

# Racism

## BEFORE YOU READ

- What is the difference between prejudice and discrimination?
- How do concepts like racism, ageism, and sexism relate to prejudice and discrimination?
- In the following text, a former Liverpool and England footballer talks about the racism he encountered on the football terraces in England and the measures he took both as a player and later as an administrator. What do you think he would have done to counter racist behaviour?

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## Ignoring the Bananas

### How John Barnes tackled racism in English football

FOR MANY black players plying their trade all over the globe the infamous monkey chant or throwing bananas on the pitch is the ultimate insult. It is a gesture that attempts to denote the individual as being less than human, unintelligent primates scampering around the park simply for the sake of [a] and amusement. Though it's less prominent in football these days, the phenomenon still remains [b] far and wide across the planet, like an incurable disease.

Understandably, those who continue to be touched by the curse have [c] their frustration in various ways. Two years ago, an [d] Samuel Eto'o attempted to leave the pitch after fans of Spanish team Real Zaragoza performed monkey chants and threw peanuts on the pitch whenever the Cameroonian international touched the ball. Now in his fourth season at Barcelona, the talented striker still refuses to take his children to watch him play.

It is a similar situation for teammate Idriss Carlos Kamani, who plays for Espanyol. In Germany, Gerard Asamoah, the first black player to play for that country, threatened to quit national duty soon after the World

Cup if chanting around the German league did not [e].

The list goes on, but none of these players can claim to have faced the level of intolerance [f] to one man in the 1980s in England.

In a time when [g] was rampant, Jamaica-born John Barnes looked the monster of discrimination dead in the eye and never seemed to [h].

"It happened and it really meant nothing to me; it was like water off a duck's back," said the former Liverpool great.

"You see, I consider racists to be ignorant people so they did not affect me at all," Barnes remarked simply.

[1]

Born in Kingston on November 11, 1963, the son of well-respected army man Colonel Ken Barnes and his wife, Jean, a television presenter, young John showcased his talent within the confines of the Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) headquarters at UP Park Camp before playing in the Colts schoolboy competition for North Street high school St George's.

Moving to England at the age of 13, Barnes, then playing for non-league team Sudbury Court, was



spotted by Watford and signed in July 1981. He was on his way to the big time, but the experiences Barnes was to face at his new club, which gained promotion to the top flight in the 1981–82 season would be unlike any he had faced before at small-time Sudbury Court – a world away in Jamaica.

"Racism was rife. You had bananas coming on the field, you had monkey chants, you had all sorts of obscenities being shouted at you," Barnes, who was in the island recently for the Digicel Football Clinics, recalled.

"It was an accepted part of football. The authorities never did anything, the referees never did

hing ... what could the players he said.

low the authorities get lved, they eject people from ground and fine football clubs back then it was the normal of football in England," he

[2]

ears and 65 goals later, Barnes red a move to powerhouse Liverpool but on his debut he warned that it would be more e same.

ever, just as he had done e, the winger was cool and casual in his approach. In mous picture seen all over world, the player, clad in the us red of his Merseyside , is seen back heeling away a na, as if he hadn't even given ymbol of degradation a second ght.

don't remember doing that. an the picture is there. but nas back then were common," es said of the shot.

he reason it all came to the is because I was playing for h-profile club like Liverpool. ix years before, that happened week, but because it was a club it wasn't highlighted" id.

i terms of me being angry wanting to fight people in the s though, it never happened, nsider those people to be ant, so how could they affect part of life or any part of my anour?

ou have to do what makes comfortable with yourself. ll react differently to every ion," he said.

June 1984, Barnes, already tablished name for Liverpool, d score possibly one of his ever goals, (albeit according n not his favourite goal) in an nd jersey against Brazil. At tstadio do Maracana, picking e ball on the left wing, Barnes ed past several defenders e rounding the 'keeper and

stroking the ball into the back of the net.

A sensational goal but not even that failed to free the player from the spectre of racial abuse, on the plane ride back members of the National Front, a right wing group, which had gone to the game claiming to support England said the game had finished 1-0 because Barnes's goal didn't count. The group had opposed Barnes' selection to play for England based on the fact that he was black.

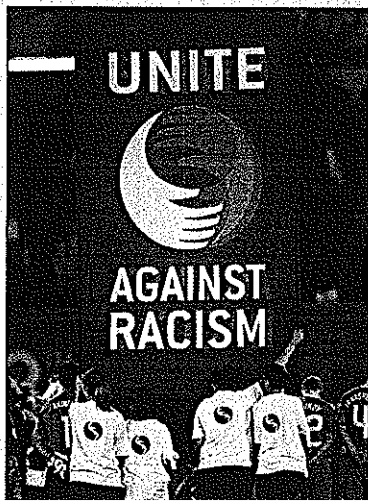
Barnes went on to score 12 goals in 79 appearances for England.

[3]

Now an ambassador of the game, Barnes, an inductee in 2005 into the English Football Hall of Fame, works at fighting racism in the sport through the Kick It Out Campaign, which has attempted to eradicate racism from the sport. While positive that racism still exists in the game, Barnes is confident that players are a lot better off in England than they were 20 years ago.

"As long as there's racism in society there will be racism in all walks of society, you just don't hear it anymore," Barnes said.

"Racism still exists in life ... football fans are told that any racist chanting and you're kicked out of the ground, so you keep your mouth shut and then you're racist the other six days of the week.



"However it doesn't exist in terms of black footballers not being given the opportunities as they were in the '70s or '80s.

"Then if you were a black goalkeeper or black centre back or midfielder, you never made it because you were told as a black man you're fast so you don't have to think too much.

[4]

"You weren't put in any positions of responsibility, so you were a winger or a centre forward. Back then all black players were wingers or centre forwards.

"Now, if you look at Arsenal they have had 10 black players on the field at once and England have had a black goalkeeper so there is no discrimination against you from a positional standpoint and you don't hear it in the grounds anymore," he said. However, this does not mean that the former Liverpool man is quick to give the English game a pat on the back. In fact, he has found it to be even a bit hypocritical in its approach to other European countries still plagued by racism.

"When England has had a black community since 1950, how come until 1980 we were still going through it - racism? You have black people in your country and know the ramifications of the black-and-white issue," he said.

"When I was playing in the '80s we still got it (racist taunts). So how can we then come down hard on Macedonia and Estonia? They don't have black communities to deal with.

"Racist chanting is completely wrong but they do not go through every day dealing with a black and a white situation."

"Football has to come down hard on it but England should have sorted out this issue a long time ago and now it is ready to come down hard on everybody else," he said.

- 1 Skim through the text and choose the correct heading from the list below for each gap numbered [1]–[4].
- A flying start
  - Winger or centre forward
  - Move to Liverpool
  - First encounters
  - Fighting the beast
  - Army man
- 2 Which words go in the gaps [a]–[h] between lines 1 and 44? Choose the words from the table below. There are more than you need.

anger	gimmickry	prevalent	aggravated
bigotry	unruly	subside	isolated
dished out	flinch	vented	ruined

- 3 Read the text again and decide whether the sentences below are true or false. Justify your answer with a brief quotation from the text.
- Football spectators throw bananas to show their appreciation of a player.
  - Racism is a thing of the past at football matches.
  - Some black and African players in Europe still face racism today.
  - While playing at Liverpool, John Barnes was upset by ignorant racists.
  - In English football in the 1980s, there was a strong anti-racist movement.
  - At Liverpool, Barnes deliberately kicked bananas off the pitch.
  - Even racist supporters celebrated Barnes's goal against Brazil.
  - Barnes went on to collaborate with anti-racist organizations.
  - Even successful black players were stereotyped by their clubs.
  - Barnes thinks the UK is free of racism these days.
- 4 What does each of the following refer to in the text?
- 'the island' (lines 80–81)
  - 'It' (line 83)
  - 'that' (line 109)
  - 'it all' (line 113)
  - 'it' (line 117)
- 5 Suggest synonyms for the following words.
- showcased (line 57)
  - confines (line 58)
  - rife (line 76)
  - powerhouse (line 95)
  - demeanour (line 126)