AMOSS Case study
AC Milan and Juventus UEFA Champions League Final 28th May 2003.

The Big Match

On 28th May 2003, 45,000 football fans travelled from Milan and Turin in Italy to support AC Milan and Juventus in the Champions League Final, which was being played at Old Trafford. The majority of these fans travelled via Manchester Airport.

As well as the fans, Airport staff were dealing with the usual scheduled and charter flight activity. On average 50,000 passengers use the Airport every day; on the day of the match this doubled.

Preparing for the event involved everyone who worked in the Airport, from control authorities to catering, from handling agents to retailers, and planning started months in advance. It was important that existing operations weren’t disrupted and that regular passengers experienced a normal service.

Airport staff envisaged various scenarios to decide what action to take. It was anticipated that if a major football and a lesser-known one reached the final, the major team’s supporters would be channelled through T1 and T3 and the smaller team’s supporters through T2. What actually happened was almost the worst-case scenario, because the match was between two major teams from Northern Italy. In the event most of the AC Milan supporters passed through T2.

On the day, everyone worked incredibly hard to make sure that staff were in the right places at the right time and, despite the scale of the arrivals, everything went fairly smoothly.

Systems had to be put in place to cope with the influx of fans.

- A number of volunteers, including Italian students to help with language problems, had been recruited and they needed the right ID passes.
- Hundreds of coaches were needed to transport the fans to and from the match, and these had to be coordinated. The coaches were colour coded so that fans could get on the right coach for their return flight: early flights were one colour, later ones a different colour. Airport staff had to identify where the coaches could park.
- Airport staff set up special clearing areas so that fans could pass through the Airport without impeding other travellers. The police were involved to ensure that security was adequate.
- There were so many aircraft arriving in a short space of time that there weren’t enough stands for them so they were block parked. Apron Controllers had to juggle incoming flights, stands and parking, then move aircraft to where they would be needed for departures.
To make things more challenging, the information provided by airlines wasn’t always up to date so flights didn’t always turn up when they were anticipated. The staff had to do the best they could with the information they had.

Departures
The departures were not quite so smooth. Airport staff had anticipated that most fans would get on the right coaches to get them to the Airport in time for their flights home. Unfortunately at the end of the match fans piled into buses, trains, taxis and arrived at the Airport in no particular order. Several of them turned up at the wrong terminal.

The majority of fans went before 7.00 pm but even fans who weren’t leaving until the following afternoon were in the Airport. On the stairs, along the Skylink − everywhere you looked there were sleeping Italians! It took 24 hours to get all the fans onto planes and Airport staff had to arrange an extra aircraft to mop up stragglers.

Everyone in the Airport worked flat out and put in a 24-hour day. Extra staff were drafted in and the clear-up operation took a long time, but generally the event went well − we haven’t seen any AC Milan or Juventus fans wandering around the Airport for some time now! Manchester Airport was proud to handle the event and received an accolade from UEFA saying that it was the best planned, arranged and executed operation that they had experienced.