

“It is already racism to create a team on the racial principle. And I can see how the Diplomats would want to play against a club named SU WHITE, which would declaratorily have only white players.”

Petr Souček (iDnes.cz, 22. 9. 2014, 96 likes)

“The Czechs are not racists; they are just slapped around by experiences. They don’t care whether he is brown, black, or yellow if he leads a decent life so that he can be an example to his children. But parasites, whether white or others, bother probably everyone. And that is not 100% racism. The fact that many of these people are of the Gypsy ethnic group is another thing. So let them play football, but it will not solve the problems of the Gypsy at all because the reason nobody wants to play with them is not addressed here. Thank you Idnes for impartial news:-/”

Milan Kratochvíl (iDnes.cz, 9. 9. 2014, 106 likes)

“Abracadabra used to be the magical formula before, but today it is racism. Is a sunrise racist, when the Sun chases away the black darkness?”

Martin Kindl (FB iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014, 68 likes)

As we explained in the theoretical part, the Roma do not have a good position in the Czech society and the media image is even worse. The opinion prevails that Roma do not work, receive social benefits from the state and that the real situation is more discriminatory towards majority than Roma minority is a frequent emotion behind a lot of comments. This statement corresponds with above-mentioned sarcasm in tabloid press Extra.cz.

“Poor Roma from Děčín – are you kidding me???”

Marek Novák, Bratislava (Extra.cz, 3. 9. 2014, 163 likes)

We can find the justification of the feeling of fear from Roma ethnic in some of the comments.

“I can't tell my child since early childhood that the Roma are the good guys and that he is safe around them. I would exhibit him to a great danger. Not many parents would do that.”

Jan Stehlík (iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014, 21 likes)

“I would never play football even with good Roma guys. When they lose, and that is in 99 cases, they are incredibly aggressive and vindictive. The Roma can't lose. I am writing this criticism, and I can go to jail for it. Today, I read in the news that the Court sentenced a former PM for racist statements in public! The condemnation of a white skin man, who only said publicly the truth, which most of the population secretly says at homes, returns us to the terrible times of totality!”

Jiri Wolf (isport.blesk.cz, 4. 9. 2014, 18 likes)

The degree of intolerance and inappropriate racist thoughts is shocking. However, reactions like this one below are not isolated in the discussions.

“The Roma do not belong on the football field, but somewhere in the pen! They are worse than animals. First, let them go to work, so they begin to behave like people, in the meantime, they should be locked up somewhere where they won't bother.”

Josef Dorazín (iDnes.cz, 2. 9. 2014, 16 likes)

CONCLUSION

Our paper presented an analysis of online news articles and related discussions dealing with the case of SU Junior Roma. This team faced multiple cancellations of matches because of a boycott from the opponents. We identify that the reasoning of the representatives of clubs that refused to play with SU Junior Roma changed over time. Mainly it was allegedly aggressive behaviour of players, old violent incident and also financial support by the city. Everybody denies racist motivation. On the other hand, representatives of SU Junior Roma loudly speak about racism as the central argument.

After analysing related articles and readers' posts, we revealed a discrepancy of representation of racism between them. Journalists from serious newspapers informed very neutrally about the whole issue. Mostly, they only described the situation without any comments. They avoided deeper analyses of the problem. The breakpoint was the match between SU Junior Roma and the staff of embassies. After that, the racism started to be a part of the topic too. However, still if journalist used the word racism, they did so very cautiously and primarily in quotations. There is almost no space for their own descriptions and comments.

On the contrary, comments under the articles dealt mostly with the racist issue. Debaters had no limits, and their expressions were very often out of line. It is obvious that racism is a part of the fan culture in the sport as was described earlier by many other researchers (see Bernstein & Blain, 2003; Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Due to the expressed opinions of discussing readers, we could also confirm that the minority is rarely participating in these discussions. In general 'they speak less' or not at all. We prove that online environment provides space for racist thoughts to flourish, and it is, therefore, a great platform to spread racism.

According to Patrick Banga, the administrator of discussions at the server idnes.cz the frequency of racist expression is constantly increasing. The situation points to the latent racism; that penetrates to a great extent the whole Czech society. The issue is not being significantly addressed (Výborný, 2011: p. 21). The problem is that serious newspapers avoid evaluating commentaries in their articles, which could relate to racism (or have potentially racist subtext) and they entirely rely on a mere description instead. But at the same time, there is an open and anonymous discussion of readers under these articles, which creates a feeling of a supportive environment, in which the racist tendencies strengthen.

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