On the back end of the most successful summer of sport Britain has ever witnessed, it appears that football has fallen victim to the sporting bug. It was first caught in late June as Andy Murray faced off against Roger Federer and lasted through to the dramatic Ryder Cup finale at the Medinah Country Club in September.

It was an incredible few months of sport which saw tears of pain, tears of joy and every emotion in between. But come August and the start of the new football season, it appeared that many had fallen out of love with the beautiful game. The talk of dramatic finals, tense showdowns, team spirit and gold medals galore, had been replaced by diving, crowd trouble, poor refereeing decisions and claims of racism. Football was back.

The past 12 months has seen the sport dragged through the mud with a drawn-out court case to decide that John Terry had not racially abused Anton Ferdinand, though the FA went ahead and dished out a four game ban and a hefty fine to the former England player, just to show that they were trying to rectify the issue of racism – something which still lingers around the sport, despite countless efforts to eradicate it completely from the game.

With the court case slowly receiving less and less column inches, the current hot topic of football sparked back into life when England travelled to Serbia last month for an U -21 match which will not be remembered for the great defensive show from a young English side, but instead for events that showed football finds it impossible to move into the modern day.

The scenes which seen England’s Danny Rose subjected to vile racist abuse, before triggering a mass brawl, has sparked the debate back into full-swing. It led to players somewhat boycotting the *Kick it out* campaign by shunning the promotional shirts in pre-match warm-ups, sending out a message to the organisation that it just simply isn’t doing enough.

Rio Ferdinand and brother Anton – the latter of which will probably be best remembered after retiring for talk of racist abuse he was alleged to have received from Mr. Terry, rather that anything he has achieved on the pitch – claimed in a joint statement that not enough was being done to fully ‘kick it out’ of the game. They have a point.

To highlight this, we simply have to look at some stats which perfectly highlight that not enough is being done to punish those found guilty of racially abusing a fellow professional. In 2004, Shaun Wright-Phillips and Ashley Cole were subjected to monkey chants at the Bernabeu Stadium, when England played Spain in a friendly match. It was anything but friendly, with the Spanish FA having to pay up a fine of £44,750.

Three years later, and it was Nedum Onuoha’s turn to be at the centre of a race-storm as he received abuse from Serbian fans during an U -21 fixture (sound familiar?). Serbia were later fined just £16,500.

In September 2008, Emile Heskey was racially abused by Croatian fans who directed monkey chants towards him. The Croatian Federation were fined a mere £15,000 – see a pattern emerging here?

In September 2011, the Bulgarian FA received a fine of £34,000 following abuse aimed towards Ashley Young during a Euro 2012 qualifier in Sofia. This came just days after Sepp Blatter controversially said that racism was not a problem in football.

So let’s put this into some perspective. At this summer’s Euros, Danish striker Nicklas Bendtner lowered his shorts to show a pair of branded Paddy Power ‘lucky pants’. The former Arsenal player was later fined £80,000 for breaching FIFA regulations regarding advertising- that’s more than the fines received by Croatia, Bulgaria and Serbia combined.

On the back of the Professional Footballers’ Association’s six-point plan which aims to clamp down on racism in the sport, it appears that a fine just won’t cut it. UEFA have a chance to send out a strong message on the subject when it comes to looking into the recent alleged racist abuse received by Rose in Serbia (the Serbian FA still deny hearing any type of monkey chants).

In September I travelled to the Balkan state to watch Wales, in a trip that will forever be remembered as Welsh footballs lowest point on the pitch in recent memory, falling 6-1 to the Serbs. All talk of violence was quickly quashed as supporters mingled together in Novi Sad prior to the game. One thing that was clear however, these fans take their football extremely seriously.

With England going 2-0 up on aggregate last month - crushing any hope Serbia had of qualifying in the process – tempers began to flair and the rest is history. Those in charge now have a big decision to make, whether to simply fine the Serbian FA, ban the home supporters, or exclude Serbia from qualifying for any major tournament at all age levels for the time being.

With Serbia receiving numerous fines already in the past couple of years, as well as a ban on home supporters due to violence, it’s clear to see it’s not enough to stop those who think it‘s okay to abuse a player simply because of the colour of his skin. UEFA must come to a decision with FIFA to forget all the logistics and exclude Serbia from international football for a period of time to send out a message.

Forget fining a country. Forget banning supporters. More needs to be done to kick racism out of football for good, and the only way that can be achieved is by strongly punishing players and nations in a way that will truly send across the message that there is no room for racism in football.

**NOTES TO DESIGN TEAM:**

The word count comes in at around 1,000 words, feel free to take any away. If you need more just let me know and it won’t be a problem.

You may want to give it a quick check over to make sure there are no glaring errors that you can spot.

You may also consider putting in a little graphic to highlight the fines received by the nations in comparison to Nick Bendtner in the form of a table or something.

On the side of the page we will look to include a different news story.