

Gone and Almost Forgotten? The Dynamics of Professional White Football in South Africa: 1959–1990

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*Dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (History)
in the
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at
Stellenbosch University*



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March 2016

Declaration

By submitting this thesis I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work and that I am the author thereof. I also confirm that I have not previously – either partially or in its entirety – submitted any of this work for the purposes of obtaining a qualification.

Date: 8 October 2015

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Abstract

This study has been positioned as a contribution to the emerging literature relating to issues of transformation in South African sport by exploring historical change in the demographics of professional football in South Africa at an institutional level. Through the use of archival documentation, contemporary media material and oral sources, it considers the political, economic and social factors that influenced white professional football during the period 1959–90, with a focus on the disappearance of the whites-only National Football League (NFL) and the subsequent struggles by its constituent clubs within integrated professional football prior to unity.

The original contribution of this study to the scholarship pertaining to South African football spans multiple dimensions. In addition to arguing that new elements need to be considered in the debate regarding the NFL's demise in the late 1970s, it also contains the first in-depth analysis of the relationship between the National Party's multinational sports policy and South African football historically. Consequently it contributes to the broader literature exploring the nexus between sport, politics and race in South African sport generally. It further analyses the trajectory of former NFL clubs – and their disappearance over time – in the period subsequent to the white league's disbandment. This constitutes a new axis of analysis within the historiography of South African football.

By the time football unity arrived in 1991 only two former (white) NFL clubs remained within the top tier of South African professional football – this after the NFL had experienced notable popularity during the 1960s and early 1970s. The analysis of this drastic historical shift relating to institutional white football represents an important marker regarding the complex and multifaceted range of historical variables that impacted the game locally during the period 1959–90. As a result this study offers historical perspective to current debates on sporting transformation. It is argued that despite the fact that football itself has largely been positioned outside these debates, the study thereof still serves as a crucial lens through which to consider the demographic fluidity that has been present within South African sport historically.

Opsomming

Hierdie studie ondersoek die veranderinge in die demografie van georganiseerde beroepsokker in Suid-Afrika binne historiese verband en is so geplaas om 'n bydrae te lewer tot die bestaande literatuur met betrekking tot transformasie in Suid-Afrikaanse sport. Deur gebruik te maak van argiefdokumentasie, historiese media-materiaal en mondelingse bronne word die invloed van politieke, ekonomiese en sosiale faktore op wit beroepsokker gedurende die tydperk 1959–90 ondersoek. Die klem word geplaas op die verdwyning van die wit Nasionale Sokker Liga (“NFL”) en die gevolglike oorlewingsstryd van die klubs binne geïntegreerde beroepsokker voor eenwording.

Die sonderlinge bydrae van hierdie studie tot die vakkundigheid met betrekking tot Suid-Afrikaanse sokker omvat verskeie vlakke. Aanvullend tot die argument dat nuwe elemente binne die debat rakende die verdwyning van “NFL” in die laat sewentigerjare in ag geneem behoort te word, bevat die studie ook die eerste diepgaande ontleding van die historiese verband tussen die multi-nasionale sport beleid van die Nasionale Party en Suid-Afrikaanse sokker. Gevolglik dra dit by tot die breër literatuur wat die skakel tussen sport, politiek en ras in Suid-Afrika oor die algemeen ondersoek. Verder word die verloop en uiteindelijke verdwyning van voormalige “NFL” klubs in die tydperk wat gevolg het na die ontbinding van wit-liga sokker ondersoek. In hierdie verband word 'n nuwe benadering jeens die ontleding van Suid-Afrikaanse sokker binne die raamwerk van geskiedskrywing, toegepas.

Met die totstandkoming van sokker-eenheid in 1991 het daar slegs twee voorheen wit “NFL” klubs binne die boonste vlak van Suid-Afrikaanse sokker oorgebly – na 'n tydperk van merkbare gewildheid gedurende die sestiger en vroeë sewentigerjare. Die ontleding van hierdie ingrypende historiese verskuiwings binne georganiseerde wit sokker verteenwoordig 'n bepaalde aanwyser met betrekking tot die ingewikkelde en multi-dimensionele reeks historiese veranderlikes wat die plaaslike spel gedurende die tydperk 1959–90 beïnvloed het. Gevolglik bied die studie 'n geskiedkundige oorsig op teenswoordige debatvoering rakende transformasie in sport. Derhalwe word aangevoer dat, ongeag die feit dat sokker op sigself grootliks by genoemde debatvoering uitgesluit word, die navorsing daarvoor steeds belangrik is met betrekking tot die demografiese veranderinge wat histories in Suid-Afrikaanse sport aanwesig was.

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people for their support and guidance throughout my academic journey over the past few years – one that originated on a road trip between Bloemfontein and Cradock during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Firstly to my mother, Laetitia Venter, for her loving support and assistance throughout the process; to my father, Ben Venter, for his measured encouragement in the background; and to my sister, Talitha Venter, for her unwavering help and enthusiasm, particularly as a house mate. Consequently I dedicate this work to my family – no greater support network could have been imaginable.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Prof. Albert Grundlingh, for his guidance, constructive criticism and reassurance throughout. I am also thankful for the support of Prof. Sandra Swart and a number of other staff members, colleagues and post-graduate students at Stellenbosch University's History Department. My gratitude is further extended to the Department for the opportunity to attend conferences and for financial and logistical support relating to research visits throughout South Africa in recent years. In this regard I am also greatly indebted to the Harry Crossley Trust for providing financial assistance in the form of a scholarship during the final year of my studies, thereby affording me the time to complete my thesis without the strain of additional work commitments.

I would also like to thank Prof. Elizabeth Bressan and Jackie Wiese for allowing me the flexibility to pursue my academic commitments within a suitable framework during the initial years of this project when I was simultaneously in their employ. Both Prof. Bressan and Dr. Pierre Viviers have been long standing mentors within various contexts during my time at Stellenbosch University and this has been of immense value to me.

As far as the research process has been concerned I am greatly indebted to the staff at the following entities: The Historical Papers Research Archive at the William Cullen Library (University of the Witwatersrand) – in particular Gabriele Mohale who offered never-ending, friendly assistance and made sure that all my visits progressed smoothly and productively; the Cape Town campus of the National Library of South Africa; the Archive for Contemporary Affairs at the University of the Free State; and the Alan Paton Centre at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg campus).

Furthermore I am indebted to Julian Turner, Mark Gleeson and Francois Cleophas for providing access to key sources and football-related networks. I would also like to express

my gratitude to all those individuals who participated in my research – either formally or informally. Their assistance has been invaluable.

Finally I am exceedingly grateful to all those individuals that took an active interest in my work from a distance. Their support in this regard has also been treasured. In this regard I would like to single out Tjaart and Martinette Coetzee, Gerhard Burger, as well as my immediate group of friends – particularly Johan Fourie and Coetzee du Toit for those stimulating conversations on the road to Cradock back in 2010.

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List of Abbreviations

FANK	-	Football Association of Natal and KwaZulu
FASA	-	Football Association of South Africa
FIFA	-	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
FPL	-	Federation Professional League
NFL	-	National Football League
NP	-	National Party
NPSL	-	National Professional Soccer League
NSL	-	National Soccer League
PSL	-	Premier Soccer League
SAB	-	South African Breweries
SABFA	-	South African Bantu Football Association
SACOS	-	South African Council on Sport
SAFA	-	South African Football Association
SANFA	-	South African National Football Association
SASA	-	South African Soccer Association
SASF	-	South African Soccer Federation
SASL	-	South African Soccer League
SAIRR	-	South African Institute of Race Relations
SANROC	-	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
SAONGA	-	South African Olympic and National Games Association
SASA	-	South African Soccer Association
SFW	-	Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery
WPFA	-	Western Province Football Association
UTC	-	United Tobacco Company

Notes on Terminology

Any study concerned with South African history that ventures into the political domain invariably necessitates an explanation relating to the use of racial terminology. This study recognises the socially constructed nature of race, but also notes that the grouping of citizens into racial categories has not only played a significant role in shaping South Africa's history, but continues to do so today – particularly where issues of equality and redress are concerned. The terminology framework employed from this point on has been chosen not only to reflect the racial terms that were in use during the period under observation, but also to provide consistency throughout the study in order to minimise any potential confusion on the part of the reader. In doing so it is acknowledged that any framework will remain contentious to some degree and that satisfying all opinions constitutes a largely futile endeavour.

The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified South African citizens into four racial categories, namely African, coloured, Indian and white.¹ However in this study the term “black” is used to denote “African”, largely due to the fact that it was used as such in many contemporary sources utilised by this study. The term “African” has generally only been used when quoted from relevant sources that employ it as such. Consequently the term “black” is not used as an umbrella term for the African, coloured and Indian population groups in this study. This deviates somewhat from the convention in similar studies. Instead, when such an umbrella term has been necessary, the phrase “race groups other than white” has been utilised. The term “non-white” has been avoided, except where used in quotations from sources.

A further note regarding the terms “multiracial” and “non-racial” is necessary since this distinction represents a significant historical fault line within South African sport. The term “multiracial” denotes activities in which South Africa's four racial groupings, as defined above, participated together – in other words racial mixing within the framework of racial classification. Standing in opposition to this is the term “non-racial”, which represents a colour-blind concept rejecting the notion of racial groupings altogether. Finally, the emergence of the “multinational” sports policy in the 1970s added an additional dimension to this framework. It stated that South Africa's different “nations” – as defined by racial classification under apartheid – could compete against each other in sport under certain conditions. This was in line with the apartheid doctrine of “separate development” and

¹ For a brief summary regarding the role and impact of the Act within South Africa's apartheid ideology see David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009), 54–7.

essentially entailed “partially mixed” sport since players from different race groups could play against each other but not with each other in the same team. It was a precursor to “multiracial” (or “mixed”) sport which did allow racially mixed teams. Due to the omnipresence of the above mentioned terms throughout the study they have not been used in quotation marks.

As a final note the term “football” has been used throughout the study for consistency since this is the dominant form of reference to the game around the globe, as evidenced in the name of the world governing body, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). The alternative of “soccer” is only used when quoted by sources. It is worth noting that the two terms are used interchangeably in contemporary South Africa, with the national governing body known as the South African Football Association (SAFA), but the top professional league known as the Premier Soccer League (PSL).

Chapter 1 – Pre-Match Tactics: Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology

What would need to be shown would be that the person accused of a contravention had been present in fact ‘for a substantial period of time’...The situation appears to us to be [a] little ludicrous to say that a disqualified person has contravened the Proclamation because he has batted for two hours and scored a century, whereas another disqualified person has not done so because his innings lasted only two minutes.¹

This passage is an extract from legal opinion obtained by the Aurora Cricket Club – a team consisting of players from different race groups – which in 1973 applied to play in Pietermaritzburg’s white cricket league.² The legal argument related to the government’s potential definition of the phrase “substantial period of time” as it pertained to an individual from one race group occupying an area reserved for those from a different race group.³ The passage not only represents an example of the potentially bizarre scenarios that could (and did) arise within the framework of apartheid-era sport, but it also serves to illustrate the inextricable nexus between sport, race and politics within South African history. In this regard it is worth considering the prominent position that modern, organised sport occupies within society – not only currently but also historically:

Sport is no longer simply concerned with physical recreation and joy and skill, grace, and sheer activity. It is ‘big business’. It has achieved a commanding position in the entertainment industry. It is a means of enhancing national prestige. It is a means of promoting commercial interests. It is an avenue of social advancement.⁴

These statements all ring true when considering the position of sport globally today, but were already made in 1964 by Richard Thompson in his book *Sport and Race* – a work which considered the connection between sport and race relations in South Africa at the time. More recently Michael Silk has pointed out that sport “is a truly global phenomenon, no longer constrained by a country’s geographical borders,” and that possibly “the most visible

¹ John Didcott and Andrew Wilson, “Opinion,” 5 October 1973, 3–4, as Annexure J of *SASF Memorandum to FIFA Delegation*, in *Report of the FIFA Delegation on the Visit to South Africa: 14 to 17 March 1976*, file PV476/1/34/39/2, Piet Koornhof Private Documents, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, South Africa (hereafter cited as Koornhof papers).

² For a full account of this episode see Christopher Merrett, “Aurora: The Challenge of Non-Racial Cricket to the Apartheid State of the mid-1970s,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, 4 (2001): 95–122.

³ The Group Areas Act (1950) represented one of the pillars of apartheid in that it legislated for the enforced residential separation of South Africa’s racial groups, leading to the forced removal of thousands of families over the ensuing decades. See David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009), 55.

⁴ Richard Thompson, *Race and Sport* (London: Institute of Race Relations, 1964), 1.

institution through which global sporting events permeate national cultures is the media".⁵ The fact that sport has received – and continues to receive – such considerable attention in the mass media suggests that it occupies a prominent position within the public consciousness. Consequently it is frequently at the centre of debates regarding issues affecting societies since sport is often a revealing reflection of the society in which it is played.

The historical case of South Africa stands out as a prominent example of the latter. In this regard a key point made by Thomson relates to sport's power to both unite and divide.⁶ This duality is especially discernible in South Africa. The segregated lines along which South African society has been structured historically resulted in sport being played on a similar basis. Over the course of the twentieth century it became a symbol of the country's divided society and the subsequent efforts to bring about unity in sport have been well documented.⁷ Since the arrival of sporting unity in 1991⁸ and South Africa's first democratically elected government in 1994, state efforts have turned towards mobilising sport as a unifying factor. According to historian Albert Grundlingh the "ANC, like most other governments, clearly regarded sport as an essential element of foreign and domestic policy in as much as it could confer prestige and promote national unity".⁹

In 1995 South Africa announced itself as a destination of choice for international sport events through its hosting (and winning) of the Rugby World Cup. In the twenty years since

⁵ Michael Silk, "Globalization and Sport," in *Sports Around The World: History, Culture, And Practice*, eds. John Nauright and Charles Parrish (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2012), 1: 9.

⁶ Thompson, *Race and Sport*, 72–3.

⁷ See for example Douglas Booth, *The Race Game* (London: Frank Cass, 1998); Cornelius Thomas, ed., *Sport and Liberation in South Africa: Reflections and Suggestions* (Alice: National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, University of Fort Hare; Pretoria: Department of Sport and Recreation, 2006); Ashwin Desai, ed., *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010); Cheryl Roberts, *No Normal Sport In An Abnormal Society* (Cape Town: Havana Media, 2011); Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976–1992," *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 1–18.

⁸ This marked the year in which South Africa was first readmitted into international competition with a tour by the national cricket team to India in November. However it has to be remembered that the process towards establishing sporting unity was an uneven one and differed between sport codes. For example in swimming the non-racial Amateur Swimming Association of South Africa (ASASA) continued to operate outside the unified South African Amateur Swimming Association (SAASA) for seven years until "full" unity was finally reached in 1999. See Ashwin Desai and Ahmed Veriava, "Creepy crawlies, portapools and the dam(n)s of swimming transformation," in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 31–5. For the purposes of this study 1991 also represents the year in which professional football in South Africa was unified with the National Soccer League (NSL) having absorbed the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL) that season.

⁹ Albert Grundlingh, *Potent Pastimes: Sport and leisure practices in modern Afrikaner history* (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2013), 143. For an analysis pertaining to the use of mega-events as a means for advancing both foreign policy and domestic goals in post-apartheid South Africa see Scarlett Cornelissen, "Scripting the nation: sport, mega-events, foreign policy and state-building in post-apartheid South Africa," *Sport in Society* 11, 4 (2008): 481–93. For a critical perspective on the nation-building narrative relating to South Africa's involvement in the Olympic Movement during the 1990s see Christopher Merrett, "Sport and Nationalism in Post-Liberation South Africa in the 1990s: Transcendental Euphoria or Nation Building?" *Sport History Review* 34 (2003): 33–59.

then the country has accrued an impressive list of high profile events as host, the most prominent of which include football's African Cup of Nations (in 1996 and 2013), the Cricket World Cup (2003) as well as the crown jewel of team sport events, namely the FIFA World Cup (2010). Cape Town also submitted an unsuccessful bid to host the 2004 Olympic Games.¹⁰ Much of the nation-building narrative centred around the success of national teams or individuals on the field of play, with the Springboks' victory in the 1995 Rugby World Cup as the most notable example.¹¹ Achievements by South African sportsmen and sportswomen on the international stage were lauded by the government and the media alike as being symbolic of the positive changes that had swept the country post-1994. In addition the hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup was regarded as a symbol not only of South Africa's rise to a position of prominence globally, but also the African continent's rise as a whole – hence the characterisation of the event as “Africa's World Cup”.¹²

However, at the same time sport continues to provide an uncomfortable reflection of South Africa's many underlying divisions rooted in the country's painful history. Nowhere is this more evident than during debates regarding transformation of sport, particularly relating to the racial makeup of national teams.¹³ The rugby Springboks stand out as a notable example. In 1995 the team was recast as a symbol of a changing South Africa, but twenty years later it is being cited as an example of the lack of change since 1994 – not only in rugby, but in the country more broadly. The recent media storm regarding the team's racial composition for the 2015 Rugby World Cup in England was indicative of this.¹⁴ The resulting criticism directed towards rugby administrators also has to be viewed on the backdrop of

¹⁰ Durban has recently been allocated the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

¹¹ A “springbok” is a small antelope found in South Africa and its association with (white) national sports teams carried a great deal of symbolic value, particularly in rugby. Rugby is the only sport code in South Africa which has retained the symbol since unification. For a detailed analysis of the national euphoria that accompanied the Springboks' winning of the 1995 World Cup see Albert Grundlingh, “Explaining euphoria: The 1995 Springbok Rugby World Cup victory and its impact,” in *Potent Pastimes: Sport and leisure practices in modern Afrikaner history*, Albert Grundlingh (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2013), 128–54.

¹² For an analysis detailing the broader “African” framing of the 2010 FIFA World Cup by the South African government, see Sifiso Ndlovu, “Sports as cultural diplomacy: the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa's foreign policy,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 144–53. For a critical perspective (prior to the event) on the purported benefits for Africa in hosting the World Cup see Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, “World Cup 2010: Africa's turn or the turn on Africa?” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 154–67.

¹³ In the post-apartheid South African context the term “transformation” is generally regarded as being multi-dimensional and to comprise redress of issues other than race, such as aspects relating to gender or persons with disabilities. However, the racial component of transformation is undoubtedly the one that has proved – and continues to prove – most controversial.

¹⁴ When the 31-man Springbok squad for the tournament was announced it contained eight players from the race groups other than white – less than the mandated 30%. This led to criticism from various quarters, including the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU). An obscure political party, the Agency for a New Agenda (ANA), even applied for a court interdict to prevent the team from participating in the tournament. This application was later dropped. See Simnikiwe Xabanisa, “Bid to block Boks,” *Times*, August 31, 2015, 1. As a response to the wide range of public opinion relating to the selection of the squad the *Cape Times* newspaper initiated a series of three public dialogues dealing with topics such as transformation and merit selection. See “Rugby transformation: join the scrum,” *Cape Times*, September 1, 2015, 1.

similar sentiments expressed with regard to other spheres of South African life, with tertiary education being one of them.¹⁵

In fact Kristina Bentley and Adam Habib articulated the fundamental problem with which the country is still grappling when they stated in 2008 that “South Africa’s democratic experiment is confronted with a central political dilemma: how to advance redress in order to address the historical injustices while simultaneously building a single national cosmopolitan identity”.¹⁶ Their edited volume *Racial Redress & Citizenship in South Africa* highlights the many complexities associated with the “national question”.¹⁷ By simply considering the state of the nation through the lens of sport, it would be hard to argue against the notion that the questions raised in this volume remain largely unresolved seven years later. Historical hindsight demands that the potential role of sport in curing the social ills of South African life should be viewed with a healthy dose of scepticism. Nevertheless it is instructive to find that Habib and Bentley included it as one of the four domains of investigation – along with the public service, economy and education – in their volume. It is argued here that sport, at the very least, can be used as a means for refracting the underlying issues underpinning debates around redress in South African society. Yet sport in itself is also confronted by a myriad of complications in attempting to bring about its own forms of redress. It is this latter dimension to which this study contributes, namely through highlighting the historical complexity regarding demographic change.

Transformation of South African Sport

The debate over the racial composition of South African national (and regional) teams is not a new one and since the late 1990s rugby and cricket – the two major team sports traditionally dominated by whites – have been at the centre of numerous controversies. A significant component to this debate has been the use – actual or rumoured – of racial “quotas” at various stages over the past two decades. At times the term “targets” has also entered the fray, further complicating the situation. Apart from receiving a great deal of

¹⁵ As merely one example Stellenbosch University has recently come in for criticism from the ruling party regarding the composition of its student body which “does not match the racial demographics in the country”. In this regard the Minister of Higher Education, Blade Nzimande, stated that one “of the many focus areas of the transformation agenda is to ensure that the composition of the student body progressively reflects the demographic realities of broader society”. See Blade Nzimande, “On the situation at Stellenbosch University,” *Statement issued by the Minister of Higher Education*, September 3, 2015, <http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/policy-and-reallife-experiences-on-campus-are-worl> (accessed September 7, 2015).

¹⁶ Kristina Bentley and Adam Habib, “An alternative framework for redress and citizenship,” in *Racial Redress & Citizenship in South Africa*, eds., Adam Habib and Kristina Bentley (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 337.

¹⁷ Adam Habib and Kristina Bentley, eds., *Racial Redress & Citizenship in South Africa* (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008).

media attention these issues have in recent years begun to generate debate amongst academics as well. In this regard Christopher Merrett, Colin Tatz and Daryl Adair have considered the use of “quotas” in rugby and cricket specifically while making the salient point that a “quota system has operated, to varying degrees, throughout most of the history of South African sport”.¹⁸ They are, however, scathing in their attack on its use in contemporary South Africa and regard it as a “re-racialisation” of South African society:

The policy of the African National Congress...has been to use professional sport as a domain of difference, to insist that proportionality is the key to fair representation, and that orchestration of participant numbers according to ethn racial quotas is preferable to the systematic provision and encouragement of opportunities for all.¹⁹

Instead they emphasise that a society that has been “divided by race and race politics for close to three centuries” – as in the case of South Africa – “cannot be connected and reconciled in a mere 16 years”. In their view “genuine integration in South African sport can only happen in the wake of substantial structural changes in society. Inevitably, these will take time, and a great many mistakes”.²⁰ These sentiments will undoubtedly (and have proven to) be unpalatable to the ruling party in a country which, despite the promise of 1994, has seen an increase in inequality since that transition.²¹ The outcry over the 2015 rugby Springboks – seen as indicative of the failure of rugby transformation over the course of more than twenty years – is therefore not surprising when viewed in this context.

South Africa’s growing inequality during the post-apartheid era has already been alluded to by Ashwin Desai in his comprehensive edited volume *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*.²² Published in 2010, this work serves as a timely reminder of the range of issues confronting sporting transformation in South Africa, while also highlighting the multi-layered nature of many of the associated debates. It covers the codes of swimming, athletics, football, rugby and cricket by utilising a combination of individual case studies (providing insight into developments at “ground level”) and broader analyses. The two chapters concerning cricket both deal extensively (but not exclusively) with the issue of

¹⁸ Christopher Merrett, Colin Tatz and Daryl Adair, “History and its racial legacies: quotas in South African rugby and cricket,” *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 14, 6 (2011): 770. For example prior to the introduction of multinationalism in the early 1970s South African national teams essentially contained a 100% quota of white players.

¹⁹ Merrett, Tatz and Adair, “History and its racial legacies,” 770.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 770–1.

²¹ For a summary of South Africa’s income inequality during the post-apartheid era see Arden Finn, Murray Leibbrandt and Ingrid Woolard, “The Middle Class and Inequality in South Africa,” *SALDRU Research Brief*, November, 2013, <http://saldru.com.uct.ac.za/bitstream/handle/11090/725/SALDRU%20Research%20Brief%20-%20Nov%202013%20-%20The%20middle%20class%20and%20inequality%20in%20SA.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed September 9, 2015). I am indebted to Johan Fourie for this reference.

²² Desai, ed., *The Race to Transform*, 3–4.

“quotas” from both of these vantage points.²³ A key theme which emerges in this regard is the tension between what Desai and Ahmed Veriava describe (in their chapter on swimming) as “Transformation 1” – namely transformative transformation entailing efforts aimed at developing mass participation – and “Transformation 2” – namely reformative transformation comprising efforts towards developing a pool of high performance athletes capable of representing South Africa internationally.²⁴ They also highlight the crucial connection between sport and broader South African society:

Much of the transformation struggle taking place within SWIMSA [Swimming South Africa] is reflective not only of South African sport generally, but also of the emergent social struggles in post-apartheid South Africa that revolve around the search for a balance between immediate demographic representivity in all social spheres, including sport, and the building of the necessary infrastructure for the sustainable transformation of society.²⁵

These complexities are largely overlooked in a paper published by Douglas Farland and Ian Jennings in 2007 which promotes the use of racial quotas in South African cricket from a philosophical standpoint.²⁶ The authors simply conclude that “genuine representivity can be guaranteed only” through a process that satisfies two requirements, namely the international practice of merit-based selection on the one hand, but also “whereby one’s race is no barrier to the likelihood of one’s talent being recognized and encouraged, and is therefore also no barrier to one’s being selected for the national team”.²⁷

Given their argument that historical white racism (in the form of apartheid) still impacts the likelihood of African, coloured and Indian South Africans being selected²⁸ – a point which is not disputed here – their conclusion simply represents a statement of the contemporary

²³ See Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, “Beyond the nation? Colour and class in South African cricket,” in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 176–221 and Goolam Vahed, Vishnu Padayachee and Ashwin Desai, “Between black and white: A case study of the KwaZulu-Natal Cricket Union,” in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 222–58.

²⁴ Desai and Veriava, “Creepy crawlies,” 35–6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁶ Douglas Farland and Ian Jennings, “Cricket and Representivity. The Case of Race Quotas in Team Selection,” *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics* 10, 5 (2007): 818–39. For a legal perspective on the use of quotas in South African sport see André Louw, “‘Should the playing fields be levelled?’ Revisiting affirmative action in professional sport, Part 1,” *Stellenbosch Law Review* 15, 1 (2004): 119–136; André Louw, “‘Should the playing fields be levelled?’ Revisiting affirmative action in professional sport, Part 2,” *Stellenbosch Law Review* 15, 2 (2004): 225–46; André Louw, “‘Should the playing fields be levelled?’ Revisiting affirmative action in professional sport, Part 3,” *Stellenbosch Law Review* 15, 3 (2004): 409–28; André Louw, “‘Transforming’ South African professional sport: Some observations on recent developments,” *Law, Democracy & Development* 9, 2 (2005): 193–218.

²⁷ Farland and Jennings, “Cricket and Representivity,” 836.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 834. They state that the prerequisite conditions for developing genuine enthusiasm for cricket “have largely been unavailable to South Africans of colour as a direct result of the fact that they have been, speaking generally, excluded from the source of wealth, and, more specifically, from the middle-class schools and well-funded clubs which foster the sport”.

transformation problem at elite level, as highlighted by the likes of Desai, Veriava, Merrett, *et al.* In other words, how can South Africa eventually field the strongest possible national teams picked from player pools not affected by the social and economic legacies of apartheid? Referring to the effects of (historic) racism in the selection process, Farland and Jennings argue that “sports administrators are indeed obliged to remedy this injustice”, but conveniently also abstain from proposing how this ought to be done.²⁹ Such theoretical speculation fails to advance the academic debate around issues of transformation in sport specifically, and South African society more broadly.

In contrast to this Vishnu Padayachee, Goolam Vahed and Desai have highlighted – in a paper published in 2004 – the “fragmented nature of post-apartheid South African society” by considering the multitude of struggles within cricket in KwaZulu-Natal during the first ten years of democracy.³⁰ In this regard they have pointed to sport being “a site of contestation”, despite attempts by politicians, administrators and the media to anoint it as a unifying factor in the country.³¹ Six years later they reiterated these themes in their joint contribution to *The Race to Transform* which constituted a case study of the KwaZulu-Natal Cricket Union (KZNCU).³² They argue convincingly that the post-apartheid tension within the KZNCU

indicates quite starkly the challenges involved in building a common national identity while pursuing redress. This is sobering in a context where sport is often unproblematically seen as the bridge that crosses language, race and class barriers, and draws both spectators and participants towards a common nationhood. [Our analysis] has shown that sport can divide as much as it can unite, and not only mirrors many of the tensions of the broader society but can also serve to generate its own tensions that feed back into the broader body politic.³³

The purported link between the transformation of South African sport and nation-building has also received attention from international scholars since the turn of the millennium. In this regard the rising tension relating to a lack of demographic change in the composition of the Springbok rugby team during the late 1990s was analysed by Karen Farquharson and Timothy Marjoribanks in a 2003 paper that considered media discourse around the 1995 and 1999 Rugby World Cups.³⁴ The authors argue that the framing of the Springbok emblem in

²⁹ Farland and Jennings, “Cricket and Representivity,” 819.

³⁰ Vishnu Padayachee, Ashwin Desai and Goolam Vahed, “Managing South African transformation: the story of cricket in KwaZulu Natal, 1994–2004,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, 3 (2004): 253–78.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 276.

³² Vahed, Padayachee and Desai, “Between black and white,” 222–58.

³³ *Ibid.*, 254.

³⁴ Karen Farquharson and Timothy Marjoribanks, “Transforming the Springboks: Re-imagining the South African Nation through Sport,” *Social Dynamics: A journal of African studies* 29, 1 (2003): 27–48. For a more recent study which compared the discourse around the Springboks’ 2007 Rugby World Cup victory with the 1995 event, see

1995 constituted symbolic change, and that this framing was coming under threat by 1999 as a result of a lack of institutional change within rugby. They conclude that “unless the re-imagination of the Springboks is accompanied by a transformation in who is selected to represent the team, and symbolically the nation, the Springboks’ contribution to South African nation-building will be over”.³⁵

While this latter statement will find resonance in the controversy around the 2015 Springboks, it does have to be viewed in light of Padayachee, Vahed and Desai’s warning concerning the unproblematic assumption regarding sport’s role in nation-building. It is this author’s view that sport – as far as representation at the elite level is concerned – is better viewed as a barometer of broader social change in South Africa, as opposed to an agent in the process towards bringing about such change. Doubts about the impact of sport symbolism on reconciliation efforts in South Africa have also been expressed elsewhere. Kristine Höglund and Ralph Sundberg concluded in 2008 that the “impact at the national level of reconciliation acts and symbols appear to be limited, because of the fleeting nature of symbolic events” such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup.³⁶

Despite the wide range of opinion encapsulated within the relatively small (but growing) body of literature pertaining to transformation of South African sport, some thematic commonalities can be discerned. Primary of these is the fact that two decades after the political transition of 1994 South Africa is still incapable of escaping its racial past. In terms of the popular discourse this is particularly evident within the realm of elite competitive sport where the pressure for national teams to be demographically representative has been increasing since the late 1990s. This pressure is bound to mount as the two high profile team sports traditionally dominated by whites, namely cricket and rugby, continue to run afoul of government’s stated transformation objectives for the country broadly, and sport specifically.

The continued presence of race in the discourse around national teams presents a stark contrast to the non-racial ideal(ism) of the Mandela presidency during the early years of the transition. In fact Merrett, Tatz and Adair argue that the “adoption of race quotas in the late 1990s coincided with a marked shift in the fundamentals of South African politics: the end of Nelson Mandela’s era of non-racialism and the introduction of Thabo Mbeki’s race

Gabriël Botma, “Lightning strikes twice: The 2007 Rugby World Cup and memories of a South African rainbow nation,” *Communicatio* 36, 1 (2010): 1–19.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 43–4.

³⁶ Kristine Höglund and Ralph Sundberg, “Reconciliation through Sports? The case of South Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 29, 4 (2008): 815.

populism”.³⁷ The erosion of the non-racial principle post-unity is often decried by officials formerly involved with bodies that were affiliated to the South African Council on Sport (SACOS). The latter promoted non-racialism at its core during the struggle against apartheid and the shift away from this ideal by the Mbeki administration during the late 1990s has not gone unnoticed. The comments of Jace Naidoo, the president of SWIMSA, during an interview with Desai and Veriava in 2006 are revealing in this regard:

[M]ost federations have seen transformation almost exclusively as a ‘numbers’ or ‘quotas’ issue. To a large extent this has been driven by the state’s philosophy of transformation – society and organs of civil society, such as sports federations, being reflective of the country’s demographics. This race-based philosophy has contributed to the need to define racial groupings in sport, and has served to entrench ideologies of race, rather than moving toward a philosophy of non-racial and mass-based sport.³⁸

Another notable theme that emerges from the literature is the complexities inherent in the debate around the transformation of South African sport. Given the significant role of the media as a conduit for popular discourse there exists a danger of potentially oversimplifying the underlying issues at hand. There are important questions that arise from engaging with the debate on sporting transformation – particularly as far as demographic change is concerned – and it is argued here that the academic literature still falls short in proposing potential answers to these questions.

The oft-quoted SACOS slogan of “no normal sport in an abnormal society” – coined in the late 1970s as a rallying call for non-collaboration with (white) government structures – serves as an entry point. While SACOS stalwarts still regard this as an honourable, principled position which underpinned their warnings regarding South Africa’s rapid readmission into international sport in the early 1990s,³⁹ it merits some unpacking from a practical standpoint. Arguing counterfactually, for example, allows one to ask what a “normal” society would look like. A potential answer – at least within a sporting context – could be proposed from a statement made by Hassan Howa, president of SACOS, in 1977: “For true merit selection everyone has to be given the same opportunities to develop his latent talent. This cannot happen in South African society.”⁴⁰ Given the persisting inequalities in South Africa this

³⁷ Merrett, Tatz and Adair, “History and its racial legacies,” 766.

³⁸ Desai and Veriava, “Creepy crawlies,” 29. Naidoo had previously also been an official for the non-racial ASASA which was affiliated to SACOS.

³⁹ Desai and Vahed point out that South Africa’s speedy readmission to international cricket in 1991 “meant that black administrators lost an important leverage point during negotiations” towards unity. See Desai and Vahed, “Beyond the nation?” 178–9.

⁴⁰ André Odendaal, *Cricket In Isolation: The Politics of Race and Cricket in South Africa* (Cape Town: André Odendaal, 1977), 269 as cited in Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London: Zed Press, 1982), iv.

description seems apt 38 years later. Therefore, by taking the slogan to its conclusion, South Africa should still be isolated from international sport in 2015 since the society is not yet normal.

There is undoubtedly some merit in the basic sentiment that – had sporting isolation continued – sports administrators from the white establishment which remained influential within unified sporting structures after 1991 might well have made greater and more sincere efforts towards eradicating sporting inequality during the 1990s (through development programmes for example).⁴¹ However, the question of providing “the same opportunities” for all South Africans is one not just facing sport, but the country as a whole and it continues to be a significant challenge in 2015. Given the extent of the inequality prevalent in South African society and the lingering weight of its racial history – aspects readily quoted by proponents of rapid transformation – would it be reasonable to expect sports administrators to have overcome the very problems which politicians have not been able to solve over the same period of time?

Furthermore, it is clear that the socio-economic circumstances of South Africans have an impact on their prospects of reaching the pinnacle of certain sports. But for which codes is this most relevant? In all likelihood it could be argued that it would be the codes still dominated by whites, with rugby, cricket and swimming being prominent examples. These are sports involving specialised facilities and equipment, while also being played at former “Model C”, private or semi-private schools that possess the necessary infrastructure and coaching expertise to ensure excellence.⁴² Consequently these schools are still viewed as enclaves of white (or at least class) privilege, despite being open to all learners. In this regard critics would point out that there is a distinct difference between being open to all and being accessible to all, which brings one back to the question of socio-economic circumstances. Bearing this in mind, could it not be argued that transforming these sport codes of privilege essentially entails eradicating socio-economic inequality in South Africa?

The trend whereby the majority of African, coloured and Indian cricketers that have presented South Africa since 1991 received their schooling at former white schools is also seen as undesirable – or at least not indicative of true transformation. Haroon Lorgat, currently the chief executive of Cricket South Africa (CSA) and previously the convenor of

⁴¹ Rugby in particular came in for criticism regarding its approach to development during the initial years after unity. See Douglas Booth, “Mandela and Amabokoboko: the Political and Linguistic Nationalisation of South Africa?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, 3 (1996): 465–70.

⁴² For a study considering redress in South African schools since 1994 see Linda Chisholm, “The Meaning of Racial Redress in South African Schools, 1994 to 2006,” in *Racial Redress & Citizenship in South Africa*, eds., Adam Habib and Kristina Bentley (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2008), 230–62.

the national selection panel, highlighted the socio-economic reality of the situation during a 2006 interview with Desai and Vahed:

Black schools don't have proper systems and structures in place. Black players start with a disadvantage and the use of 'elite schools' should be a short-term thing. Cricket is a culture that has to take root and for this to happen we have to take cricket to the people...[But] cricket bodies cannot do this on their own. We need an integrated approach between the UCB [United Cricket Board] and government.⁴³

It is proposed that these aforementioned questions are indicative of the complex nature of debates regarding sporting transformation. It seems reasonable to further argue that any single question naturally prompts further questions. For example, what are the factors outside the economic realm that impact on participation numbers in different sport codes? What role do ethnic considerations play in this process? The latter issue has been extensively explored by Albert Grundlingh in the case of Afrikaners, particularly with regards to rugby and cricket. He argues that three fundamental factors have “at different stages, depending on the overall configuration of interests...asserted their influence in varying degrees” in “shaping the Afrikaner world of sport and leisure”. These comprise “ethnicity and its different inflections (including a specific sense of masculinity) at different historical junctures, the imperatives of material conditions, and middle-class aspirational initiatives”.⁴⁴

This adds further credence to the notion that the relationship of a particular ethnic group with a specific sport code is not static, but is shaped by a multitude of factors over time. As a result it prompts the question as to what a “transformed sport” would look like in contemporary (or future) South Africa. Clearly, given the above, it problematises an argument stating that there is some one-size-fits-all, static future state that needs to be aimed for (such as simply reflecting the demographics of the population). Consequently it is argued that an improved understanding of these factors is needed before debates regarding sporting transformation can be taken forward in a constructive and practical manner. Furthermore, it is proposed that such an understanding can only be gleaned from an analysis of both historical and contemporary factors that have influenced – and continue to influence – the particular sport code(s) in question.

This study represents a contribution within the latter framework by considering historical factors that have influenced the demographics of professional football in South Africa, specifically so-called “white” professional football. This sport has been notably absent from

⁴³ Desai and Vahed, “Beyond the nation?” 183.

⁴⁴ Grundlingh, *Potent Pastimes*, 220.

the mainstream transformation debate – a fact highlighted and questioned by Merrett, Tatz and Adair.⁴⁵ While any debate comparing demographics across different sporting codes runs the risk of descending into a tit-for-tat comparison of population statistics, the state of professional football warrants a momentary pause for reflection.

The fact that South Africa's 23-man football squad used at the 2010 FIFA World Cup contained a solitary white player – namely defender Matthew Booth – who did not play a single minute in the competition, was reflective of the demographics of the professional game in the country at the time.⁴⁶ A glance at the squad compositions of South Africa's top professional clubs playing in the Professional Soccer League (PSL) easily confirmed this. White players were (and still are) sparsely distributed amongst these teams.⁴⁷ It is therefore well worth speculating that football – in the eyes of the media and officialdom – is seen as “normal” since the top club (and national) teams are a much closer reflection of South Africa's population demographics. Such a view can be discerned from statements by Dale McKinley in his 2010 analysis of contemporary South African football:

Unlike most of South Africa's other major sports, such as rugby, cricket, athletics, field hockey, swimming and tennis, soccer did not enter into the post-apartheid era as a sport in dire need of racial transformation on the field of play. Indeed, it was the only major sport, circa 1994, in which the vast majority of players, at all levels of the game, were black. In many ways, this reality was reflective of the apartheid system's longstanding social, economic and political peripheralisation of the game of soccer alongside an exactly opposite approach taken to the country's other major sports.⁴⁸

However, it is argued here that McKinley's summary edges dangerously close to being an over-simplified binary representation of football's history under apartheid. It could be inferred, for example, that the apartheid government did not care much for football since it was viewed as a “black sport”, and that the code was consequently marginalised in terms of infrastructure, thereby allowing blacks to dominate the game on and off the field of play – a situation which then simply served as the point of departure once unity arrived. McKinley himself states that under apartheid

⁴⁵ Merrett, Tatz and Adair, “History and its racial legacies,” 769.

⁴⁶ “2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa,” FIFA, accessed August 14, 2011, <http://www.fifa.com/worldcup/archive/southafrica2010/teams/team=43883/index.html>.

⁴⁷ Marc Fletcher, “You must support Chiefs; Pirates already have two white fans!': race and racial discourse in South African football fandom,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 79.

⁴⁸ Dale McKinley, “Transformation' from above: The upside down state of contemporary South African soccer,” in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 83.

...soccer became the *bête noir* of the racist white establishment, who successively used all means at their disposal, including the extensive powers of the apartheid state, to promote and support (white) sports such as rugby and cricket as well as to suppress and control the social, economic and political reach and impact of the (black) sport of soccer.⁴⁹

While some of these descriptions are accurate to varying degrees – for example the attitude of the government towards non-racial football in the form of the South African Soccer Federation (SASF), a SACOS affiliate – this study will argue that a much more nuanced position is needed. For example, McKinley's description does not take cognisance of the fact that at the beginning of 1985 a prominent official estimated that nearly 40% of the players in South Africa's top professional league at the time – the National Professional Soccer League (NPSL) – were white.⁵⁰ This is particularly significant given the turbulent political situation at the time. Furthermore, it will be argued that football was central to efforts by the Minister of Sport, Piet Koornhof, to “reform” apartheid sport through multinationalism during the mid-1970s. In fact one white club chairman recounted many years later that he was surprised by Koornhof's knowledge of the game at the time, including the players, structures and foreign football.⁵¹ This study offers context to this latter statement given Koornhof's extensive interaction with football officials during the 1970s.

A note on “representative” national football teams – under apartheid – is also necessary. In this regard two racially integrated South African teams played against foreign opposition during 1976 and 1977 respectively. The latter encounter represented the first occasion where black sportsmen representing South Africa were awarded Springbok blazers. These instances constitute merely a small sample of events and processes that need to be untangled in order to gain an improved understanding of South African football's complicated – and often paradoxical – history under apartheid. This study analyses the political, economic and social factors that influenced white professional football during the period 1959–90, with a focus on the disappearance of the whites-only National Football League (NFL) and the subsequent struggles by its constituent clubs within integrated professional football prior to unity.

By the time football unity arrived in 1991 only two former (white) NFL clubs remained within the top tier of South African professional football – this after white professional football had experienced its zenith in 1969 with total attendances peaking at 2 million spectators that season. Consequently this study – through analysing this drastic change in the white

⁴⁹ McKinley, “Transformation' from above,” 81.

⁵⁰ “Another record year for the NPSL,” *South African Soccer*, February, 1985, 24.

⁵¹ Simon Kuper, *Football Against the Enemy* (London: Orion, 1994), 143.

professional game – represents an important contribution to the academic literature pertaining to demographic change in South African sport. In this regard it provides historical perspective to the broader debate on sporting transformation, primarily by demonstrating the demographic fluidity applicable to football. It also contributes to the broader literature exploring the interplay between sport, politics and race in South African sport generally and the history of South African football specifically.

Historiography of South African Sport

The contours of the body of literature on South African sport are closely tied to the seminal events and historical processes that shaped the country's history as a whole. During apartheid there emerged a significant body of work – both inside and outside academia – considering the nexus between sport, politics and race in South Africa. Much of this work formed part of the struggle against apartheid and was written by individuals actively involved in efforts to isolate South Africa from the 1960s onwards. In the post-apartheid era works have been able to reflect with growing distance on the processes that led to unity, while South Africa's increasing involvement in sport mega-events offered a platform for diverse scholarship to emerge. Unity itself – both in a sporting and political sense – posed new questions to the “new” South Africa as the country grappled with its identity – a process which continues to this day. In this regard the mid-1990s saw the emergence of a number of works on “identity and re-imagining the concept of the nation”.⁵² In addition the lingering questions over redress in South African society have since the 2000s offered a fertile avenue for academic inquiry regarding aspects such as transformation in sport.

South Africa's controversial political dispensation during the second half of the previous century is a significant factor behind the body of work that has emerged on South African sports history. John Nauright pointed out recently that, as far as academic literature is concerned, more work has been done on South Africa than the rest of sub-Saharan Africa combined.⁵³ Much of this literature – academic or otherwise – serves to provide a framework for this study since the latter is particularly concerned with the intersection between South African politics and South African football. In addition to Thompson's *Race and Sport* another early work that constitutes a valuable resource is Mary Draper's *Sport and Race in*

⁵² André Odendaal, “Sport and Liberation – The Unfinished Business of the Past,” in *Sport and Liberation in South Africa: Reflections and Suggestions*, ed., Cornelius Thomas (Alice: National Heritage and Cultural Studies Centre, University of Fort Hare; Pretoria: Department of Sport and Recreation, 2006), 26.

⁵³ John Nauright, “Africa (sub-Saharan),” in *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, eds., S.W. Pope and John Nauright (London: Routledge, 2012), 326.

South Africa, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) in 1963.⁵⁴ Draper's manuscript draws largely on newspaper material in highlighting some of the patterns that had emerged around the sport-political axis during the preceding decade.

A notable example was the affiliation by various African, coloured and Indian controlling bodies to their white counterparts, thereby obtaining some benefits (such as facility access and marginal representation on committees) and assisting the latter with protecting its international standing. Opposed to this were the non-racial controlling bodies that rejected the option of subservient affiliation to the white bodies.⁵⁵ In this regard Draper highlights not only the emergence of this important fault line, but also considers aspects such as government policy and the legal implications of mixed sport. In addition the manuscript perceptively highlighted some of the emerging issues that would subsequently prove to be highly contentious within the framework of the sporting boycott, such as team selection and international participation.

Key works penned by activists on the front line of the campaign against South Africa began to emerge during the 1970s. Due to the political situation at the time these individuals operated in exile which saw their writings published outside the boundaries of South Africa. Dennis Brutus and Chris de Broglio of SANROC (South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee) were two early examples.⁵⁶ Peter Hain's *Don't play with apartheid* (1971) also provided an insider perspective on the dynamics relating to the boycott strategy aimed at rugby and cricket specifically.⁵⁷ In subsequent years other works were published with the assistance of the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF)⁵⁸ as Joan Brickhill targeted the

⁵⁴ Mary Draper, *Sport and Race in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1963). The SAIRR was a liberal think-tank that conducted research and produced publications on matters relating to race in South Africa. For the purposes of any historical study dealing with South African politics its material represents a healthy counterweight to official government publications. The SAIRR is still in existence today. See "History of the IRR," South African Institute of Race Relations, accessed July 13, 2015, <http://irr.org.za/about-us/history>. An additional sport-related publication under the banner of the SAIRR was released in 1968 and dealt with South Africa's relationship with the Olympic Games. See Muriel Horrell, *South Africa and the Olympic Games* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1968).

⁵⁵ Draper, *Sport and Race*, 2.

⁵⁶ See Dennis Brutus, "The Sportsman's Choice," in *Apartheid: A Collection of Writings on South African Racism by South Africans*, ed., Alex la Guma (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 149–60 and Chris de Broglio, *South Africa: Racism in Sport* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1970).

⁵⁷ Peter Hain, *Don't play with apartheid: the background to the Stop The Seventy Tour Campaign* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971).

⁵⁸ The IDAF was originally formed as "British Defence and Aid" in 1956 by Canon John Collins in Britain as a means for channelling funds into South Africa for the defence of those accused during the Treason Trial. It later became an international organisation and according to South African historian, Saul Dubow, "[it] did much to establish the moral foundations of anti-apartheid activism in Britain". See Saul Dubow, *Apartheid 1948–1994* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 52.

South African government's multinational sports policy⁵⁹ while SANROC's Sam Ramsamy dealt with the international boycott as a whole.⁶⁰

Anti-apartheid efforts and the sports boycott also attracted international scholars and activists intent on highlighting – from a foreign vantage point – the forces at play in South Africa's sports-political game. South African-born Colin Tatz argued for the continuation of the sports boycott by Australia in 1983,⁶¹ while Grant Jarvie's *Class, Race and Sport in South Africa's Political Economy* (1985) further analysed the situation that had developed by the mid-1980s.⁶² Jarvie argued that the South African state was facing an "organic crisis" at the time and that sporting resistance needed to form part of a "total strategy involving the broader liberation forces" in order to bring an end to apartheid.⁶³ This analysis proved accurate in hindsight.

American scholar Richard Lapchick's *The Politics of Race and International Sport: The Case of South Africa* – published in 1975 as the outflow of his earlier doctoral thesis – stands out as an earlier example of an academic work concerned with the sport-political situation in South Africa.⁶⁴ Another oft-cited work is Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon's *The South African Game: Sport and Racism*, published in 1982. The latter represents a reflection of opinions from within the non-racial sports movement at the time and was endorsed by the likes of SANROC as providing a "true" reflection of sport in South Africa.⁶⁵ Whereas both of these works highlight important facets of the interplay between sport and politics in South Africa a few notes regarding objectivity are necessary.

In this regard it should be noted that all three authors – through no fault of their own – compiled these works outside South Africa. Lapchick was denied a research visa⁶⁶ – in all likelihood due to his subject matter⁶⁷ – while Archer and Bouillon understandably pointed to

⁵⁹ See Joan Brickhill, *Race Against Race: South Africa's "Multinational" Sport Fraud* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund, 1976).

⁶⁰ See Sam Ramsamy, *Apartheid, The Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa and the International Boycott* (London: International Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa, 1982).

⁶¹ Colin Tatz, "Sport in South Africa: The Myth of Integration," *The Australian Quarterly* 55, 4 (1983): 405–20.

⁶² Grant Jarvie, *Class, Race and Sport in South Africa's Political Economy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985).

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁶⁴ See Richard Lapchick, *The Politics of Race and International Sport: The Case of South Africa* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975).

⁶⁵ See Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*. SANROC's endorsement of the book can be found in the form of a quote by Sam Ramsamy on the back cover.

⁶⁶ Jeffrey Sammons, "'Race' and Sport: A Critical, Historical Examination," *Journal of Sport History* 21, 3 (1994): 241, as cited in Peter Alegi, "Keep Your Eye on the Ball: A Social History of Soccer in South Africa, 1910–1976," (PhD Diss., Boston University, 2000), 10.

⁶⁷ In 1977 he appeared on the government's radar when a South African foreign affairs official based in New York obtained a copy of a paper to be presented by Lapchick at the World Conference for Action Against Apartheid held in Lagos, Nigeria in August that year. The paper was entitled *The Politics of Race and International Sport: A*

the possible risks involved in pursuing interaction with non-racial sports officials opposing apartheid inside the borders of the country.⁶⁸ However, with this in mind, it must also be pointed out that they were positioned directly in the fight against apartheid: Bouillon, a French journalist, was the secretary-general of the French Anti-Apartheid Movement, while Lapchick was the chairman of the American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society (ACCESS).⁶⁹

Consequently they took a specific ideological stance on South Africa which had the potential to obscure certain complexities relating to the subject of apartheid sport. In the case of Lapchick's work this was pointed out by more than one reviewer, as Stanley Morse stated that the sport-political situation in South Africa "demands more systematic and objective treatment than [Lapchick] provides; indeed, his bias and approach are immediately clear".⁷⁰ Years later American scholar, Jeffrey Sammons, defended Lapchick's approach against criticism (from another reviewer at the time of the book's release) by arguing that the balance sought "in Lapchick's work was neither possible nor desirable under the circumstances in 1975" and that "political concerns outweighed purely academic ones".⁷¹ This might well be true from a moral standpoint, but does not change the fact that it represents merely one side of the ideological coin – something that must be borne in mind by any researcher citing Lapchick's work. In this regard Morse aptly pointed to the latter's favouring of the "isolationist" approach as opposed to the "bridge-building" approach in terms of bringing about change in South Africa.⁷² This would become a notable point of contention in later years, especially at a local level where SACOS took an aggressive stance of non-collaboration – the merits of which can be judged with historical hindsight.

Archer and Bouillon's *The South African Game* also needs to be viewed through a similar filter. It is generally regarded in a positive light, with Nauright describing it as "remarkably resilient and useful".⁷³ Peter Alegi's summary borders on hyperbole, however, when he describes it as a "meticulous, lucid and nuanced analysis of the complex and changing relationship between social, political, and economic structures and individuals' agency in the history of both white and black sport".⁷⁴ While it certainly constitutes an important work on

Comparison of South Africa and Nazi Germany and was forwarded to the Secretary of Sport and Recreation, Beyers Hoek, who in turn passed it on to Piet Koornhof. See Beyers Hoek, *Department of Sport and Recreation Memo*, November 25, 1977, file PV476/1/34/30/3/1, Koornhof papers.

⁶⁸ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, i–ii.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *No Normal Sport*, 78 and 82.

⁷⁰ Stanley Morse, review of *The Politics of Race and International Sport: The Case of South Africa*, by Richard Lapchick, *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 14, 4 (1976): 731.

⁷¹ Sammons, "'Race' and Sport," 241, as cited in Alegi, "Keep Your Eye on the Ball," 10.

⁷² Morse, review of *The Politics of Race*, 731.

⁷³ Nauright, "Africa (sub-Saharan)," 326.

⁷⁴ Alegi, "Keep Your Eye on the Ball," 11.

apartheid sport that derives value in terms of providing a voice for the non-racial movement at the time, this study has found it necessary to point out some of the deficiencies in *The South African Game* as it pertains to football.⁷⁵ These are undoubtedly the result of the scope of subject matter dealt with in the book as well as the fact that its authors were not situated in South Africa. While this certainly constitutes extenuating circumstances, it does not change the fact that these football-related deficiencies are present in the text.

These relate primarily to the authors' analysis of the impact of multinationalism within a football context, as well as a tendency to politicise every administrative development in the sport, thereby ignoring non-political factors such as boardroom power struggles for example. This constitutes an analytical trap in which there is at times a predisposition to attribute ground-level developments to shady government puppet masters operating in the background with a grand plan to sow division amongst administrators. This study argues that the football environment – and even the National Party itself – was a lot more multi-layered as often appears in the analysis of football contained in *The South African Game* and that a balanced analysis requires cognisance of this. Any scholar analysing multinationalism, for example, would be well advised to consider Paul Anderson's doctoral thesis, *An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport (1970–1979)*, completed at Stellenbosch University in 1979.⁷⁶ Anderson's analysis also represents a foreign perspective – he represented the New Zealand Junior All Black rugby team during the period 1969–72⁷⁷ – but has the added advantage of having been completed inside South Africa.⁷⁸ Anderson was also not a member of an anti-apartheid organisation and consequently his evaluation is drained of a specific ideological flavour.

As far as the general development of academic sports history in South Africa is concerned, the noted historian of sport, André Odendaal, points out that “South African universities were relatively slow” in following the international emergence of the discipline as an acceptable academic pursuit during the 1970s.⁷⁹ Odendaal himself made an important contribution through his self-published *Cricket in Isolation: The Politics of Race and Cricket in South Africa*, released in 1977.⁸⁰ Despite not being positioned as a traditional academic work *per*

⁷⁵ These aspects will be dealt with in the relevant chapters analysing multinationalism.

⁷⁶ Paul Anderson, “An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport (1970–1979),” (PhD Diss., Stellenbosch University, 1979).

⁷⁷ Jill Nicholas, “Our People: Paul Anderson,” *Rotorua Daily Post*, March 24, 2013, http://www.nzherald.co.nz/rotorua-daily-post/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503438&objectid=11094439 (accessed September 8, 2015). Anderson's rugby career is also alluded to in Odendaal, “Sport and Liberation,” 24.

⁷⁸ He was brought to Stellenbosch University on a rugby scholarship by Danie Craven in 1978. See Nicholas, “Our People: Paul Anderson.”

⁷⁹ Odendaal, “Sport and Liberation,” 24.

⁸⁰ See Odendaal, *Cricket in Isolation*.

se, this multi-faceted volume contains a wide range of views from stakeholders across the cricketing spectrum at a time that was described as a “historic juncture” by Odendaal.⁸¹ The latter’s analysis, while promoting the cause of non-racial cricket, does so in a balanced manner and constitutes a valuable insight into the complexities prevalent within cricket at the time.⁸² This serves as a useful comparative backdrop to concurrent happenings within South African football which was also undergoing dramatic changes during the course of 1977, as this study will show.

A key contribution made by Odendaal – especially in some of his later work – entailed analyses of the long and rich history of black (particularly African) cricket in South Africa, thereby dispelling the popular myth that black South Africans only took to the game much later than their white counterparts.⁸³ He has also dealt with the same theme in the context of black rugby.⁸⁴ In a sense this study is also making a contribution to what it argues is a misunderstood sporting history of a particular group, namely white footballers in South Africa. However, it is primarily concerned with the vehicles for white football – namely the former whites-only NFL and its constituent clubs – as opposed to the personal experiences of individual players themselves.

Scholars with a primary academic focus on the history of South African sport were a rarity prior to the 1990s, with one exception being Floris van der Merwe. Having come from a physical education background he was appointed to a Sports History position at Stellenbosch University (located in the physical education department) in 1979 – the first (and, as far as can be ascertained, still the only) such position in the country⁸⁵ – and continued in this role up to 2011. His approach has been self-described as “descriptive, not

⁸¹ Odendaal, *Cricket in Isolation*, xv. The book had been completed shortly after the formation of the non-racial South African Cricket Union (SACU) which was to be the solitary controlling body for cricket in the country, thereby essentially representing unity in South African cricket under apartheid. Consequently Odendaal – himself an accomplished cricketer – viewed this development with optimism. History later showed that the “normalisation” of cricket through SACU was to be short-lived as a break-away non-racial body, the South African Cricket Board (SACB) was formed in November 1977 under the leadership of Hassan Howa. See André Odendaal, *The Story of an African Game: Black Cricketers and the Unmasking of One of Cricket’s Greatest Myths, South Africa, 1850–2003* (Cape Town: David Phillip, 2003), 227. Odendaal later became the only white first class cricketer to play for the SACB.

⁸² See for example Odendaal’s views on dialogue between associations, which he viewed as a means to reap “cooperation and mutual trust, or at least a better understanding of the expectations of the respective parties”. See Odendaal, *Cricket in Isolation*, 286. The issue of dialogue became particularly contentious in football circles from 1977 onwards as SACOS took an increasingly hard-line stance regarding this aspect.

⁸³ See for example André Odendaal, “South Africa’s Black Victorians: Sport and Society in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century,” in *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad 1700–1914*, ed., James Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 193–214, and Odendaal, *The Story of an African Game*. Odendaal also dealt with this subject in *Cricket in Isolation*. See Odendaal, *Cricket in Isolation*, 305–46.

⁸⁴ André Odendaal, “The thing that is not round’: The untold history of black rugby in South Africa,” in *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal and Burridge Spies (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995), 24–63.

⁸⁵ Odendaal, “Sport and Liberation,” 24–5.

sociological”⁸⁶ and consequently his focus has been on empirical analyses of sport codes, events or practices themselves, as opposed to exploring sport within the broader socio-political context in which it is played.⁸⁷ One study which did take the latter route was Cecile Badenhorst’s doctoral thesis, completed at Queen’s University in Canada in 1992, which explored the control of Africans’ leisure time in Johannesburg prior to apartheid.⁸⁸

The end of apartheid opened up new avenues for historical research into South African sport and in this regard key works emerged during the 1990s. Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal and Burridge Spies considered various facets of South African rugby history in *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, published in 1995 and coinciding with South Africa’s hosting of the Rugby World Cup that year.⁸⁹ This was the first example of academic scholarship being stimulated by the hosting of a sport mega-event in post-apartheid South Africa – an aspect that increased greatly in subsequent years leading up to (and after) the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Other significant works published in the 1990s include John Nauright’s *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (1997)⁹⁰ and Douglas Booth’s *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (1998).⁹¹ These two works represent key contributions by foreign scholars, with Booth’s book particularly relevant in the context of this study, since it constitutes an in-depth analysis of the historical sport-political nexus in South Africa.⁹² Booth has also published a number of other academic papers along a similar theme.⁹³

As far as South African scholars are concerned Christopher Merrett has an extensive publication record that represents an important contribution to the academic literature regarding the historical relationship between sport, race and politics in South Africa. Merrett has pursued a particular focus on the city of Pietermaritzburg in the KwaZulu-Natal province,

⁸⁶ As quoted in Odendaal, “Sport and Liberation,” 25.

⁸⁷ For an overview of Van der Merwe’s areas of interest see Floris van der Merwe, *Essays on South Africa Sport History* (Stellenbosch: FJG Publikasies, 2009). The latter publication comprises papers presented by Van der Merwe at international conferences over the course of three decades.

⁸⁸ Cecile Badenhorst, “Mines, Missionaries and the Municipality: Organized African Sport and Recreation in Johannesburg, c1920–1950,” (PhD Diss., Queen’s University, 1992).

⁸⁹ Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal and Burridge Spies, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995).

⁹⁰ John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997).

⁹¹ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

⁹² Booth’s key aim was to consider the status of sport in shaping a new South African national identity during the 1990s – an aspect and period with which this study is not concerned, however.

⁹³ See for example Douglas Booth, “South Africa’s ‘Autonomous Sport’ Strategy: Desegregation Apartheid Style,” *Sporting Traditions* 6, 2 (1990): 155–79; Douglas Booth, “United sport: an alternative hegemony in South Africa?” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 12, 3 (1995): 105–24; Booth, “Mandela and Amabokoboko,” 465–70; Douglas Booth, “The South African Council on Sport and the Political Antinomies of the Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23, 1 (1997): 51–66; Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, 3 (2003): 477–93; Douglas Booth, “Beyond history: Racial emancipation and ethics in apartheid sport,” *Rethinking History* 14, 4 (2010): 461–81.

although his works have certainly not been limited to this domain as they also consider broader issues in multiple sport codes.⁹⁴ His latest works form part of a body of literature on the history of South African sport that has grown significantly during the 2000s and continues to gather momentum. In this regard the increasing distance (in terms of time) from the end of apartheid has produced a new set of questions confronting South African society, as evidenced by the scholarship relating to the transformation of sport for example.⁹⁵

Cricket and rugby have continued to attract a great deal of scholarly attention, while there has been a large upsurge in football-related literature as well. The latter development necessitates a separate analysis in the following section below. In terms of the former developments Odendaal's work on cricket has been complemented by a number of scholars with the relationship between South African cricket and the British Empire proving a particularly fertile avenue for exploration. This saw the compilation of the edited volume *Empire & Cricket: The South African Experience, 1884–1914* by Bruce Murray and Goolam Vahed in 2009.⁹⁶ Both editors have themselves published extensively on the history of South African cricket elsewhere.⁹⁷ More recently Dean Allen also made a significant contribution to this field by publishing *Empire, War & Cricket in South Africa: Logan of Matjiesfontein* (2015)⁹⁸ – a work representing an outflow from his doctoral thesis completed in 2008.⁹⁹ Allen

⁹⁴ See for example Christopher Merrett, "Sport, Racism and Urban Policy in South Africa: Pietermaritzburg, a Case Study," *Sporting Traditions* 10, 2 (1994): 97–122; Christopher Merrett, "In nothing else are the deprivations so deprived: South African sport, apartheid and foreign relations, 1945–71," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 13, 2 (1996): 146–65; Merrett, "Aurora," 95–122; Christopher Merrett, "From the outside lane: issues of 'race' in South African athletics in the twentieth century," *Patterns of Prejudice* 38, 3 (2004): 233–51; Christopher Merrett, "Race, Gender and Political Dissent in the Comrades Marathon, 1921–1981," *South African Historical Journal* 59, 1 (2007): 242–60; Christopher Merrett, "'We don't Want Crumbs, We Want Bread': Non-Racial Sport, the International Boycott and South African Liberals, 1956–1990," *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, 2 (2010): 81–93; Christopher Merrett, "Identity and the geography of physical recreation: imperialism and apartheid in the South African city of Pietermaritzburg," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 15 (2011), 2098–114.

⁹⁵ Refer to the examples highlighted earlier in this chapter.

⁹⁶ Bruce Murray and Goolam Vahed, eds., *Empire & Cricket: The South African Experience, 1884–1914* (South Africa: UNISA Press, 2009).

⁹⁷ See for example Bruce Murray, "Politics and Cricket: The D'Oliveira Affair of 1968," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27, 4 (2001): 667–84; Bruce Murray, "The Sports Boycott and Cricket: The Cancellation of the 1970 South African Tour of England," *South African Historical Journal* 46, 1 (2002): 219–49; Bruce Murray, "A New History of South African Cricket," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 31, 4 (2005): 875–81; Bruce Murray, "Abe Bailey and the Foundation of the Imperial Cricket Conference," *South African Historical Journal* 60, 3 (2008): 375–96; Goolam Vahed, "'There is plenty of play left in South Africa's race game': Race, cricket and nation in post-apartheid South Africa," *Society in Transition* 32, 2 (2001): 260–76; Goolam Vahed, "'What do they Know of Cricket who only Cricket Know?': Transformation in South African Cricket, 1990–2000," *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 36, 3 (2001): 319–36; Goolam Vahed, "Cultural Confrontation: Race, Politics and Cricket in South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s," *Sport in Society* 5, 2 (2002): 79–108; Goolam Vahed, "Taking up the white man's game: the rise and decline of African cricket in Durban, 1930–1960," *Historia* 48, 2 (2003): 111–26; Goolam Vahed, "Deconstructing 'Indianness': Cricket and the articulation of Indian identities in Durban, 1900–32," *Culture, Sport, Society* 6, 2–3 (2003): 144–68; Goolam Vahed, "Cricket and corruption: the post-apartheid relationship between India and South Africa within and beyond the boundary," *Diaspora Studies* 6, 2 (2013): 80–91.

⁹⁸ Dean Allen, *Empire, War & Cricket in South Africa: Logan of Matjiesfontein* (Cape Town: Zebra Press, 2015).

⁹⁹ Dean Allen, "'Logan's golden age': cricket, politics and empire, South Africa, 1888–1910," (PhD Diss., University of Brighton, 2008).

has also published a number of academic articles analysing cricket during the colonial period.¹⁰⁰

As far as the political and racial dimensions of South African cricket are concerned two additional works stand out as valuable sources. Ashwin Desai, Vishnu Padayachee, Krish Reddy and Vahed co-authored *Blacks in Whites: A Century of Cricket Struggles in KwaZulu-Natal* in 2002,¹⁰¹ while Bruce Murray and Christopher Merrett cast their net over the country as a whole with *Caught Behind: Race and Politics in Springbok Cricket* (2004).¹⁰² Elsewhere Albert Grundlingh has also explored the changing historical relationship between the game and Afrikaners.¹⁰³ The latter dimension constitutes one component of his broader analysis relating to the leisure practices of Afrikaners in general – as detailed in *Potent Pastimes* (2013).¹⁰⁴

Rugby within the South African context continues to receive considerable attention. In 1998 David Black and John Nauright considered the sport's deep political and racial history in South Africa, as well as its potential significance in shaping the country's new identity towards the end of the 1990s.¹⁰⁵ The ethnic and nationalistic dimensions of the game in South Africa have also been examined by various scholars.¹⁰⁶ In addition facets such as the significance of the game during the colonial period,¹⁰⁷ its professionalisation during the mid-

¹⁰⁰ See for example Dean Allen, "Bats and Bayonets: Cricket and the Anglo-Boer War, 1899–1902," *Sport in History* 25, 1 (2005): 17–40; Dean Allen, "South African Cricket, Imperial Cricketers and Imperial Expansion, 1850–1910," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, 4 (2008): 443–71; Dean Allen, "South African cricket and British imperialism, 1870–1910," *Sport in Society* 12, 4–5 (2009): 464–81; Dean Allen, "A man's game: Cricket, war and masculinity, South Africa, 1899–1902," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 63–80. For a general analysis of white sport during this period see Dean Allen, "The race for supremacy: the politics of 'white' sport in South Africa, 1870–1910," *Sport in Society* 14, 6 (2011): 741–53.

¹⁰¹ Ashwin Desai, Vishnu Padayachee, Krish Reddy and Goolam Vahed, *Blacks in Whites: A Century of Cricket Struggles in KwaZulu-Natal* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2002).

¹⁰² Bruce Murray and Christopher Merrett, *Caught Behind: Race and Politics in Springbok Cricket* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press and Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004).

¹⁰³ Albert Grundlingh, "From J.J. 'Boerjong' Kotze to Hansie Cronje: Afrikaners and cricket in twentieth-century South Africa – diffusion and representation," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 98–114.

¹⁰⁴ Grundlingh, *Potent Pastimes*.

¹⁰⁵ See David Black and John Nauright, *Rugby and the South African Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

¹⁰⁶ See for example Albert Grundlingh, "Playing for power? Rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa, c.1900–70," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 11, 3 (1994): 408–30; Odendaal, "The thing that is not round"; John Nauright, "Masculinity, muscular islam and popular culture: 'coloured' Rugby's Cultural symbolism in working-class Cape Town c.1930–70," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 14, 1 (1997): 184–90; Dean Allen, "Beating them at their own Game: Rugby, the Anglo-Boer War and Afrikaner Nationalism, 1899–1948," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 20, 3 (2003): 37–7; Philani Nongogo, "Origins and development of black rugby in East London and its response to South Africa's rugby unity, 1886–2000: a study of selected clubs," (Master's Diss., University of Fort Hare, 2004); Jonty Winch, "Ebrahim Patel – the IRB's First Black South African in More Than 100 Years," *Sport in History* 33, 4 (2013): 512–31; Isak Niehaus, "Warriors of the rainbow nation? South African rugby after apartheid," *Anthropology Southern Africa* 37, 1–2 (2014): 68–80.

¹⁰⁷ See Dean Allen, "Tours of Reconciliation: Rugby, War and Reconstruction in South Africa, 1891–1907," *Sport in History* 27, 2 (2007): 172–89; Dean Allen, "Captain Diplomacy: Paul Roos and the Creation of South Africa's Rugby 'Springboks'," *Sport in History* 33, 4 (2013): 568–83.

1990s,¹⁰⁸ and the commercialisation of South Africa's rugby heritage¹⁰⁹ have been explored. This serves as an indication of the increasing number of investigative angles available to scholars when it comes to studying the game within its historical South African context.

However, it is important to note that the historiography of sport in South Africa is not only growing, but also diversifying.¹¹⁰ In this regard areas of investigation have in recent years included dog racing, school sport, rodeo sports, rugby league, disability sport and surfing.¹¹¹ A special issue of *The International Journal of the History of Sport* in 2011 served as further indication of this trend, although it also included works on cricket and football. It was later published in book form under the editorship of political scientist Scarlett Cornelissen and Grundlingh.¹¹² At the same time some of the established themes within the discipline – such as the intersection between sport, race and politics – are being tackled by a new generation of scholars that have emerged in recent years.¹¹³ This study represents a contribution within the latter framework as it will be argued that an understanding of the historical relationship between politics and football is critical towards furthering an analysis of the decline of white professional football in South Africa. In order to further demonstrate the value of this study an analysis of the state of historiography relating to South African football specifically is necessary.

¹⁰⁸ See Albert Grundlingh, "Rugby, rands and religion: Ramifications of the professionalization of the game, 1995–2013," in *Potent Pastimes: Sport and leisure practices in modern Afrikaner history*, Albert Grundlingh (Pretoria: Protea Book House, 2013), 155–91.

¹⁰⁹ See Marizanne Grundlingh, "Showcasing the Springboks: The commercialisation of South African rugby heritage," *South African Review of Sociology* 46, 1 (2015): 106–28.

¹¹⁰ For a recent review of "the relative paucity of studies on sport within the discipline of sociology in South Africa" see Chris Bolsmann and Cora Burnett, "Taking South African sport seriously," *South African Review of Sociology* 46, 1 (2015): 1–6.

¹¹¹ See for example Albert Grundlingh, "'Gone to the Dog': The Cultural Politics of Gambling – The Rise and Fall of British Greyhound Racing on the Witwatersrand, 1932–1949," *South African Historical Journal* 48, 1 (2003): 174–89; Francois Cleophas, "Opening a Window on Early Twentieth-Century School Sport in Cape Town Society," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31, 15 (2014): 1868–881; Hendrik Snyders, "'An Americanised issue with no place in South Africa?' – rodeo sports, muscular and cultural identity and animal rights in urban South Africa," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 15 (2011): 2130–141; Hendrik Snyders, "'Preventing Huddersfield': The rise and decline of rugby league in South Africa, c.1957–1965," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 9–31; Cobus Rademeyer, "Guttman's ingenuity: The Paralympic Games as legacy of the Second World War," *Historia* 60, 1 (2015): 47–59; Glen Thompson, "'Certain political considerations': South African competitive surfing during the international sports boycott," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 32–46; Glen Thompson, "Otelu Burning and Zulu surfing histories," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 26, 3 (2014): 324–40; Glen Thompson, "Surfing, gender and politics: Identity and society in the history of South African surfing culture in the twentieth-century," (PhD Diss., Stellenbosch University, 2015).

¹¹² Scarlett Cornelissen and Albert Grundlingh, eds., *Sport Past and Present in South Africa: (Trans)forming the Nation* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012).

¹¹³ See for example Francois Cleophas and Floris van der Merwe, "Contradictions and responses concerning the South African sport colour-bar with special reference to the Western Cape," *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 17, 1 (2011): 124–40; Juan Klee, "Multinational sport participation replaces apartheid sport in South Africa – 1967–1978: The role of BJ Vorster and PGJ Koornhof," *New Contree* 64 (2012): 155–70; Cobus Rademeyer, "Sports isolation and the struggle against apartheid in South African sport: the sports policy of the National Party during the 1980s," *Journal for Contemporary History* 38, 2 (2013): 70–90; Philani Nongogo, Anneliese Goslin and Johannes van Wyk, "An argument for the struggles to de-racialise South African sport: The Olympic Movement's response, 1896–1946," *African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance* 20, 4 (2014): 1637–664.

Historiography of South African Football

Compared to cricket and rugby the academic literature pertaining to South African football was even slower to develop. While the former codes had already spawned important works prior to and during the 1990s, the scholarly landscape for football still lay notably bare by the end of the decade. This slowly began to change in the following years as Peter Alegi completed his doctoral thesis – constituting a social history of South African football during the period 1910–76 – in 2000.¹¹⁴ His master's thesis, completed in 1995, investigated the role of football within urban black communities during the period 1886–1956.¹¹⁵ These postgraduate studies led to the subsequent publication of *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* four years later.¹¹⁶ This was a significant contribution within the field and represents a useful point for periodising the development of football-related literature.

During the apartheid era the academic output relating to football was minimal with Bernard Magubane's 1963 master's thesis in sociology standing out as the only notable early work.¹¹⁷ By using archival and oral sources Magubane demonstrated the popularity and meaning of football within urban black communities under apartheid – aspects that Alegi built upon and considered more broadly 37 years later. Approximately two decades would pass before football again received scholarly attention as two overviews of the game's development in South Africa were published during the early 1980s. Tim Couzens's summary originated from within the History Workshop at the University of the Witwatersrand – a research programme founded in 1977 as a revisionist effort within South African social history.¹¹⁸ In 1982 Frederik Nöthling utilised parts of Couzens's summary in the compilation of his own brief outline relating to the game's history in South Africa.¹¹⁹ Nöthling pointed out – quite appropriately at the time – that “[t]here [was] no comprehensive history of South African soccer” and that its “history [could] be a rewarding topic for a post-graduate student

¹¹⁴ Alegi, “Keep Your Eye on the Ball.”

¹¹⁵ Peter Alegi, “Umdlalo Wabantu: A Social History of Soccer in Urban Black South African Communities, 1886–1956,” (Master's Diss., Yale University, 1995).

¹¹⁶ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004).

¹¹⁷ Bernard Magubane, “Sport and Politics in an Urban African Community: A Case Study of African Voluntary Organizations,” (Master's Diss., University of Natal, 1963).

¹¹⁸ Tim Couzens, “An Introduction to the History of Football in South Africa,” in *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response*, ed., Belinda Bozzoli (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983), 198–215. For a historical summary regarding the Wits History Workshop see Deborah Posel, “Social History and the Wits History Workshop,” *African Studies* 69, 1 (2010): 29–40.

¹¹⁹ Frederik Nöthling, “Soccer in South Africa (A Brief Outline),” *Kleio* 14, 1–2 (1982): 28–41. Couzens' summary was published as part of an edited volume a year after Nöthling's article, but it was clearly compiled two years earlier in 1981 judging by Nöthling's citations.

interested in this popular game”.¹²⁰ This suggestion was to lie dormant for many years, however.

Richard Maguire and Ian Jeffrey made partial contributions towards filling this void in the early 1990s. Maguire’s honours thesis constituted a history of the popular Soweto-based club, Orlando Pirates,¹²¹ while Jeffrey published an essay exploring supporter dynamics and the role of football patrons in the township of Sharpeville, south of Johannesburg.¹²² Out of these aforementioned works Nöthling’s paid the most attention to white football in both its amateur and professional forms, although by his own admission it was only a brief foray into this domain. Whereas the lack of scholarship on South African football was still evident by the end of apartheid, a handful of popular works had appeared since the late 1950s. Some of these have proven useful as primary sources for this study.

Eddie Firmani’s autobiography, *Football with the Millionaires* (1959), was published at a time when South African football was undergoing rapid change with the arrival of its first professional league, the whites-only NFL.¹²³ Firmani himself was positioned outside these developments on account of his highly successful career in England and Italy,¹²⁴ but his book was soon followed by a cluster of works focusing on local developments within white football. Vivian Granger’s personal account of the dynamics that led to the formation of the NFL is particularly useful in highlighting key personalities as well as the initial tension between amateur and professional officials.¹²⁵ Eric Litchfield, a former player in Britain who became a journalist, sports editor and football administrator in South Africa, was also intimately involved in this process. Subsequently he produced an array of works chronicling white sport in general (including football),¹²⁶ the rise of the NFL specifically,¹²⁷ as well as the success of club side Cape Town City during the early 1970s.¹²⁸ These works provide an insider perspective – mostly in a celebratory tone – regarding a highly successful period in the history of white professional football.

¹²⁰ Nöthling, “Soccer in South Africa,” 41.

¹²¹ Richard Maguire, “The People’s Club: A History of Orlando Pirates,” (Honours Diss., University of the Witwatersrand, 1991).

¹²² Ian Jeffrey, “Street Rivalry and Patron-Managers: Football in Sharpeville, 1943–1985,” *African Studies* 51, 1 (1992): 69–94.

¹²³ Eddie Firmani, *Football with the Millionaires* (London: Stanley Paul, 1959).

¹²⁴ During the 1950s Firmani, who was born in Cape Town, played for Charlton Athletic (England), Sampdoria and Internazionale (both in Italy). He was also capped for the Italian national team.

¹²⁵ Vivian Granger, *The World Game Comes to South Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1961). Granger was the NFL’s general manager throughout the league’s existence (1959–1977).

¹²⁶ Eric Litchfield, *The Springbok Story: From the Inside* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1960).

¹²⁷ Eric Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun* (Johannesburg: Simondium-Uitgewers, 1963) and Eric Litchfield, *Eric Litchfield’s Book of Soccer* (Johannesburg: Hugh Kearthart, 1965).

¹²⁸ Eric Litchfield, *Cape Town City: The Story of Our Famous Club* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1972). Litchfield was employed as the club’s administrative manager at the time of writing this book.

George Thabe's *It's a Goal!*, published in 1983, was compiled along a similar vein as part of the golden jubilee celebrations of the South African National Football Association (SANFA) – the controlling body for black (African) football of which he was president.¹²⁹ In subsequent years there also emerged works specifically focusing on glamour club Kaizer Chiefs, a team that embodied the rise of black professional football in South Africa from the 1970s onwards.¹³⁰ Simon Kuper's award-winning *Football against the Enemy* (1994) also contained a chapter on South African football detailing the author's interactions with a colourful cast of characters shortly after the end of apartheid. The reflections on the first participation by a black player (Vincent Julius) in the white NFL in 1977 are particularly useful.

From the late 1990s onwards a steady stream of popular accounts of South African football surfaced, largely in the wake of the national men's team's participation (and relative success) in major international tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup and African Cup of Nations.¹³¹ These accounts were mostly penned from the perspective of former players and journalists.¹³² Peter Raath's *Soccer Through the Years, 1862–2002* constituted a wide-ranging popular account of the game's history in South Africa and contains a large body of content relating to the NFL and its constituent clubs.¹³³ This represented the first attempt to document the entire span of the history of football in South Africa in book form and Raath's effort was commendable for its scope and level of detail – although the absence of referencing makes it difficult to verify the accuracy of the latter. While Raath also endeavoured to lend balance to his book by including a section dealing with the professional leagues other than the NFL – both non-racial and racial¹³⁴ – it can be argued that, as far as the pre-unity era is concerned, his work primarily focuses on white football. This latter aspect did represent a notable contribution, however – albeit outside the academic sphere – and despite a somewhat convoluted structure the large volume of statistics and colourful player anecdotes have proven useful in that context.

¹²⁹ George Thabe, ed., *It's a Goal! 50 Years of Sweat, Tears and Drama in Black Soccer* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1983).

¹³⁰ James North, "Sports: The Kaizer Chiefs," in *Freedom Rising*, James North (New York: Macmillan, 1985), 144–57 and Sekola Sello, *Chiefs, 21 glorious years: the official history of SA's glamour football club* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1991).

¹³¹ The national men's team, known as *Bafana Bafana* (a Zulu and Xhosa term meaning "The Boys"), performed admirably at both the 1998 FIFA World Cup in France and 2002 FIFA World Cup in Japan and South Korea. The team also won the 1996 African Cup of Nations competition on home soil, finished as runners-up in 1998 (in Burkina Faso) and finished in third place in 2000 (in Ghana and Nigeria).

¹³² See for example Jack Blades, ed., *The Rainbow Game: A Random History of South African Soccer* (Lanseria: Bailey's African History Archives, 1998); Graeme Friedman, *Madiba's Boys: The Stories of Lucas Radebe and Mark Fish* (Johannesburg: New Africa Books, 2001); Peter Auf der Heyde, *Has Anybody Got a Whistle? A Football Reporter in Africa* (Manchester: Paris Wood Press, 2002); Ernest Landheer, *Roger de Sa: Man of Action* (Claremont: Spearhead, 2002); Farouk Abrahams, *Surviving African Football: An Autobiography* (Cape Town: Peter du Toit, 2003); Thami Mazwai, ed., *Thirty Years of South African Soccer* (Johannesburg: Mafube Publishing, 2003).

¹³³ Peter Raath, *Soccer Through the Years, 1862–2002* (Cape Town: Peter Raath, 2002).

¹³⁴ See Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 95–119.

As far as the development of academic literature on South African football is concerned any analysis has to turn to Alegi's *Laduma!* as a marker. This represented the “the first academic monograph on football in the country” and stands out as a significant contribution in that context.¹³⁵ By considering the period from the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 up to the Soweto uprising in 1976, Alegi “analyses the ways in which Africans transformed the British sport of football into a leading form of urban popular culture”, while also considering “the creation and maintenance of a sphere of social action that influenced class and generational divisions, shaped masculine identities, and served as a mobilising force for neighbourhood, township, and political organisations”.¹³⁶ He convincingly demonstrates how football took on significant meaning in the lives of black South Africans and consequently *Laduma!* can best be described as a far-reaching social history of black football in South Africa during the period under observation.¹³⁷

This last point is important in terms of assessing the degree to which *Laduma!* addressed the glaring void relating to academic scholarship on South African football which still existed at the time of its publishing. Alegi himself conceded that his study “[was] necessarily selective and [made] no claim to be either exhaustive or definitive”.¹³⁸ In this regard it should therefore not be viewed as an all-encompassing history of the game in South Africa – which in fairness was not its aim in the first place. For example it pays preciously little attention to white football and the NFL – only referring to this dimension in the context of white officials’ efforts to strangle the non-racial South African Soccer League (SASL) in the early 1960s, coupled with a brief description in the epilogue of the NFL’s demise during the 1970s.¹³⁹

The epilogue itself represents an attempt to stretch the scope of *Laduma!* by briefly highlighting “the most important developments in domestic football between 1971 and 1992 in order to bring the story closer to [2004]”.¹⁴⁰ In a subsequent review South African sociologist, Chris Bolsmann, rightly pointed out that “justice [was] not done to an important period in South African football history” and described the epilogue as “disappointing”. He justifiably argued that “this period [deserved] a fuller and more detailed investigation and

¹³⁵ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “Introduction,” in *South Africa and the Global Game: Football, Apartheid and Beyond*, eds., Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann (London, New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.

¹³⁶ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 1.

¹³⁷ Alegi uses “black” as an umbrella term for African, coloured and Indian South Africans where necessary in his study.

¹³⁸ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 6.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 132–3, 141–3.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

analysis due to the social and political changes both on and off the field".¹⁴¹ Both Bolsmann and Alegi have made efforts to address this weakness since – an analysis of which follows below. At this point it is necessary to point out that the scope of this study falls almost entirely outside the central thrust of *Laduma!* – not only does it focus on white professional football in the form of the NFL, but it also comprises an in-depth analysis of developments during the period 1978–90 which was only briefly considered in Alegi's study. It will therefore be argued that this study represents an important complementary work to that of Alegi, Bolsmann and other scholars since.

In this regard subsequent scholarly progress needs to be considered. In addition to Alegi's early work that was published prior to – but along similar themes – as *Laduma!*,¹⁴² both him and Bolsmann set about addressing the void relating to South African football literature in the ensuing period. Bolsmann, along with Andrew Parker, considered the celebrity status of a white South African player, Mark Fish, in the context of the changing post-apartheid state.¹⁴³ This was followed by a collaborative paper (with Keith Brewster) that compared the respective motivations behind Mexico City's hosting of the 1968 Olympic Games and South Africa's hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.¹⁴⁴ Alegi meanwhile analysed the 2001 Ellis Park Stadium disaster in Johannesburg in which 43 people died during a stampede at a high profile match between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates.¹⁴⁵ He also turned his attention to the 2010 FIFA World Cup that was approaching by considering the political dynamics of stadium construction in Cape Town and Durban,¹⁴⁶ as well as highlighting efforts to establish a "Football Heritage Complex" in Durban – a project in which he was actively involved at the time.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴¹ Chris Bolsmann, "Review Essay on Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa*," *Soccer & Society* 7, 2–3 (2006): 297.

¹⁴² See for example Peter Alegi, "Katanga vs Johannesburg: a history of the first sub-Saharan African football championship, 1949–50," *Kleio* 31, 1 (1999): 55–74; Peter Alegi, "'Amathe Nolimi' (it is saliva and the tongue): contracts of joy in South African football c. 1940–76," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 17, 4 (2000): 1–20; Peter Alegi, "Playing to the Gallery? Sport, Cultural Performance, and Social Identity in South Africa, 1920s–1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, 1 (2002): 17–38. These papers all considered historical developments within the realm of black football. An exception to this theme was a 2001 paper that analysed South Africa's failed bid to host the 2006 FIFA World Cup. See Peter Alegi, "'Feel the Pull in your Soul': Local Agency and Global Trends in South Africa's 2006 World Cup Bid," *Soccer & Society* 2, 3 (2001): 1–21.

¹⁴³ Chris Bolsmann and Andrew Parker, "Soccer, South Africa and Celebrity Status: Mark Fish, Popular Culture and the Post-Apartheid State," *Soccer & Society* 8, 1 (2007): 109–24.

¹⁴⁴ Chris Bolsmann and Keith Brewster, "Mexico 1968 and South Africa 2010: development, leadership and legacies," *Sport in Society* 12, 10 (2009): 1284–298.

¹⁴⁵ Peter Alegi, "7 'Like Cows Driven to a Dip': The 2001 Ellis Park Stadium Disaster in South Africa," *Soccer & Society* 5, 2 (2004): 233–47.

¹⁴⁶ Peter Alegi, "The Political Economy of Mega-Stadiums and the Underdevelopment of Grassroots Football in South Africa," *Politikon* 34, 3 (2007): 315–31; Peter Alegi, "A Nation to Be Reckoned with: The Politics of World Cup Stadium Construction in Cape Town and Durban, South Africa," *African Studies* 67, 3 (2008): 397–422.

¹⁴⁷ Peter Alegi, "The Football Heritage Complex: history, tourism, and development in South Africa," *Afrika Spectrum* 41, 3 (2006): 415–26.

Yet despite these advances Alegi and Bolsmann pointed out in 2010 that there were still a “limited number of academic (and non-academic) works on South African football” at the time – that being six years after the publishing of *Laduma!*.¹⁴⁸ This was a clear indication that scholarship on football had been slower to develop than that on cricket and rugby for example. In this regard Alegi and Bolsmann’s edited volume, *South Africa and the Global Game: Football Apartheid and Beyond*, published in conjunction with the arrival of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, represented an important leap forward as it showcased the emerging works by other scholars from various fields.¹⁴⁹ The World Cup itself proved a catalyst for scholarship on South African football and has seen a large body of work come to fruition in the period directly leading up to the event and since.

In addition to works considering questions around the tournament itself,¹⁵⁰ notable themes spanning further than the confines of the World Cup have included fandom and identity in South Africa,¹⁵¹ localised and individual histories of the game,¹⁵² the migration of players from (and within) the continent,¹⁵³ women’s football,¹⁵⁴ as well as the early colonial history of football in South Africa.¹⁵⁵ Paul Darby also produced an insightful essay in 2008 detailing

¹⁴⁸ Alegi and Bolsmann, “Introduction,” 4.

¹⁴⁹ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, eds., *South Africa and the Global Game: Football, Apartheid and Beyond* (London, New York: Routledge, 2010). The book consists of work by scholars that was published in a special issue of *Soccer & Society* at the beginning of 2010. The relevant individual papers are cited elsewhere in this section.

¹⁵⁰ See for example Scarlett Cornelissen, “Football’s tsars: proprietorship, corporatism and politics in the 2010 FIFA World Cup,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 131–43; Desai and Vahed, “World Cup 2010,” 154–67; Ndlovu, “Sports as cultural diplomacy,” 144–153; Percy Ngonyama, “The 2010 FIFA World Cup: critical voices from below,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 168–80; Chris Bolsmann, “Representation in the first African World Cup: ‘world-class’, Pan-Africanism, and exclusion,” *Soccer & Society* 13, 2 (2012): 156–72; Dean Allen “‘The successes and challenges of hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup’: the case of Cape Town, South Africa,” *Soccer & Society* 14, 3 (2013): 404–15.

¹⁵¹ See for example Fletcher, “‘You must support Chiefs,’” 79–94; Sean Jacobs, “‘It wasn’t that I did not like South African football’: media, history and biography,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 95–104.

¹⁵² See for example Peter Alegi, “A biography of Darius Dhlomo: transnational footballer in the era of apartheid,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 46–62; Charles Korr and Marvin Close, *More than Just a Game: Football v Apartheid* (London: Collins, 2008); Hilton Biscombe, *Sokker op Stellenbosch* [Soccer at Stellenbosch] (Stellenbosch: SUN MeDIA Stellenbosch, 2010); Sylvain Cubizolles, “Soccer in a rugby town: restructuring football in Stellenbosch,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 105–17; Sylvain Cubizolles, “Finding a new identity for a township club – the case of the Mighty 5 Star in Stellenbosch,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 15 (2011): 2191–205; Sylvain Cubizolles, “Integrating a Popular Sport into the Patrimony in a South African Provincial Town: The Case of Football in Stellenbosch,” *African Studies* 71, 1 (2012): 108–26; Mphumeledi Ngidi, “Inter-race soccer and the 1960 riots in Durban, South Africa,” *Historia* 59, 2 (2014): 326–43.

¹⁵³ See for example Scarlett Cornelissen and Eirik Solberg, “Sport Mobility and Circuits of Power: The Dynamics of Football Migration in Africa and the 2010 World Cup,” *Politikon* 34, 3 (2007): 295–314; Paul Darby and Eirik Solberg, “Differing trajectories: football development and patterns of player migration in South Africa and Ghana,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 118–30.

¹⁵⁴ See for example Cynthia Pelak, “Women and gender in South African soccer: a brief history,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 63–78; Prishani Naidoo and Zanele Muholi, “Women’s bodies and the world of football in South Africa,” in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 105–45.

¹⁵⁵ Jonty Winch, “Unlocking the Cape Code: Establishing British Football in South Africa,” *Sport in History* 30, 4 (2010): 501–22; Chris Bolsmann, “South African Football Tours at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Amateurs, Pioneers and Profits,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 91–112; Chris Bolsmann, “The 1899 Orange Free State football team tour of Europe: ‘Race’, imperial loyalty and sporting contest,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 81–97; Lloyd Hill, “Football as code: the social diffusion of ‘soccer’ in South Africa,”

how the status of South Africa within world football was a key focal point around which the 1974 FIFA presidential election was contested.¹⁵⁶ However, despite this burgeoning body of work it is important to note that works focusing specifically on white professional football remain few and far between. Consequently it is argued here that significant gaps remain in this area and that this study represents an important, original contribution towards tackling some of the lingering questions. In order to demonstrate this, a brief analysis of the relevant works is necessary.

Historiographic Research Gaps Pertaining to White Professional Football

It is clear that Bolsmann has established himself as the most prolific – essentially the only – scholar with a consistent engagement with the history of white football in South Africa as a whole and its professional variant specifically. In terms of amateur white football he has collaborated with foreign scholars in analysing South Africa's international contacts with Australia and Sweden,¹⁵⁷ but it is his work relating to the NFL that is most important in terms of establishing the framework for this study. In this regard three key essays stand out. The first of these considers the period 1892–1977 in the history of white football in the country.¹⁵⁸ While the first portion of the essay chronicles the pre-1959 amateur period, the latter half turns to the NFL and constitutes the first academic study analysing the league in any significant detail. Bolsmann considers – to varying degrees – a number of factors that were certainly significant in the league's eventual decline, including the arrival of the multinational sports policy in the 1970s, South Africa's expulsion from FIFA in 1976 shortly after the Soweto uprising, as well as the rise of the powerful black official, George Thabe, at the same time.¹⁵⁹

However, given that a single essay – particularly one considering an 85 year period – limits the depth to which one can drill analytically, it is argued here that the exact impact of these developments on the NFL are only partially explained. Furthermore it will be argued that other notable factors – such as South Africa's deteriorating economy and declining match attendances during the 1970s – are not considered at all. This study contains a chapter

Soccer & Society 11, 1–2 (2010): 12–28; Lloyd Hill, "Reflections on the 1862 Football Match in Port Elizabeth," *South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation* 33, 1 (2011): 81–98.

¹⁵⁶ Paul Darby, "Stanley Rous's 'Own Goal': Football Politics, South Africa and the Contest for the FIFA Presidency in 1974," *Soccer & Society* 9, 2 (2008): 259–72.

¹⁵⁷ Chris Bolsmann and Nick Guoth, "Dominions Apart: Scandal and Sporting Mismatch in Australian–South African Association Football Encounters, 1947–95," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, 3 (2012): 472–91; Hans Bolling and Chris Bolsmann, "'Here Come 'Chelsea' of Sweden': Djurgården Football Club on Tour in Apartheid South Africa," *Sport in History* 33, 3 (2013): 353–72.

¹⁵⁸ Chris Bolsmann, "White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892–1977," *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 29–45.

¹⁵⁹ Bolsmann, "White Football," 34–42.

specifically analysing the latter aspects – an earlier version of which was published in the form of an essay recently.¹⁶⁰

Bolsmann's second contribution, co-authored with Alegi, considers the period 1976–1992 and constitutes an analysis of major developments within professional football during that period up to South Africa's return to international football in 1992.¹⁶¹ It builds on Bolsmann's earlier analysis by arguing for three factors that “sealed the fate of the white NFL”, namely the government's “support for sporting reforms, the steady supply of corporate sponsorships for (partially) mixed football, and the defection of Wits [University] and four other white teams to the African-controlled NPSL” after the 1977 season.¹⁶² While the pinpointing of sponsorship trends is a valuable point, the argument relating to government support for reform fails to consider that white club officials themselves were in favour of mixed football by that point – a key argument to be explored in this study. The statement regarding club defections also fails to consider the underlying reasons behind these moves.

The rest of the essay constitutes a valuable analysis of the NPSL and the breakaway National Soccer League (NSL) which formed in 1985. However, apart from a brief mention of the sale of top white club Highlands Park to Ephraim “Jomo” Sono in 1983,¹⁶³ there is no specific analysis regarding the disappearance of former NFL clubs over the course of the period leading up to unity. Granted this latter aspect is not a concern of the essay as a whole, which serves to highlight the glaring need for research into this question. A corollary to this is the 1978 season in which a number of former NFL clubs joined the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL) – an affiliate of SACOS. While mention has been made of this elsewhere,¹⁶⁴ it is generally done in passing and viewed as a brief strategic mistake by the former NFL teams who soon realised that their financial survival lay with the NPSL, which prompted a move away from the FPL after only one year. This study contains an extended analysis of this episode and will demonstrate that defections away from the FPL during and after the 1978 season were not confined to former NFL teams alone. Consequently it is argued that a much improved understanding of divisions within the FPL, its parent body (the SASF) and SACOS is required.

¹⁶⁰ Gustav Venter, “Long Balls in the Dying Moments: Exploring the Decline of South Africa's National Football League, 1970–1977,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, 2 (2015): 265–85.

¹⁶¹ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 1–18.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁶³ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 12.

¹⁶⁴ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142; Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 10; Chris Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa: Leisure, Consumption and Identity in the National Football League, 1959–1977,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, 16 (2013): 1957.

The third essay under consideration was published in 2013 and deals exclusively with the NFL.¹⁶⁵ It constitutes a descriptive analysis of the league from its inception in 1959 to its disbandment after 1977. In this regard it serves as a valuable source for understanding the nature of the league, particularly with regards to factors such as spectatorship, sponsorship and the prevalence of foreign-born players. The section dealing with the league's decline contains similar arguments to those proposed in the earlier essays and consequently the aforementioned shortcomings remain.

In particular it is argued here that the paper's contention that multinationalism "resulted in significantly fewer white fans attending professional matches" – thereby leading to the demise of the NFL¹⁶⁶ – falls short of the mark. Incidentally a similar argument was made by Alegi in *Laduma!*,¹⁶⁷ while Archer and Bouillon contended in 1982 that multinationalism drew away black supporters from the NFL.¹⁶⁸ This study will contest both these latter arguments while proposing that a much improved understanding of the effects of multinationalism on South African football is needed. The period 1976–9 in particular was a highly uncertain one both politically and administratively within football circles, and consequently it is dealt with at great length in this study.

The three essays analysed in this section together constitute an attempt to fill the void left by Alegi's epilogue in *Laduma!*. The latter itself dealt briefly with the NFL, and while some of the relevant factors are mentioned – such as the influence of sponsors – some questionable arguments are also advanced. An example of the latter is Alegi's contention that declining NFL attendances was "partly the result of Proclamation 225 of the Group Areas Act issued in 1965, which prohibited interested blacks from attending white matches".¹⁶⁹ This simply does not hold water since NFL attendances were still on the increase during the first four years after that proclamation came into effect – as this study will demonstrate. While it can be argued that the proclamation limited the potential of the league by placing restrictions on black supporters, it does not explain why whites stopped attending matches as the 1970s wore on.

The original contribution of this study to scholarship on South African football spans multiple dimensions. In this regard white professional football – in the form of the NFL and its constituent clubs – has attracted scant attention within the rising number of academic works

¹⁶⁵ Chris Bolsmann, "Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa: Leisure, Consumption and Identity in the National Football League, 1959–1977," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, 16 (2013): 1947–61.

¹⁶⁶ Bolsmann, "Professional Football," 1958.

¹⁶⁷ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142.

¹⁶⁸ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 252–3.

¹⁶⁹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142.

on the broader domain of South African football history. While Bolsmann has made important strides in addressing this void, it has been argued that significant cavities remain. Consequently this study proposes that new factors need to be considered in the debate regarding the NFL's decline. In addition it contains the first in-depth analysis of the relationship between the multinational sports policy and South African football and moves beyond the standard description of multinationalism as government "window-dressing" constituting a failed reform in terms of regaining readmission into international sport. Individual multinational tournaments during the period 1973–7 are analysed at length and it will be argued that these cannot simply be blanketed together as a monolithic factor.

In addition this study represents the first academic analysis of the trajectory of former NFL clubs – and their disappearance over time – in the period subsequent to the white league's disbandment. In this regard the chapter dealing with the 1978 FPL season constitutes a new axis of analysis where the lack of unity within non-racial football at that time is considered. This is followed by an analysis of former NFL teams in the context of the integrated NPSL and NSL during the period 1978–90. It will be argued that the latter represents a critical phase in shaping the face of South African professional football. In itself the analysis of the NPSL and NSL – both of which constituted the dominant professional league in the country before and after 1985 respectively – represents a valuable addition to football scholarship since this dimension is only considered briefly in *Laduma!* and partly in one other essay.¹⁷⁰ While this study certainly does not purport to "complete" the football picture prior to the arrival of unity in 1991, it does represent an important contribution to the existing scholarship through its analysis of previously under- or unexplored facets within the game in South Africa.

Methodology and Sources

The British historian of sport, Richard Holt, recently published a unique essay in the comparative historiography of sport in which he detailed "the role of the historical profession in the writing of sports history in Britain, France and the United States with additional references to Germany, Italy and Australia".¹⁷¹ He points to the fact that in Britain the study of sport has moved from "a highly marginal position in the 1970s and 1980s" to being "legitimized within British history" – a statement supported by the fact that sports history has a presence not only within specialist academic journals dedicated to the subject but also

¹⁷⁰ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 141–6; Alegi and Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity," 8–18.

¹⁷¹ Richard Holt, "Historians and the History of Sport," *Sport in History* 34, 1 (2014): 1–33.

within a wide range of mainstream history publications.¹⁷² According to Ross McKibbin sports history in Britain has also “benefited from the willingness of some universities, such as De Montfort [in England], to specialize in the history of sport at both graduate and undergraduate level and so to create several generations of historians with a specific training in sport and its history”.¹⁷³ From an overall perspective Holt concludes that “sport is now recognized by most general historians as a lively and legitimate sub-discipline of mainstream history as well as a distinctive area of interdisciplinary research”.¹⁷⁴

Within the South African context John Nauright concluded after the 2010 FIFA World Cup that “[t]here is still much to be done in the processes of uncovering, recovering and reconstructing histories of sport in South Africa” and that “it is up to scholars...to build on [the] impetus [generated by the World Cup] and [to] continue to expand our understanding of the role of sport in South Africa”.¹⁷⁵ This study constitutes a response to this call to arms by providing an account of the institutional history of white professional football in South Africa during the period 1959–90. Consequently it is not concerned with the cultural dimension of the game locally – for example the meaning of football to white players in a cultural sense – but instead focuses on white footballing institutions. In this regard “institutional professional white football” has been defined as the whites-only professional league, the NFL, as well as its constituent clubs. The resulting research problem was formulated as follows:

What caused the decline of institutional professional white football in South Africa?

In terms of the study’s periodisation 1959 was the logical starting point since that year marked the arrival of (white) professional football in South Africa in the form of the NFL. While 1977 was the final season of the whites-only league, an important consideration of this study has been the subsequent history of former NFL clubs beyond the league’s disbandment. These clubs largely maintained their white identities and continued to play in the top tier of South African professional football, which from the late 1970s became racially integrated with the government’s approval.

Yet by the end of the 1990 season only two former NFL clubs remained in top level professional football in the country. This constitutes a clear contrast to the height of the NFL which saw more than 2 million spectators attend matches in 1969. Even after the league’s

¹⁷² Holt, “Historians and the History of Sport,” 4–5.

¹⁷³ Ross McKibbin, “Sports History: Status, Definitions and Meanings,” *Sport In History* 31, 2 (2011): 167.

¹⁷⁴ Holt, “Historians and the History of Sport,” 26–7.

¹⁷⁵ John Nauright, “Epilogue: Making new histories of sport in South Africa,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 184.

disappearance former NFL clubs – while having dwindled in number – continued to perform well during the first few seasons of integrated football which commenced in 1978. Consequently this study analyses the period in which these clubs disappeared from the scene and attempts to highlight the factors that drove this process. The 1990 season was the final one in which South Africa had multiple professional leagues administered by separate governing bodies prior to unity. This was chosen as the end point for the study since it is argued that institutional professional white football had essentially reached a status of insignificance by that point.

As a result this study is not concerned with the period after unity, even though the latter offers a potentially fertile area for further investigation into aspects that lie beyond the scope of this analysis. An example of such an investigation would be the apparent decline in the number of white professional players at an individual level. As a simple comparison the South African national team contained five white players in its 1996 African Cup of Nations-winning squad, three of whom were key members of the team (the captain, Neil Tovey, midfielder Eric Tinkler and defender Mark Fish played every minute of every match).¹⁷⁶ In contrast South Africa's 2010 FIFA World Cup squad – as pointed out earlier – contained only one white player (defender Matthew Booth) who did not play a single minute in the competition.

In terms of methodology an inductive approach has been followed in order to allow for the emergence of relevant themes from the data. The latter primarily took a qualitative form although some quantitative data has also been utilised where deemed appropriate. The analytical process was conducted with Holt's description of good historical practice in mind, namely with a wariness "of mono-causality, preferring subtle accounts which bring into play a wide range of forces combining together – sometimes in unpredictable ways – while also taking contingent factors such as individual personality or historical accident into account".¹⁷⁷ This latter statement encapsulates the analytical approach applied to professional white football in this study.

Primary sources consisted mainly of archival documentation and media material (both newspapers and football-specific magazines), while some oral sources were utilised as a complementary element. In this regard the documents of the Football Association of South Africa (FASA), housed at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the William Cullen

¹⁷⁶ Barrie Courtney, "African Nations Cup 1996 – Final Tournament Details," last updated March 18, 2002, <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/96a-det.html> (accessed August 14, 2011).

¹⁷⁷ Holt, "Historians and the History of Sport," 3.

Library of the University of the Witwatersrand, represent an invaluable collection of material originating from within white football's controlling body during the period 1892–1992. This latter period includes the life span of the NFL (1959–77), with the league itself having been an affiliate of FASA throughout its history.

One challenge presented by the FASA material – which has also been used extensively in the existing work on white football by Bolsmann – is the fact that the organisation itself was primarily concerned with amateur football, while the NFL represented its professional arm. Consequently the material in the collection does not consist of NFL-specific items but rather documents pertaining to its parent body.¹⁷⁸ However this is largely mitigated by the fact that NFL representatives were always present at FASA meetings and that many of the issues affecting professional football were discussed during these meetings. FASA annual reports also include some details regarding NFL attendances and finances. In addition the period 1966–76 saw FASA and the NFL being headed up by the same man, namely the United Party MP and Johannesburg-based diamond dealer Dave Marais. Marais, who was also a former mayor of Johannesburg, served as president of FASA and chairman of the NFL. Consequently many of his most notable decisions were driven by considerations from within the professional ranks, with South Africa's status within FIFA being a notable example. The FASA collection also contains some material relating to two clubs, namely Cape Town City and Arcadia Shepherds, which have proven extremely useful.¹⁷⁹

Another valuable archival source proved to be the private documents of the former Minister of Sport and Recreation, Piet Koornhof, who occupied this role in the National Party government during the period 1973–8. This collection is housed at the Archive for Contemporary Affairs at the University of the Free State and provided an illuminating insider perspective on football's broader position within Koornhof's sport strategy, known as multinationalism. It also served to highlight the division within National Party ranks regarding many of Koornhof's attempted reforms, and consequently illustrated the danger of labelling football-related developments as the product of monolithic clusters such as “the government” or “the National Party”. It is argued that such over simplistic classifications has the potential to obscure underlying complexities prevalent within the football-political domain at the time.

¹⁷⁸ The author's attempts to locate a potential repository of NFL documents were unsuccessful. It is possible that these documents were in the possession of the league's general manager, Vivian Granger, who passed away in 1984. Correspondence with the latter's daughter, currently residing in the United States, could not confirm the whereabouts – or indeed existence – of such documentation. Consequently the FASA collection at this stage represents the best available documentary evidence pertaining to the league's history.

¹⁷⁹ The Cape Town City material comprises some reports and financial figures pertaining to the late 1970s and are contained in reports of the (white amateur) Western Province Football Association (WPFA) – an affiliate of FASA. The WPFA were the owners of Cape Town City. The Arcadia Shepherds material comprises mainly of scrapbooks and selected minutes of club meetings during the period 1967–90.

Koornhof's regular correspondence and meetings with football officials positioned outside the non-racial movement further served as a precious window into the administrative dynamics existing on that side of the ideological divide.

These so-called establishment sources were balanced by the use of the minute books of SACOS – formed in 1973 as the coordinating body for non-racial sport in the country.¹⁸⁰ These have proven valuable on two levels: firstly in terms of providing insight into the reaction of the non-racial movement to actions, decisions and proposals emanating from the government and white football officials; secondly by illuminating the division which existed within the non-racial movement regarding professional football in the late-1970s when government-sanctioned integration became a possibility and ultimately a reality. This division centred around the position of the South African Soccer Federation (SASF) within SACOS after the SASF allowed some former NFL clubs to join its ranks in 1978. This latter development occurred within the context of the principle of non-collaboration (with government-affiliated entities) pursued aggressively by SACOS and some SASF members particularly from 1977 onwards.

A final archival source that also proved of some use in analysing the struggles of former NFL clubs within the integrated NPSL from 1978 onwards, was the document collection of the Football Association of Natal and KwaZulu (FANK) housed at the Alan Paton Centre located on the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. While the FANK was a regional body controlling black (African) amateur football, the collection does contain some correspondence and documentation pertaining to the professional NPSL.

These archival sources were complemented by an extensive body of media material comprising primarily of what can be described as the white, English-language press – although sources were not limited to this category – and football-specific magazines that chronicled developments within the local game during the period under consideration. The wide ranging newspaper collection housed at the National Library of South Africa (NLSA) in Cape Town proved invaluable in this regard. The football magazines utilised for this study are also located at the NLSA. In addition the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) press cuttings collection, housed at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, constituted a priceless repository of media reporting on the football-political spectrum. The football-related cuttings from the 1970s and 1980s were used in this study.

¹⁸⁰ The author is indebted to Francois Cleophas, senior lecturer in sports history at Stellenbosch University, for providing him with access to this valuable source.

Finally some oral sources were used in the form of interviews conducted by the author – either personally or telephonically – with former players, administrators and journalists active during the time span of this study. These interviews were semi-structured and comprised of open-ended questions. It is important to recognise that – as Jane de Hart points out – all participants in conversations bring “social, psychological, and cultural biases, perceptions and codes,” and that these “elements, conscious or unconscious, may do as much to shape the information forthcoming as the question asked”.¹⁸¹ With this in mind the responses served to complement the archival and media sources mentioned above, particularly with regards to highlighting any additional lines of inquiry that needed to be pursued. They also provided a sense of the personal dynamics prevalent within organisations such as the NPSL and FASA, for example. Responses were triangulated with archival or media sources where possible. In addition some interviewees provided valuable manuscripts and other materials that added notable value to the study.¹⁸²

Chapter Structure

The chapter structure of this study has been assembled in a broadly chronological form in order to facilitate detailed analyses of specific periods of time demarcated by events and processes deemed significant in the history of white professional football. However, the lengths of the respective periods under investigation in individual chapters vary as a result of the relative importance attached to different factors under consideration. Chapter 2, for example, begins with the life span of the NFL (1959–77) and fulfils a two-pronged function. It serves as a descriptive overview of the league itself – building on the work of Bolsmann in the process – and constitutes an analysis of the structure of the league. This is used as a platform from which to argue for the existence of certain weaknesses within the NFL which facilitated its eventual decline. The analysis in this chapter is situated outside the political domain with the emphasis falling on on-field and economic factors.

Chapter 3 moves into the political domain and considers the initial effects of the government’s multinational sports policy on white football during the period 1971–5. In this regard it argues for the multifaceted nature of multinationalism as three specific tournaments are analysed. These comprise the 1973 South African Games football competition, the 1974

¹⁸¹ Jane de Hart, “Oral Sources and Contemporary History: Dispelling Old Assumptions,” *Journal of American History* 80, 2 (1993): 590 as cited in Douglas Booth, *The Field: Truth and fiction in sport history* (London: Routledge, 2005), 96.

¹⁸² The author is particularly indebted to Highlands Park supporter, Julian Turner, and leading football journalist and commentator, Mark Gleeson, in this regard.

Embassy Multinational Series, as well as the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament. This constitutes the first in-depth academic analysis of these events separately and moves away from a monolithic description of multinationalism.

Chapter 4 builds on this narrative by considering FASA's status both locally and internationally during the period 1974–6. This period is book-ended by two FIFA congresses, namely one in Frankfurt (1974) – where it became increasingly likely that FASA would eventually be expelled from the world body – and the one in Montreal (1976) where this expulsion became a reality. The intervening period is used as a lens through which to consider FASA's relationship with the non-racial SASF, as well as the power shift towards black professional football at the time. In addition the multinational experiment was further loosened, which saw the first racially mixed South African national football team play against an incoming tour party from Argentina which fell outside the auspices of FIFA. This tour is considered in the context of FASA's broader efforts to avoid expulsion from world football's governing body.

Chapter 5 refocuses the lens on the NFL and considers its final seasons and the eventual transition to government-sanctioned integration during the period 1976–8. A key axis of analysis entails the league's overtures towards playing multiracial football at this point. This led to the experimental 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition which represented the first extended multinational tournament at club level, with the added peculiarity of allowing teams to loan a limited number of players from other race groups during the course of this competition. The analysis of this tournament – another scholarly first – also serves to illustrate the struggles experienced by individual NFL clubs at that point in time.

Chapter 6 shifts the overall analysis to the period following the NFL's disbandment. It constitutes an analysis of the final breakup of the NFL which saw some teams head to the non-racial FPL, while others joined the NPSL (previously a league consisting of black teams only). Thereafter the chapter focuses on the 1978 FPL season specifically – one which saw NFL teams briefly playing in the non-racial football setup. This is considered in the context of the deteriorating relationship between the SASF and its parent body, SACOS, at the time. Divisions within the SASF concerning the issue of potential dialogue with the NPSL are also evaluated in terms of developments within football circles at the end of 1978 – a point by which the NPSL established itself as the dominant professional league in the country.

Chapter 7 analyses the participation of former NFL teams in the NPSL (and later the breakaway NSL) during the period 1978–90. Despite strong performances on the field of

play during the initial years of integrated professional football (as sanctioned by the government), the former NFL teams gradually disappeared from these leagues over the course of this period. This chapter analyses the factors and processes which contributed to these developments and argues that spectator violence, administrative difficulties, politics at a local level and economic pressures need to be considered in this regard. By the time unity arrived in 1991 only two former NFL teams remained in top level professional football in the country. The study concludes with a summary of the key findings from the preceding chapters and also proposes additional avenues that could prove fruitful in terms of future research on the broader subject of South African football history.

Chapter 2 – From Carpet Football to Long Balls in the Dying Moments: An Apolitical Analysis of the NFL, 1959–77

This chapter¹ constitutes an analysis of the structure of the National Football League (NFL) – the “whites-only” semi-professional league founded in 1959 – as a means towards understanding some of the factors that led to its eventual decline and breakup after the 1977 season.² The central thrust of this analysis lies outside the political domain with the focus directed towards economic and on-field factors. It will be argued that the latter dimensions represent a new analytical viewpoint from which the history of the NFL is to be considered. The league proved highly popular and successful during the 1960s and into the early 1970s, but saw match attendances drop sharply from 1974 onwards during its final seasons. Consequently this chapter seeks to contextualise this trend by examining the structure of the league and arguing for the existence of non-political factors that contributed to its eventual decline.

Of particular interest is the strategy employed by some clubs during the 1970s of importing high profile British “guest” stars on short-term contracts. In this regard a number of players that were members of England’s 1966 FIFA World Cup-winning squad made their way to South Africa in the twilight of their careers. This generated notable interest in the game locally but was ultimately unsuccessful in sustaining the league over the long-term. This phenomenon is utilised as a lens through which to consider some of the challenges experienced by the NFL, particularly once broader macro factors in South Africa began to influence white professional football operationally. At the outset of this analysis it is also necessary to provide a brief history of the league’s founding and its subsequent rise to prominence.

¹ An earlier version of this chapter has recently been published as an essay in the *International Journal of the History of Sport*. See Gustav Venter, “Long Balls in the Dying Moments: Exploring the Decline of South Africa’s National Football League, 1970–1977,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 32, 2 (2015): 265–85.

² During the course of the NFL’s lifespan there were also “black” and non-racial professional football leagues in operation in South Africa with differing political aims and alignments. The non-racial South African Soccer League (SASL) spanned the period 1961–5 and was later followed by the Federation Professional League (FPL) founded in 1969, also on the non-racial principle and with a more aggressive anti-apartheid stance. The National Professional Soccer League (NPSL) was formed in 1962 as a rival to the SASL but soon folded. It was subsequently resurrected in 1967. In 1971 it was reorganised as an “African” league with the backing of white authorities. In 1978 it became a multiracial league when a number of former “white” clubs joined its ranks as a result of the disbandment of the NFL. For further detail regarding these leagues see Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 117–44.

The Early History of Football in South Africa

Football in South Africa dates back to 1862 when the first documented matches were played between white civil servants and soldiers in the Cape Colony.³ Alegi points to the fact that these early contestations contained facets of both rugby and association football – something which was not unusual given that “different sets of football rules...existed at the time”.⁴ However, it was the Natal Colony that played a decisive role in the spread of particularly the association game throughout the rest of the territory that is South Africa today.⁵ In this regard association football was popularised in Natal largely due to an influx of working-class British soldiers as a result of the Anglo-Zulu War (1879) and the first Anglo-Boer War (1880–1881). The year 1882 saw the establishment of the first regional football association, namely the Natal Football Association.⁶ Thereafter the discovery of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 served as “the major stimulus for the widespread diffusion of the association code”.⁷ Soon thereafter, in 1892, the South African Football Association (SAFA) – a whites-only controlling body for the game countrywide – was formed.⁸

Notable developments within the local game during the ensuing years included SAFA's affiliation to the English Football Association in 1897 as well as an incoming tour by the Corinthian Football Club – the first foreign team to visit South African shores – in the same year.⁹ Corinthians would return for two more tours in 1903 and 1907.¹⁰ The first local team to travel abroad was in fact a team consisting of sixteen black players from the Orange Free State Republic that visited Britain and France in 1899.¹¹ A second South African touring team achieved significant success on a twelve-match tour to South America in 1906, winning eleven matches against various opponents from Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil. As a result Bolsmann states that “South Africa was therefore at the forefront of globalizing football in the early twentieth century”.¹² This notion is supported by the fact that SAFA obtained

³ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 1.

⁴ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 15.

⁵ Lloyd Hill, “Football as code: the social diffusion of 'soccer' in South Africa,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 20.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Chris Bolsmann, “White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892–1977,” *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Peter Raath, *Soccer Through the Years, 1862-2002* (Cape Town: Peter Raath, 2002), 6.

¹¹ For a full account of this tour see Chris Bolsmann, “The 1899 Orange Free State football team tour of Europe: 'Race', imperial loyalty and sporting contest,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, 1 (2011): 81–97. The term “black” as used here constitutes an umbrella term for individuals from the race groups other than white.

¹² Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 30.

membership of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in 1910 – in the process becoming the first non-European member of the organisation.¹³

Over the next 29 years, prior to the outbreak of World War II, a number of British teams toured South Africa. These comprised four English Football Association representative teams (in 1910, 1920, 1929 and 1939) as well as Scottish clubs Aberdeen (1927 and 1937) and Motherwell (1931 and 1934).¹⁴ The year 1924 saw the first tour to Europe by a SAFA representative team, with the latter playing matches in Britain, Ireland and the Netherlands. Results and attendances were positive, but ultimately the venture was “not a financial success”.¹⁵

The difference in quality between local South African and incoming British touring teams during the period 1897–1939 is evident at the hand of cumulative tour statistics, with British teams winning a combined total of 167 out of 196 tour matches (85.2%), and losing only 15 (7.7%).¹⁶ The contrasting early international rugby success experienced by the South African Springboks – for example on their tours to Britain in 1906–7 and 1912–3 – was one factor that led to a rise in popularity of rugby among whites in South Africa.¹⁷ Additional factors that led to the eventual subordination of football include its exclusion from the national education system after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, as well as its increasing popularity within African communities.¹⁸ Despite these developments, Bolsmann points to the fact that, “by the late 1920s, SAFA still had ambitions for football to become the most popular game amongst white South Africans”.¹⁹ The need to nurture and develop the game nationally would become a prevailing theme throughout the white controlling body’s lifespan.

SAFA’s pre-World War II preference to face British opposition as opposed to continental European teams – which were regarded as inferior in quality and offering less potential for financial returns²⁰ – began to shift after the war. The period up to the 1960s saw a number of continental teams visiting South Africa, including the likes of Athletic Club of Portugal (1951), the Israel Football Association (1953), Djurgården of Sweden (1956), Dynamo Club Prague (1957) and Ajax Amsterdam (1958).²¹ In addition to these tours the strong football connection with Britain continued to exist as is evident from incoming tours by the likes of

¹³ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 30.

¹⁴ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 13.

¹⁵ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 31.

¹⁶ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 13.

¹⁷ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 17.

¹⁸ Hill, “Football as code,” 23.

¹⁹ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 32.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 32–3.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

Wolverhampton Wanderers (1951 and 1957), Newcastle United (1952), Dundee United (1953), Hearts of Midlothian (1953–4), an English FA representative team (1956), Preston North End (1958), Bolton Wanderers (1959) and Leicester City (1961).²² Despite these regular tours and established international links Nöthling makes reference to a loss of momentum by white football from the early 1950s onwards.²³ He cites Eric Litchfield, a prominent football writer at the time (who played professional football for Newcastle United and Northampton Town before turning to sports journalism in South Africa and becoming the sports editor of both the *Rand Daily Mail* and the *Sunday Times*)²⁴ as blaming the decay on “faulty team selection, visits by British clubs which were too strong and a general unwillingness on behalf of the Football Association to promote the game honestly”.²⁵ The stage was set for sweeping changes to hit the South African football landscape.

The Arrival of Professional Football in South Africa

By the 1950s the issue of professionalism had already been an enduring and vexing problem for the Football Association of Southern Africa (FASA) – the national controlling body for white football originally founded as SAFA in 1892.²⁶ Not only had a number of white South African players taken up professional football in Britain (and later Europe) during the 1930s and 1950s,²⁷ but there was also the issue of “veiled professionalism” that existed back home.²⁸ In addition there was a growing frustration for some within football circles at the perceived slow progress of the game at the hand of the amateur controlling authorities.²⁹ This ultimately led in 1959 to a “rebel” breakaway movement initiated by key personalities within Transvaal football at the time. After months of deliberation – both behind the scenes and externally with amateur divisional associations and FASA – the first (semi) professional football league in South Africa came into existence. The National Football League (NFL) played its first round of matches on Saturday July 4, 1959. The prevailing mood at the time was summarised by Lubbe Snoyman, the league’s temporary chairman, in a media interview a few weeks prior to this date: “All sorts of arguments will be advanced against our move. We are not concerned because, as ninety per cent of the public, players and officials will agree, something had to be done to extricate South African soccer from its bogged-down

²² Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 33.

²³ Frederik Nöthling, “Soccer in South Africa (A Brief Outline),” *Kleio* 14, 1–2 (1982): 33.

²⁴ Eric Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun* (Johannesburg: Simondium-Uitgewers, 1963), inside cover page.

²⁵ Nöthling, “Soccer in South Africa,” 33.

²⁶ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 30.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

²⁸ Nöthling, “Soccer in South Africa,” 34.

²⁹ See for example Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun*, 6 and Vivian Granger, *The World Game Comes to South Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1961), xi.

situation. We are doing it drastically – but effectively.”³⁰

During the preceding period FASA had in March 1959 initiated a sub-committee to look into various aspects of professional football in South Africa,³¹ but it was felt by members of the breakaway group that this process would be too slow (given that the committee would only report back six months later) and that a positive outcome in favour of professionalism was in any event unlikely.³² From this point onwards, despite its best efforts, FASA was unable to dictate the outcome of the process and ultimately the rebel movement succeeded in introducing semi-professional football into South Africa without the cooperation of the white controlling body. It was a heated battle for supremacy between the professional rebels and amateur establishment throughout the intervening months.³³ The investigative sub-committee eventually reported to FASA in October that “professional football [could] only be of benefit to South African football”, and that advantages would include an increased standard of play, the potential luring of star players, and the improvement and retention of young players.³⁴ The NFL was subsequently affiliated as an associate member of FASA at the latter’s half-yearly meeting in October, 1959,³⁵ and, despite the initial controversy surrounding the introduction of professionalism, a productive working relationship between the two entities ensued in the coming years.

Professional football in South Africa saw a relatively modest start during its inaugural season, with a total paid attendance of only 107,227 in all competitions during 1959³⁶ (although it has to be noted that the league competition was half the length of a normal season as a result of the late start in July of that year). Clubs had to be self-sustainable and the league’s general manager, Vivian Granger (who was also the main driver behind the formation of the league), calculated that approximately 2,000 paying adults would have to attend each match in order for clubs to balance their books.³⁷ During the first two seasons only about half of the clubs were able to do this, but according to Granger wealthy men “took up professional football as a sort of hobby” by becoming club owners and carrying the costs themselves.³⁸

³⁰ Granger, *The World Game*, 60.

³¹ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 33.

³² Granger, *The World Game*, 26.

³³ For a colourful account of this conflict from the perspective of the professional “rebels” see Granger, *The World Game*, 1–100.

³⁴ FASA, *Confidential Report on Professional Football*, October, 1959, Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892–1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers).

³⁵ Minutes, FASA Half Yearly Meeting, October 17, 1959, FASA papers.

³⁶ Vernon Woods, *S.A. Book of Soccer 1974* (Johannesburg: D.S. Saunders, 1974), 50.

³⁷ Granger, *The World Game*, 77–8.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

However the NFL soon began to capture the imagination of the public and in this regard there were some early positive signs. The Castle Cup (a national knock-out competition inaugurated by the NFL in 1959 and which was open to both amateur and professional teams) saw 30,000 spectators turn out to watch the 1960 final between Ramblers (a Johannesburg-based team) and Durban City.³⁹ Whereas the league initially consisted of only twelve teams (nine from the Transvaal and three from Natal), the second season saw it expand to fifteen teams while a second division was also added. By 1962 the league consisted of eighteen teams and also had a third division.⁴⁰

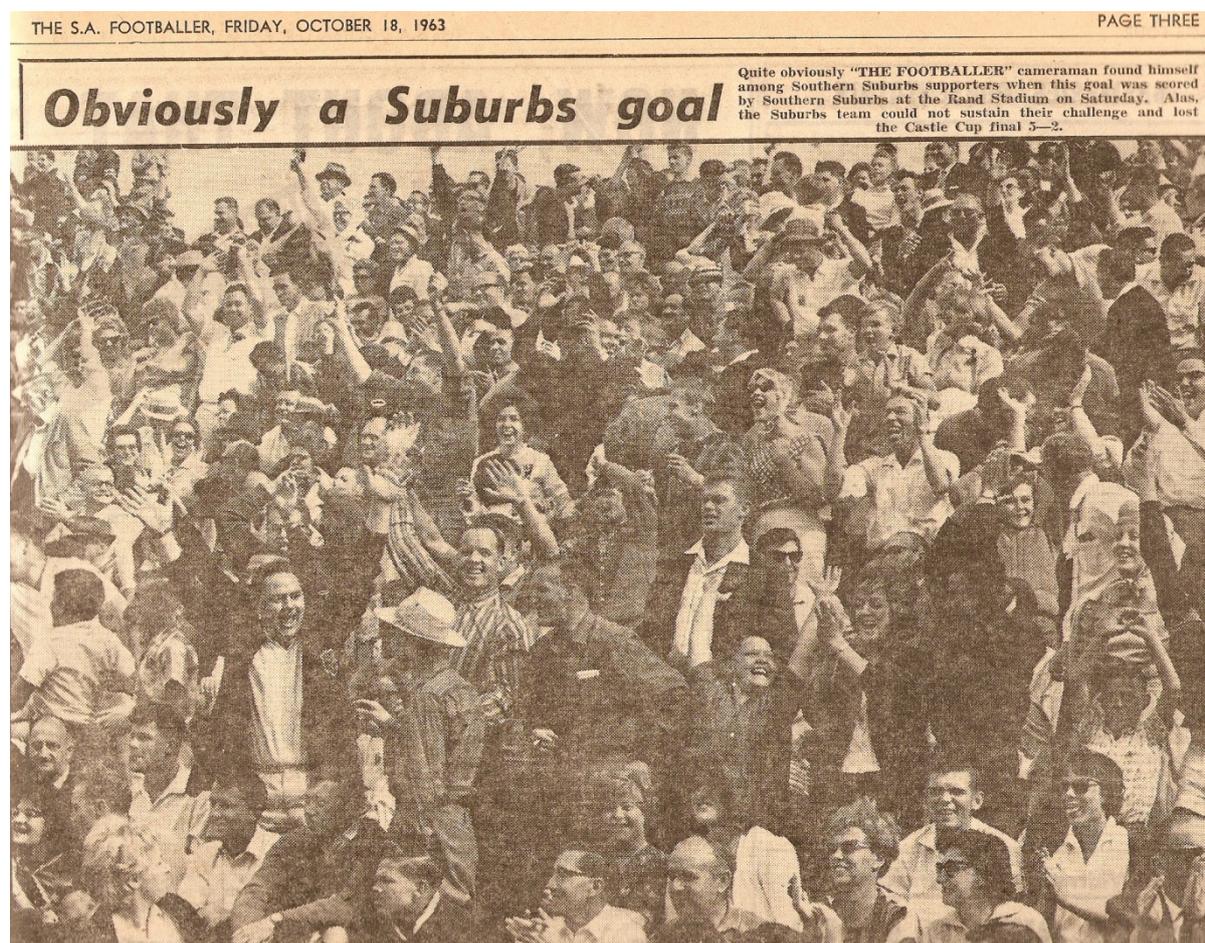


Figure 2.1 – The growing popularity of the professional game: Southern Suburbs supporters cheer a goal in the 1963 Castle Cup final against Addington. The latter won the encounter 5–2.⁴¹

The majority of players and officials were white English-speaking South Africans, although the game was also popular among some members of the white Afrikaans-speaking

³⁹ Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 217–9 and Eric Litchfield, *Eric Litchfield's Book of Soccer* (Johannesburg: Hugh Keartland, 1965), 121.

⁴¹ From *The S.A. Footballer*, October 18, 1963, 3, as contained in Julian Turner, *The History of South African Football 1955–1985: Segregation to Integration, Part 1*, DVD-ROM Disc 4, 2012.

community. Players and supporters generally came from working-class backgrounds. Whereas the NFL was a “whites-only” league it is important to note that some clubs in Natal and the Cape had significant Indian and coloured support at their respective matches. These were played in segregated stadiums in line with the apartheid-era practice of allocating separate public amenities to the different race groups.⁴² The role of individuals from immigrant backgrounds should also be noted. Clubs such as Johannesburg-based Rangers, Jewish Guild and the powerful Highlands Park outfit were owned by members of the South African Jewry, while Hellenic in Cape Town and Lusitano in Johannesburg were owned and supported by members of the respective Greek and Portuguese communities in those centres.⁴³

Attendances continued to rise throughout the 1960s (see Figure 2.2 below) as both FASA and the NFL presided over a period of growth within white football nationally. It is worth noting that this occurred on the backdrop of significant economic growth experienced in South Africa throughout the decade.⁴⁴ Eric Litchfield summarised the situation in July, 1963, by stating that the professional game had “swept through the country like a veld fire”.⁴⁵ He even went as far as to describe its introduction as “the greatest success story in the history of South African sport”.⁴⁶ Seven years later at FASA’s 1970 AGM its president, Dave Marais (who was also the chairman of the NFL), described 1969 as having been “one of the Association’s best years”.⁴⁷ Reference was made to healthy attendance figures at league matches and FASA’s improved financial position, with accumulated funds of R52,000 having been built up despite the fact that no incoming touring teams had visited South Africa since the association’s suspension from FIFA in 1964.⁴⁸ Other positive developments included support from various sponsors such as the South African Breweries and the United Tobacco Company, the appointment of a director of coaching, the hosting of various coaching courses nationally as well as visits by international referees to South Africa.⁴⁹ During the same meeting Granger also claimed that football was by this time “the most popular sport in South Africa”.⁵⁰ While this claim is debatable given that the exact basis and context for this statement is not included in the minutes, it does indicate that white football (and in particular

⁴² For a detailed discussion on spectatorship within the NFL see Chris Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa: Leisure, Consumption and Identity in the National Football League, 1959–1977,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, 16 (2013): 1951–3.

⁴³ Jack Milner, “Tracing the Jewish footprint in SA football,” *Sports Mad! Jews, Soccer & Sport: A supplement compiled by the SA Jewish Report*, June 18–25, 2010, 1–III and Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 131, 187.

⁴⁴ Albert Grundlingh, “‘Are We Afrikaners Getting too Rich?’ Cornucopia and Change in Afrikanerdom in the 1960s,” *Journal of Historical Sociology* 21, 2–3 (2008): 144.

⁴⁵ Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun*, 4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁷ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1970, 1, FASA papers.

⁴⁸ The suspension from FIFA is detailed in a separate section further below.

⁴⁹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1970, 2–3, FASA papers.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

its professional arm which was being readily supported by the sporting public at this time) had reached a prominent place within the South African sporting landscape.

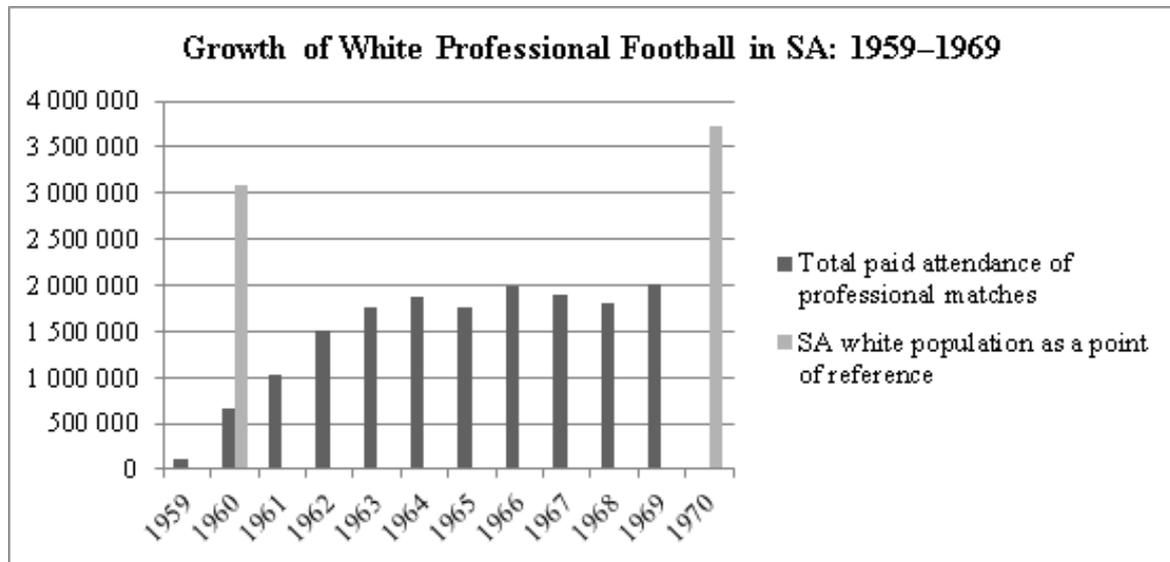


Figure 2.2 – Total paid attendances in white professional football, 1959–69.⁵¹

The British Influence

South African (white) football had a longstanding connection with Britain prior to the arrival of professionalism in 1959. This connection began with SAFA's original affiliation to the English FA in 1897, after which a number of incoming and outgoing tours followed over the course of the following 67 years. Individual South African players also began playing professionally in Britain during the 1930s and 1950s, with those returning being in a position to impart knowledge gained abroad.⁵²

During the early days of professional football in South Africa there was already a realisation that "new blood would be necessary in the future to maintain the growing interest of the public".⁵³ The words of one club committee member reflected a widespread notion: "My idea is for each club to introduce one experienced player – a player-coach – and one or two other young players with full-time professional experience into each professional side".⁵⁴ This laid the platform for an increasing foreign influence that would filter into the NFL over the coming years. In addition a few clubs – wanting to capitalise on the early momentum experienced with the introduction of professional football – managed to recruit high profile British players

⁵¹ Compiled from Woods, S.A. *Book of Soccer 1974*, 50 and Merle Lipton, "The SA Census and the Bantustan Policy," *The World Today* 28, 6 (1972): 258.

⁵² Bolsmann, "White football in South Africa," 30–4.

⁵³ Granger, *The World Game*, 101.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

on a short-term basis to play as “guests” in South Africa. The three biggest names that were lured to the NFL during the first two seasons were Billy Wright (1959) and Stanley Matthews (1960) – both of whom played for Rangers – as well as Tom Finney (1960) who played for Brothers.⁵⁵ Both clubs were based in Johannesburg.

The visits by these three ageing star players during the early days of professional football in South Africa assisted in providing the clubs in question, as well as the NFL as a whole, with initial impetus and publicity. Matthews’s visit, for example, was met with great fanfare and it did not take long for an immediate impact to be felt – this despite the fact that he was “slowing up” by this time (he was 45 years old no less!). His second league match for Rangers, for example, produced a record NFL league match attendance (at the time) of 17,000 at the Old Kingsmead Stadium in Durban – this after Durban United, hosts of the fixture, had shifted the encounter away from their smaller home venue of Hoy Park to accommodate the large expected turnout.⁵⁶ However, the costs involved in these ventures – Wright was purported to have received a payment of £1,000 and rumour placed Matthews’s figure at just over £2,000⁵⁷ – obviously meant that such moves were unsustainable over a longer period of time. As a result the policy of importing short-term “guest” players with similarly high profiles to those of the aforementioned three names would lie dormant for the remainder of the decade, only to emerge again during the 1970s due to factors that will be discussed elsewhere.

It is important to note, however, that British (and other foreign players) of lesser fame and stature would steadily flow into the league during the course of the 1960s on either a longer term or permanent basis, thereby creating an environment with a distinct British flavour. In this regard Bolsmann points out that 75% of the league’s players were foreigners, mostly “recruited from the lower leagues of English and Scottish professional football”.⁵⁸ Foreign coaches also entered the league and at the 1964 FASA AGM it was reported that “the standard of [South African] football [was] certainly improving since the introduction by certain [c]lubs of importing coaches from overseas”.⁵⁹

Structural Weaknesses of the NFL

Despite the growth experienced by the NFL during the first ten years of its existence, an

⁵⁵ Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa,” 1950.

⁵⁶ Granger, *The World Game*, 173.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 108, 179.

⁵⁸ Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa,” 1954.

⁵⁹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1964, 3–4, FASA papers.

argument will be made for the presence of certain sporting and administrative factors – practically from the advent of professional football – that created notable structural weaknesses within the league. Furthermore it will be argued that these weaknesses left the NFL vulnerable to macro level changes within South Africa – both on and off the football pitch – that occurred from the 1970s onwards. These changes would ultimately play a decisive role in the league’s decline and eventual disbandment after its 1977 season.

(1) Access to a Limited Youth Player Base

As far as the early spread of football within South Africa is concerned it is notable that by 1914 the sport had not been taken up “with enthusiasm” by (white) schools in the Western Province.⁶⁰ This is the region that formed the backbone of the former Cape Colony. Lloyd Hill points to the significance of this development in that the education system of this province would become the “blueprint for the national education system that emerged” after the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.⁶¹ Football subsequently became a largely marginalised sport within the national schools setup – a state of affairs which was lamented by SAFA at its 1928 AGM where the situation was described as “unfortunate and regrettable”.⁶²

This marginalisation in white schools occurred along class and language lines. Rugby was the winter sport of choice in Afrikaans-language high (secondary) schools. In this regard Grundlingh states that “with the rise of organised Afrikanerdom and an assertive middle class, soccer’s working class origins were frowned upon”.⁶³ This class prejudice was also evident in elite and private English-language schools. The situation in predominantly English-speaking Natal is particularly noteworthy since this province “quite naturally took up the sporting traditions identified with the British national character, *i.e.* amateurism and teammanship”.⁶⁴ Thompson points out that the phenomenon of “athleticism”, which emerged subsequent to the introduction of games in the curriculum of the British public school, “is associated with a system of symbols and rituals involving ‘manly’ games, notably rugby – never soccer – and cricket”.⁶⁵ In this regard football was “rooted out deliberately” in

⁶⁰ H.P. Swaffer, *South African Sport*, 73, as cited in Hill, “Football as code,” 23.

⁶¹ Hill, “Football as code,” 23.

⁶² Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 32.

⁶³ Albert Grundlingh, “Playing for power: Rugby, Afrikaner nationalism and masculinity in South Africa,” in *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, by Albert Grundlingh, André Odendaal, and Burr ridge Spies (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1995), 116–7.

⁶⁴ Paul Thompson, “Schools, Sport and Britishness: Young White Natal, 1902–1961,” *South African Historical Journal* 45, 1 (2001): 240.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 241.

some elite Natal schools during the early parts of the twentieth century.⁶⁶

In the Transvaal football at times faced a similar uphill battle in high schools. The formation of the Transvaal High Schools' Soccer League in 1951 represented the first organised football league for high schools "for at least twelve years".⁶⁷ This was described as a "Back to Soccer" movement and seen as "a step in the right direction" as "...many of the High Schools, particularly the larger ones, were able to provide their pupils with both codes as official school games".⁶⁸ From an overall perspective Bolsmann highlights the working-class base of white football in South Africa by stating that "significant numbers of English-language state schools in working-class neighbourhoods across the country played football".⁶⁹ This statement resonates with Nauright's assertion that football "was the one sport played by whites that did not develop an elite white following".⁷⁰

By the time professional football arrived in South Africa the issue relating to schools football was still of particular concern to FASA. At the amateur controlling body's 1960 AGM the president, Fred Fell, mentioned that professional clubs each had "a grave duty" to "sponsor and help financially" the various amateur associations and junior structures since all professional footballers passed through that "nursery".⁷¹ Fell was commenting in the wake of the turbulent change which had occurred within South African football with the arrival of professionalism, and was at this stage primarily concerned with the protection of the longstanding amateur structures. It should be noted, however, that it was in the professional teams' own best interests to nurture these structures, particularly bearing in mind the limited player base at their disposal due to the subordination of football within schools nationally.

The NFL seemed to take heed of Fell's message and by 1964 FASA was full of praise for the professional league's efforts to not only create a harmonious working relationship between the two entities, but also to plough finances into amateur football. The treasurer's report at FASA's 1964 AGM is insightful in this regard:

The bulk of [FASA's] income in 1963 was derived from our match against the Tottenham Hotspur F.C. in Johannesburg on June 13th, 1963. To say that the gesture on the part of the National Football League in allocating this game to our Association was magnanimous [*sic*] is but an understatement. The match

⁶⁶ Thompson, "Schools, Sport and Britishness," 243.

⁶⁷ Dan Stalson, "Transvaal High Schools' Soccer League," in *The History of the Southern Transvaal Football Association*, edited by John Sinclair (Johannesburg: Southern Transvaal Football Association, 1983), 38.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 38–9.

⁶⁹ Bolsmann, "Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa," 1952.

⁷⁰ John Nauright, *Sport, Cultures and Identities in South Africa* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 104.

⁷¹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 5, 1960, 2, FASA papers.

in Johannesburg against this world-renowned [club] was obviously the showpiece of the tour and for the National Football League to offer this match to our Association further underline [*sic*] the complete harmony, understanding and co-operation which exists between our two Associations today. There is no doubt that this has been the most successful football promotion, both financially and otherwise, ever staged by our Association.⁷²

The promotion of football within schools would, however, continue to remain a challenging aspect to FASA. In 1967 the association began laying the ground work for the possible introduction of a national tournament for high school teams the following year. Circulars were sent to potentially interested high schools as suggested by the divisional associations, but the response was poor, with only sixteen schools (eleven in the Transvaal, three in the Cape and two in the Orange Free State) indicating a willingness to participate as opposed to twenty-two declining involvement.⁷³ This brought about a decision six weeks later to postpone the tournament proposal to an undetermined future date.⁷⁴ It would take a further five years for a national high schools tournament to come to fruition with Pro Nutro sponsoring the inaugural event in 1972. FASA president, Dave Marais, reflected on these developments in his report to the 1973 FASA AGM by stating that “one of the weaknesses of [football in South Africa] was that there was not enough [football] at high school level”.⁷⁵ This state of affairs meant that NFL clubs would, throughout the duration of the league’s existence, have access to a limited youth player base – a factor that would limit the league’s potential.

(2) Inequality between Clubs

While the NFL certainly experienced significant success during the first ten years of its existence it should be noted that, as far as the participating clubs were concerned, it was essentially characterised by inequality from the outset. The fact that each club was responsible for financing itself led to a Darwinian “survival of the fittest”⁷⁶ model which placed pressure on the smaller clubs – not only in terms of retaining their places in the NFL’s first division, but also in terms of sustaining their very existence in some cases. The end of the NFL’s first season in 1959, for example, saw two clubs disbanding, namely Pretoria City and Maritzburg Celtic.⁷⁷ After the 1962 season two more teams, namely Ramblers and Iscor, were involved in subsequent mergers after being relegated that year.⁷⁸ Apart from these

⁷² Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1964, 6, FASA papers.

⁷³ Minutes, FASA Meeting of the Officers, October 19, 1967, 2, FASA papers.

⁷⁴ Minutes, FASA Meeting of the Officers, December 7, 1967, 2, FASA papers.

⁷⁵ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 10, 1973, 3, FASA papers.

⁷⁶ Granger, *The World Game*, 47.

⁷⁷ Litchfield, *Goals in the Sun*, 217.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 219.

extreme cases of failure the league itself also constantly changed in size. During the period 1959–72 the number of teams in the first division never remained constant for more than two seasons at a time. Having started with only twelve teams in 1959, the total quickly swelled to eighteen by 1962, after which it steadily decreased to fourteen by 1968 before eventually stabilising somewhat at fifteen in 1972.⁷⁹ This points to a degree of structural instability within the NFL from the outset and lends support to the notion that it was impossible to sustain the initial growth of the league over time. In this regard the ideal size of the first division was a pressing question, particularly during the early years when at times it was felt that there were too many teams within the top tier.⁸⁰

The reality was that only a core group of top end clubs provided consistency and stability within the league. These were initially located along the Transvaal-Natal axis and included the likes of Johannesburg-based Highlands Park and Rangers, Arcadia Shepherds (Pretoria), Germiston Callies, as well as Durban City and Durban United. The last five names constitute the five founding clubs that were present in the league throughout its entire lifespan. Highlands Park missed only the inaugural season (it was formed in 1960),⁸¹ but would go on to become the most successful team in the league by claiming a total of eight league titles – four more than next best Durban City. These six teams were soon also joined by two Cape Town-based clubs, namely Cape Town City (1962) and Hellenic (1964), and together this grouping would provide the spine for professional white football in South Africa. Derby encounters between these sides were particularly popular, with a 1964 Castle Cup quarterfinal between the two Durban-based teams drawing around 34,000 spectators for example.⁸²

The same cannot be said of the teams outside of this small core group of clubs. Their collective plight in fact led to a proposal for revenue sharing in 1973, whereby 30% of competition prize money would potentially be pooled centrally and distributed evenly among all NFL teams. Ed Gray, editor of the *South African Soccer Weekly* magazine at the time, provides an insightful look at this unbalanced situation:

It is obvious that the less endowed clubs have got to receive some financial help if they are to survive and the league is to remain a national one. East London United and Port Elizabeth City stage a battle for survival every year. There are others who keep going by the generosity of enthusiastic supporters and sponsors. Fortunate clubs like Durban City, Durban United, Hellenic,

⁷⁹ From league tables published in Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 67–164.

⁸⁰ Litchfield, *Eric Litchfield's Book of Soccer*, 85–7.

⁸¹ Granger, *The World Game*, 140.

⁸² Litchfield, *Eric Litchfield's Book of Soccer*, 103.

Cape Town City, can draw their crowds from other races than Whites. Berea Park and Arcadia Shepherds, for example, are restricted to Whites. It is an uneven state of affairs...Thirty per cent may be too high a figure to take away from the sponsored competitions prize money, but certainly something must be done to help the 'have not's' in their gallant efforts to keep going. If it is not then the national league will consist of two clubs in each of Natal, Western Province and the Transvaal...⁸³

It can therefore be argued that the inequality that existed between the NFL's constituents created a degree of vulnerability that would later become very problematic once certain decisive forces began to impact on the league.

(3) International Isolation

The racial segregation which characterised South African society, and which had already been present long before the National Party came into power in 1948, was also reflected on the sports field. The formation in 1897 of the South African Coloured Rugby Football Board – “the first black national sports body” – and in 1903 of the South African Indian Football Association – the first national football association for a race group other than white – represent early developments towards the racial balkanisation of South African sport.⁸⁴ By the 1950s “there were up to four national federations in each sport, each with an independent organizing body, separate finances and facilities and competitions”.⁸⁵ It was not until 1956, however, that an official government policy on sport was formulated. In a statement to the media the minister of the interior, Dr T.E. Dönges, “declared that sport would remain segregated and that inter-racial competitions were prohibited in South Africa”.⁸⁶ According to Archer and Bouillon the significance of this policy relates to the fact that it was introduced because “black organisations were beginning successfully to contest the hegemony of white federations and to demand national and international recognition”.⁸⁷

South African football, in particular, became an arena of intense contestation during this time. At the forefront of the challenge being made against the white-controlled SAFA was the anti-apartheid South African Soccer Federation (SASF) – formed in 1951 by the South African African Football Association, the South African Coloured Football Association and the aforementioned South African Indian Football Association.⁸⁸ The next ten years saw a

⁸³ Ed Gray, “Split the Prize Money,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, May 3, 1973, 3.

⁸⁴ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 18.

⁸⁵ Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London: Zed Press, 1982), 153, as cited in Alegi, *Laduma!*, 106.

⁸⁶ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 37.

⁸⁷ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 150.

⁸⁸ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 36.

bitter battle for control over South African football as the SASF applied for FIFA membership on multiple occasions (1952, 1954, 1958 and 1960) and attempted to have SAFA expelled from world football's governing body.⁸⁹ The South African issue became an increasingly pressing matter on the latter's agenda, resulting in a FIFA commission of inquiry (headed by Dutchman K.L. Lotsy) visiting South Africa in 1956.⁹⁰ However, FASA (as SAFA had become known in March, 1957)⁹¹ was able to stave off any immediate expulsion through the implementation of certain cosmetic changes such as incorporating other racially defined associations as non-voting "associate members" and offering them stadiums, coaching and the possibility of overseas tours.⁹² The SASF's efforts would ultimately prove successful, however, as South Africa's deteriorating international position resulted in FASA's suspension from FIFA in September 1961.⁹³

This dramatic development coincided with the early days of professional football in South Africa. This meant that no teams from other FIFA member nations would be permitted to tour South Africa, and *vice versa*. This would ultimately have a detrimental impact on the finances of both FASA and the NFL, severely limiting both organisations' income potential. The white authorities did receive a temporary reprieve in January, 1963, however, when FASA's suspension was suddenly lifted by FIFA. This occurred in the wake of another delegation, headed by the FIFA president Stanley Rous (who was elected in 1961), having visited South Africa earlier that month and compiled a report stating that "there [was] no wilful [*sic*] discrimination on the part of FASA in respect of any organization in South Africa" and that "FIFA should not interfere with the internal affairs of any country".⁹⁴ The suspension was ultimately re-imposed by 48 votes to 15 at FIFA's Tokyo congress in October, 1964, after a debate which took place "in the most acrimonious of circumstances".⁹⁵

Despite being ostracised internationally from that point onwards – culminating in a complete expulsion from FIFA at the latter's July, 1976, Montreal congress⁹⁶ – the intervening months during the 1963–4 period did provide a notable window of opportunity for some high profile incoming tours to take place. FASA and the NFL made full use of this opportunity as A.C. Cerro of Uruguay (1963), Tottenham Hotspur (1963), Arsenal (1964), Eintracht Frankfurt

⁸⁹ Bolsmann, "White football in South Africa," 36–7 and Paul Darby, "Stanley Rous's 'Own Goal': Football Politics, South Africa and the Contest for the FIFA Presidency in 1974," *Soccer & Society* 9, 2 (2008): 261–3.

⁹⁰ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 112.

⁹¹ Bolsmann, "White football in South Africa," 37.

⁹² Alegi, *Laduma!*, 114.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁹⁴ Darby, "Stanley Rous's 'own goal'," 265.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 266.

⁹⁶ Alegi and Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity," 7.

(1964) and Real Madrid (1964) all visited South Africa during that period.⁹⁷ Notably Matt Busby's Manchester United team was also scheduled to tour South Africa in 1965 before the FIFA suspension was re-imposed.⁹⁸ The importance of these tours from a financial perspective can be gleaned from the minutes of the 1964 FASA AGM. A summary of the association's financial situation at that point in time is worth quoting at length:

You will observe from the accounts in your possession that the finances of your Association have improved considerably during the past year. Our surplus funds have increased by R17,724 from R1,405 in 1962 to R19,129 in 1963...But, gentlemen, even though this is most gratifying, it should be noted that the major portion of the increase in our surplus funds was due to a source of income, namely, profit on tours, which may dry up on us. Excluding the profit made on tours our income exceeded our expenditure by only R605...Here I must sound a note of caution. Until such time as we are completely assured of our membership of F.I.F.A. we must deal with our surplus funds with the utmost conservatism.⁹⁹

One year later the situation had progressed further. The three high profile tours of 1964 had brought a profit of R33,519 – an amount which included an entertainment tax refund of R26,131. This helped grow FASA's surplus funds to a total of R47,128. Factored into that tally was an excess of expenditure over other income of R6,704 – a situation described as “rather disturbing” bearing in mind that the FIFA suspension had again taken effect a few months previously, thereby severing all potential income from overseas tours for the foreseeable future.¹⁰⁰ Whereas the aforementioned financial figures pertain specifically to FASA, it should be noted that the resulting financial constraints imposed by international isolation on the umbrella body would undoubtedly also have impacted on the NFL. The 1963 Tottenham Hotspur tour, for example, was initiated by the league itself with only a portion of the income, as noted earlier, flowing to FASA. Consequently the limited scope for income generation would hang like the sword of Damocles over the NFL for the duration of its existence.

(4) Operational Challenges

Another factor worth considering as part of an analysis into the NFL's structural weaknesses relates to certain regional operational challenges. Two notable examples stand out in this regard. Firstly, the dominant position of the Transvaal within the NFL landscape meant that at times there was an oversupply of Johannesburg-based clubs within the league. This

⁹⁷ Bolsmann, “White football in South Africa,” 33.

⁹⁸ Minutes, FASA Executive Meeting, September 8, 1964, 2, FASA papers.

⁹⁹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 7, 1964, 5, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1965, 5, FASA papers.

intensified the competition over the regional football support base and also resulted in regional fixture congestion on Saturday afternoons in the province. Vivian Granger, the league's general manager, shed light on these challenges in a 1971 opinion article published in *Ball and Turf*, the NFL's official mouthpiece. During that season the NFL's first division contained five teams from the greater Johannesburg area (Rangers, Germiston Callies, Highlands Power, Southern Suburbs and Jewish Guild). The fact that no sport was permitted on Sundays in the Transvaal at the time meant that all these teams had to contest their weekend home matches on Saturday afternoons. Clubs based in Natal did not share this problem since Sunday football was permitted there. Granger mentions how six years previously the NFL had already petitioned for the Transvaal legislation to change, but to no avail.¹⁰¹ A further challenge presented by the Transvaal was meteorological in nature – namely its cold winters. Consequently night football during June and July was to be avoided as a rule since “thousands refuse to budge from their fireplaces after dinner on the bitter cold night of a Transvaal winter”.¹⁰²

A second operational challenge within the NFL related to the coastal centres, namely the enormous travel distances that particularly Cape Town's two first division clubs, Cape Town City and Hellenic, had to undertake during the course of a normal season. The 1971 season, for example, would have seen each Johannesburg-based club travel approximately 5,460 kilometres in total for away matches, each Durban-based team approximately 7,027 kilometres, and each of the two Cape Town-based teams approximately 14,107 kilometres – a substantial increase compared to their rivals.¹⁰³ This reality was part of the reason why Ian Taylor, chairman of Cape Town City, was strongly opposed to a proposal for the inclusion of an additional NFL team for the 1973 season, citing extra travelling costs as a prohibitive factor: “The Durban and Transvaal teams are not involved in as much travelling as the two Cape Town clubs, and their expenditure for air travel is not as high as that of Cape Town City and Hellenic.”¹⁰⁴ Despite the existence of an “Air Lift Fund” within the NFL (collected through levies on adult tickets and contributions by travelling clubs)¹⁰⁵ to lessen the burden of air travel, the geographic situation still represented a distinct challenge in terms of the sustainability of the two Cape Town-based clubs as intimated by Taylor. Other coastal clubs such as Port Elizabeth City and East London United were also affected, particularly in light of changing economic conditions within South Africa during the 1970s – an aspect to be explored later.

¹⁰¹ Granger, “Three cures for Joburg's soccer ills,” *Ball and Turf*, August 11, 1971, 7.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Distances calculated using http://www.worldatlas.com/travelaids/flight_distance.htm (accessed August 25, 2013).

¹⁰⁴ Harold Butler, “Taylor Will Oppose 16-Team League,” *Ball and Turf*, August 23, 1972, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Granger, *The World Game*, 228.

A Turning Point

In the previous section it was argued that, despite the success experienced by the NFL during the first ten years of its existence (1959–1969), the league was vulnerable as a result of certain structural weaknesses sprouting from various sporting and administrative factors. The following section will argue that a changing South African landscape – not only in terms of football, but also the economy – would ultimately expose this vulnerability and play a significant role in the demise of the league. This occurred in spite of the fact that during the early 1970s some teams resurrected the earlier policy of signing high profile international stars on short term “guest” contracts as a means of generating publicity and boosting attendances.

The first warning signs regarding the health of professional white football in South Africa probably begin to appear in the minutes of the 1971 FASA AGM. In his president’s report Dave Marais mentions that attendances had dropped during the preceding 1970 season. The fact that the league had been downsized from sixteen teams to fifteen (thereby offering 30 fewer matches), coupled with a successful tour of South Africa by the New Zealand “All Blacks” rugby team as a rival attraction, were given as two possible reasons for this decline.¹⁰⁶ The third reason provided is the most insightful however: “...the South African [football] follower had become more selective and will only attend games where he feels the football is of a high calibre [*sic*], and worth the money he has spent.”¹⁰⁷ Marais’s statement alludes to two important aspects that play a role in the success or failure of any professional sports league, namely the quality of the play (or entertainment for an increasingly discerning audience) on offer as well as its affordability. It will be argued here that from the early 1970s onwards the NFL began to fail on both accounts.

High Profile Guests Return

Despite Dave Marais’s words of warning during FASA’s 1971 AGM, he did make reference to a notable development which had begun to emerge during the early parts of the 1971 season, namely the importation of overseas “stars” by certain NFL clubs. This was similar to the policy employed by Rangers and Brothers during the early years of professional football, only this time the clubs leading the way were Cape Town-based Cape Town City and Hellenic. Marais congratulated them on their “enterprise” and mentioned that “this was necessary to keep the interest of the South African spectators, as no overseas team could

¹⁰⁶ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1971, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

[do so at the time]” as a result of FASA’s suspension from FIFA.¹⁰⁸

A key figure behind this re-emergence of high profile “guests” was George Eastham, a non-playing member of England’s victorious 1966 World Cup squad. Eastham was recruited by Cape Town City on a short-term contract during the 1970 season and proved a “big attraction” during his stay. He proved to be the “forerunner” to an influx of similarly contracted players into the NFL in the coming seasons.¹⁰⁹ In 1971 he switched allegiances to Hellenic by taking up the reigns as player-manager – a role which saw him utilising his British connections to recruit other high profile stars to the club.¹¹⁰ In this regard he convinced two of his former World Cup team mates, namely Gordon Banks and Roger Hunt, to play for Hellenic as guests during 1971, and two Scottish internationals (Ian St. John and Billy Hunter) also played for the club that season on slightly longer contracts.¹¹¹

Developments at Cape Town City continued along a similar vein as England international, Francis Lee, and Scottish international, Peter Lorimer, both turned out as guests for the club in 1971.¹¹² England’s hero in the 1966 World Cup final, Geoff Hurst, also followed as a guest in 1973.¹¹³ It can be argued that these and other less high profile British signings helped to usher in a period of dominance for the two Cape Town-based clubs within the NFL as attendances boomed during this period and trophies soon followed. Towards the end of the 1971 season Ian Taylor, president of the Western Province Football Association (which owned Cape Town City), “confirmed that the scheme [of signing Lee and Lorimer] had been a success and was obviously a popular innovation as far as the public was concerned”.¹¹⁴ Despite the venture having been a “heavy expense” – something which was going to be reassessed – the two players “had pulled in extra crowds and had given spectators some idea of the skills required in top class soccer overseas”. Taylor also estimated that the team’s average attendance in 1971 was 17,200 spectators per match – up from 15,500 per match the previous year.¹¹⁵

A similar trend was reported at Hellenic when the club reached an aggregate attendance of 300,000 for the first time in its history in 1971 – in fact this was the first time the club had reached even 200,000 in a season. The popularity of football in the city at this time was also

¹⁰⁸ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1971, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁹ Eric Litchfield, *Cape Town City: The Story of Our Famous Club* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1972), 83.

¹¹⁰ Harold Butler, “Cape Clubs Plan Now For Next Year,” *Ball and Turf*, August 4, 1971, 6.

¹¹¹ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 129.

¹¹² Litchfield, *Cape Town City*, 84.

¹¹³ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 134.

¹¹⁴ Harold Butler, “Cape Town (Gates Up) Will Assess ‘Guest Star’ Policy,” *Ball and Turf*, September 8, 1971, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

evident when a Cape Town-record attendance of 32,899 was reported for the derby clash between the two teams at Green Point earlier in the season – a figure which was likely closer to 40,000 as hundreds of unpaid spectators flooded into the ground when a gate was pushed over.¹¹⁶ Hellenic continued to import big names during the 1970s – some of these included Bobby Moore (1974 and 1975), Jeff Astle (1974) and Alan Ball (for a full season in 1976).¹¹⁷

Other clubs also experimented with the guest policy which saw George Best play for Jewish Guild in 1974¹¹⁸ and Bobby Charlton play for Arcadia Shepherds in 1976.¹¹⁹ The arrival of Best in 1974 demonstrates the fact that at times the NFL itself made concerted efforts to acquire star players for the league as a whole. Dave Marais, chairman of the NFL, and Vivian Granger, the general manager, travelled to England in January, 1974, to gauge Best's potential interest in coming to South Africa as a guest player. Over the course of the next few months an agreement was reached with the Irish star, after which the NFL then offered his services to its clubs. Johannesburg-based Jewish Guild stepped forward with a sizeable financial commitment to take on the venture.¹²⁰ Best played four matches in South Africa, the first of which drew a Transvaal NFL record 31,000 spectators at the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg on the Republic Day holiday (May 31).¹²¹ In true Best fashion the icon created a media frenzy wherever he went – fuelled in part by the strange coincidence of having suffered sunstroke upon arrival and then being stalked at training by a notorious local stripper with the stage name Ultra Violet no less!¹²² Despite notable media attention regarding his “doubtful physical condition” at the time it was felt that the large turnouts at his matches were an indication of “how starved [the South African] soccer public [was] of big names”.¹²³

¹¹⁶ Harold Butler, “Cape Town (Gates Up) Will Assess ‘Guest Star’ Policy,” *Ball and Turf*, September 8, 1971, 4.

¹¹⁷ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 132–3.

¹¹⁸ “Best Promises Not To Let S.A. Down,” *Football & Turf*, May, 1974, 2.

¹¹⁹ Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa,” 1955.

¹²⁰ “Best Promises Not To Let S.A. Down,” *Football & Turf*, May, 1974, 2.

¹²¹ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 154.

¹²² Luke Alfred, “Best before,” *Sunday Times*, July 13, 2014, 9.

¹²³ “Editor’s Viewpoint,” *Football & Turf*, June, 1974, 8.



Figure 2.3 – George Best (left) in action as a guest player for Jewish Guild against Hellenic at the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg.¹²⁴

This aspect clearly became a concern to NFL management during the early 1970s. FASA's 1973 Annual Report, for example, makes reference to five British stars having been imported by the NFL during that season, with matches subsequently arranged in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town. Proceeds were then divided evenly between the fifteen first division clubs.¹²⁵ At this point it is important to note that in addition to the fair sprinkling of high profile short-term guest signings during the 1970s there was also a tradition since the league's inception of importing a slew of other longer term British imports of lesser quality. Over time this situation drew increasing amounts of criticism within media circles¹²⁶ – so much so in fact that by February, 1974, the NFL had instituted a sub-committee to look “into the question of limiting overseas players in the [league]”.¹²⁷ One of the recommendations made by this committee was for a minimum of three “South African players” to be fielded by each team throughout their first division matches¹²⁸ – a rather small requirement indicative of the extent to which the British influence extended into the NFL by this point. In this regard retrospective comments by Joe Frickleton, a Scottish professional that joined Highlands Park

¹²⁴ From Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 3.

¹²⁵ FASA, Annual Report, 1973, 6, FASA papers.

¹²⁶ Bolsmann, “Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa,” 1954.

¹²⁷ “Better Chance For S. Africans?” *Football & Turf*, February, 1974, 11.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

as a player in 1964 and went on to coach them during the final years of the NFL and beyond, are noteworthy:

In an attempt to recapture the lost fans who had been drifting away from the game, [the clubs] kept bringing out mediocre foreign players to boost the league. That failed dismally and the paying customers saw through that ruse. The fans wanted to see their local heroes, not pay good money to watch a bunch of very average foreigners taking over. The people simply stopped coming to our games.¹²⁹

Whether the importation of better quality players (had it been realistically possible) would have made a significant difference in sustaining the NFL is doubtful. However, the aforementioned sentiments provide valuable insight for analysing the declining health of the league over time – an issue which will be dealt with from this point onwards.

Decline of the NFL

After the success of the 1960s NFL attendances began to fluctuate during the early 1970s, with declines (compared to the previous year) reported in 1970 and 1972, followed by increases in 1971 and 1973 respectively. Thereafter an extended decline set in for each of the remaining four seasons (1974–7) with the final two years in particular seeing a precipitous drop of more than 300,000 spectators per year.¹³⁰ By 1974 the league management was clearly concerned over the health of the NFL as a special “post-mortem” general meeting was held to assess the decline in attendances that season. A special sub-committee was also appointed “to go into ways and means of improving the League”¹³¹ – a clear indication that all was not well. Three years later, however, FASA’s 1977 Annual Report ruefully conveyed that the NFL had suffered “a disastrous year in many respects, financially and otherwise”.¹³² Furthermore the report reflected with a touch of melancholy:

When it was formed in 1959 the League changed the face of South African soccer, but over the past ten years economic conditions, the desire of almost everybody for multi-racial soccer, television, and the dramatic events of 1977 gradually eroded its power as an entertainment. Before that the League was regarded as the biggest entertainment factor in the country outside of the cinema.¹³³

¹²⁹ Thami Mazwai, ed., *Thirty Years of South African Soccer* (Johannesburg: Mafube Publishing, 2003), 32.

¹³⁰ Figures obtained from FASA Annual General Meetings and Annual Reports, 1971–7, FASA papers. Unfortunately the FASA documents do not contain a full set of exact NFL attendance figures for each year comprising the period, sometimes only referring to the change compared to the previous season. This is due to the fact that the FASA documents were reliant on the reporting done by the NFL, which was not uniform from year to year.

¹³¹ FASA, Annual Report, 1974, 9, FASA papers.

¹³² FASA, Annual Report, 1977, 13, FASA papers.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

The 1977 season turned out to be the NFL's last as it was no longer able to withstand the impact that various macro level forces was having on the South African football landscape. This section will argue that two forces in particular, namely the decay of the league's entertainment value and South Africa's changing economic climate, exposed some of the NFL's structural weaknesses over time, thereby setting the stage for additional factors within the political domain to land the decisive blow. This latter dimension is explored in subsequent chapters.

(1) Decay of the League's Entertainment Value

Figure 2.4 indicates the decline in goal scoring within the NFL from its inaugural season – which provided a high of 5.30 goals per match – to its final season in 1977, which saw an all-time low of 2.37 goals per match being scored. Similar figures for the English top flight are provided as a point of reference. The potential existence of a link between this trend and the prevalence of British coaches within the league during the course of its life span is worth considering. Arthur Goldman, a contemporary commentator, noted in 1972:

No doubt about it – South African professional soccer is in the midst of a malaise...I refer...to the scoring paralysis which has crept upon us...In South Africa, the last couple of years have seen our foreign-born coaches introduce refinements of [defensive] play into the pro game here. Stakes, albeit smaller and less significant [than overseas], are still important in our context, and in a very tight league such as we have in the [NFL first division], it is essential not to drop more than one point a game.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Arthur Goldman, "Where Have All The Goals Gone?" *Ball and Turf*, August 30, 1972, 4.

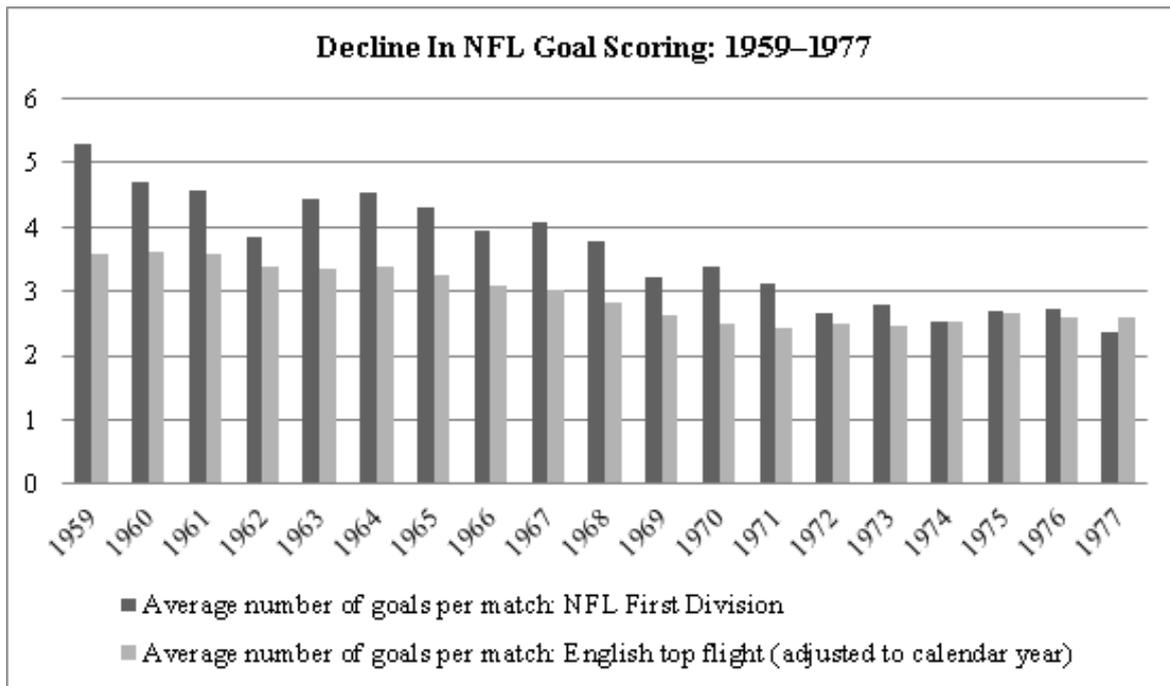


Figure 2.4 – Scoring Comparison between NFL and English Top Flight, 1959–1977.¹³⁵

By 1971 the lack of goal scoring in the NFL was already becoming a matter of concern to the league’s management, particularly in light of the fact that South African football followers “had become more selective” in terms of their match attendance.¹³⁶ Evidence of this concern can be found in the form of rule experiments proposed by the NFL for its 1971 Transvaal Summer League. These included a curtailed off-side law stating that an attacker could only be in an off-side position between the goal line and the front edge of the corresponding penalty area, as well as the introduction of “short corners”.¹³⁷ FIFA refused to grant permission for these proposed experiments to take place,¹³⁸ although two years later some experimentation was conducted with the off-side law (this time with FIFA’s permission) during the first round of the NFL’s Coca-Cola Shield competition in February 1973.¹³⁹ The league also introduced a sponsored cash prize of R3,000 designed to boost goal scoring for the 1972 season. The sponsor concerned (Monatic-Alba Ltd.) “decided to make this award in a bid to discourage clubs from following the pattern of football in many overseas countries where negative tactics [were] ruining the game as a spectacle”.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Compiled from league tables in Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 67–164, and data provided at David Bauer, “125 years of the Football League and the top flight – which team comes top?” <http://www.theguardian.com/football/datablog/2013/apr/17/football-league-125-years> (accessed August 27, 2013).

¹³⁶ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1971, 1, FASA papers.

¹³⁷ “Offside! Is it time to bring a change in the laws again?” *Ball and Turf*, August 25, 1971, 6.

¹³⁸ “Opinion...F.I.F.A.’s reply justified,” *Ball and Turf*, September 8, 1971, 5.

¹³⁹ “Off-Sides Reduced,” *Ball and Turf*, February 21, 1973, 1.

¹⁴⁰ “R3 000 Monatic Alba Award To Boost Goals,” *Ball and Turf*, February 16, 1972, 1.

During the same period some NFL coaches were also becoming concerned over the effect of the aforementioned tactical developments within the local ranks. Roy Bailey, coach of Southern Suburbs at the time, described the situation in 1971:

The game has become far too tight in the centre of the field, primarily because of the defensive approach introduced to prevent the other side from scoring...With the middle of the field effectively blocked at present, the only channel left open for attacking moves...is down both flanks...This particular breed of forward [one that can create openings from the touchline and also score goals by cutting infield himself] has disappeared from modern soccer, but his return on the wing would be my answer to opening up the play and making the game far more interesting as [a] spectacle.¹⁴¹

This defensive approach was indicative that the first priority for clubs was not to lose, as opposed to striving for wins. The fact that two league points were earned for a win and one for a draw facilitated this line of thinking. It is for this reason that leagues across the globe now offer three points for a win in order to encourage attacking play. The lack of goals in the NFL was in line with global trends at the time whereby safety-first tactics brought about a so-called “goal famine” world-wide.¹⁴² Ultimately this trend would continue throughout the remainder of the NFL’s existence, and it is therefore argued that this erosion of the “entertainment value” negated the short-term excitement and interest brought about by the aforementioned high profile guest signings by certain clubs during the 1970s.

(2) South Africa’s Changing Economic Climate

FASA’s 1971 AGM has been identified as potentially representing a turning point within white professional football in South Africa. As part of his report Dave Marais “informed the meeting that F.A.S.A. would have to watch its finances very carefully in the future as the economic climate was not good” and “recommended that clubs and Associations, professional and amateur, do everything in their power to boost their finances”.¹⁴³ In this regard Figure 2.5 partly contextualises what Marais was alluding to. South Africa’s inflation rate – as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) – began rising sharply from 1969 onwards, eventually reaching (and settling at) double digit rates towards the middle part of the 1970s, partly as a result of the 1973 international oil crisis.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Cash, “Roy Bailey in search for two wingers,” *Ball and Turf*, September 1, 1971, 4.

¹⁴² “Offside! Is it time to bring a change in the laws again?” *Ball and Turf*, August 25, 1971, 6.

¹⁴³ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1971, 3, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁴ Jeremy Wakeford, “The Impact of Oil Price Shocks on the South Africa Macroeconomy: History and Prospects,” paper presented at the TIPS/DPRU Forum, Johannesburg, South Africa, October 18–20, 2006, 99.

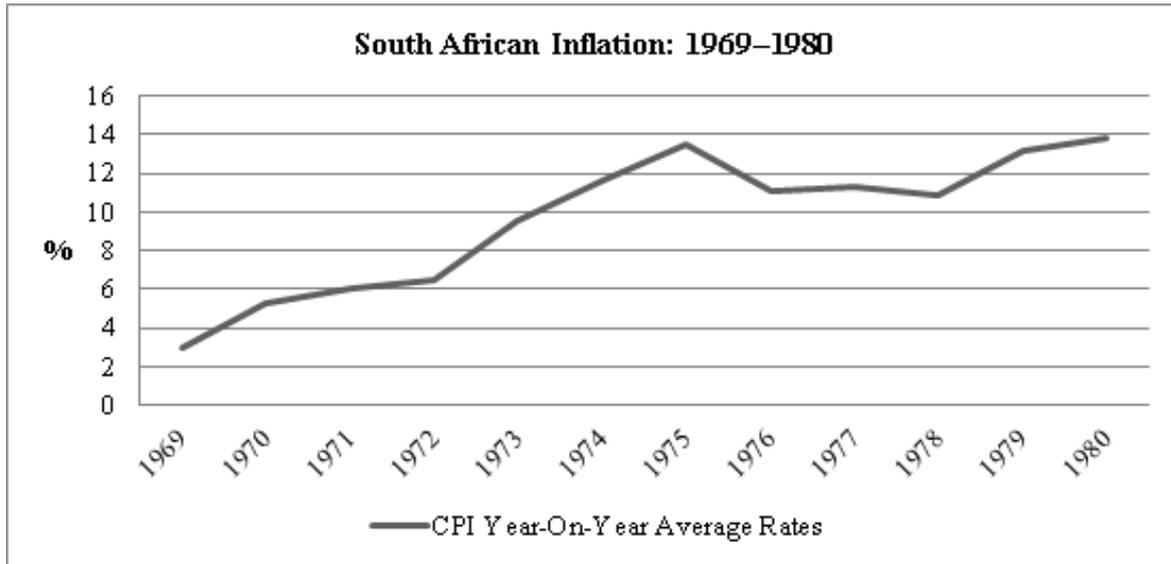


Figure 2.5 – Annual South African CPI Rates, 1969–1980.¹⁴⁵

As far as football was concerned the impact of these developments was certainly felt at administrative level, with FASA's financial report at its 1976 AGM indicating that, "because of inflation and increased costs, [the Association] might have to start dipping into its reserves".¹⁴⁶ More importantly, however, the rising costs also began to affect the football fan wanting to attend matches. In this regard there was furious resistance by Durban City and Durban United against a proposed increase in ticket prices for the 1974 season, with both club chairmen indicating that such an "increase would put their clubs out of existence as attendance in Durban had already been affected by increased charges".¹⁴⁷ During the same meeting Cape Town delegates indicated that ticket prices in their region would likely be increased "to meet the enormous air travel bills incurred in travelling regularly to Natal, Transvaal and the Eastern Cape".¹⁴⁸ These developments support an argument stating that rising inflation in South Africa during the 1970s applied two-pronged pressure on professional white football. Not only were NFL clubs forced to deal with rising operational costs which placed them under greater financial strain, but the man on the street was also being required to pay increased ticket fares resulting from the pressure felt by these clubs. When coupled with the decline in the entertainment value of the play on the field it can be argued that attending matches in the NFL became a less attractive proposition as the decade wore on. It is therefore suggested here that the fluctuation and eventual drop in attendance figures during the course of the 1970s came about largely as a result of the two

¹⁴⁵ Compiled from data provided at <http://www.statssa.gov.za/keyindicators/CPI/CPIHistory.pdf> (accessed August 27, 2013).

¹⁴⁶ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1976, 6, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁷ "Fiery N.F.L. General Meeting," *Ball and Turf*, November 30, 1973, 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

factors considered in this section.

Other Potential Factors Relating to Attendances

In addition to the previously highlighted developments (both on and off the field) some noteworthy supplementary factors are worthy of attention, particularly within the political domain. These are dealt with at length in the subsequent chapters, but necessitate a reference here as far as their purported relationship with decreasing NFL attendances is concerned. The introduction in 1971 of Prime Minister John Vorster's policy of "multinationalism"¹⁴⁹ constituted a response to South Africa's expulsion from the Olympic movement the previous year.¹⁵⁰ Alegi explains that in trying "to gain readmission into world sport, multinationalism tinkered with apartheid by allowing for the possibility of integrated national teams abroad and by permitting occasional matches in South Africa between representative teams from different racial groups – defined as 'nations' by apartheid orthodoxy".¹⁵¹

Within football this resulted in three notable multinational tournaments during the period 1973–5. The first two – namely the 1973 South African Games football competition and the 1974 Embassy Multinational Series – were played at "national" level and comprised of racially defined teams representing each race group. The third tournament – the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions competition – was played at club level and saw the best club teams from each race group battle it out for supremacy. These events are dealt with in detail in the following chapter, but at this stage it is worth pointing out that while they were certainly significant in the context of broader political developments within sport at the time, the actual tournaments comprised a small number of fixtures in total and were played over short periods of time. Alegi and Bolsmann are correct when they state that "large crowds watched these tournaments, which generated significant revenue and demonstrated that racially mixed football was popular".¹⁵² However, Bolsmann makes the argument that multinational football "also represented the demise of the NFL as crowds were no longer segregated which resulted in significantly fewer white fans attending professional matches".¹⁵³

This is problematic for the simple reason that multinational tournaments took place as

¹⁴⁹ The implementation of this policy and its effects on the South African football landscape are considered in Chapter 3.

¹⁵⁰ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 140.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Alegi and Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity," 6.

¹⁵³ Chris Bolsmann, "Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa," 1958.

additional events on the football calendar and that there is no evidence that arrangements regarding potential spectator integration were carried over into NFL league fixtures. The latter continued as per normal and as a result it cannot be argued that white spectators were driven away as a result of integration in the stands at league fixtures. Archer and Bouillon propose an alternative argument relating to the effect of multinationalism on white professional football: namely that the aforementioned tournaments in fact drew away black, coloured and Indian supporters from NFL matches since clubs representing the latter race groups were able to showcase their quality within the framework of multinationalism.¹⁵⁴ This is completely implausible since the first two multinational tournaments were not club-based and the third contained only two competitive black clubs, namely Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, which already had strong followings. In addition Archer and Bouillon also erroneously bracket SASF clubs within their argument¹⁵⁵ – this despite the fact that the SASF vehemently rejected the concept of multinationalism and refused to participate in these events.

Instead it is argued here that the advent of multinationalism does not explain the drop in NFL attendances during the mid-1970s. In this regard it is important to bear in mind that multinational tournaments were short-term events which did not function as like-for-like alternatives to watching league football. Their mere existence can therefore not be regarded as an alternative form of football entertainment over the long term. Consequently it is argued that the decline in the NFL's entertainment value, coupled with South Africa's deteriorating economic situation, together constitute a more plausible explanation for the loss of spectator support during this period. The significance of multinationalism is tied to the political undercurrents prevalent at the time and this aspect is analysed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The foundations of white professional football were not only weakened by declining attendances but also by a number of other factors to be explored at later junctures. The central aim of this chapter has entailed an analysis of the NFL's structure as a means towards establishing the context in which these factors influenced the league. In this regard it has been argued that certain structural weaknesses were present for the majority of the NFL's lifespan. These longstanding weaknesses comprised access to a limited player base, inequality between professional clubs, South African football's international isolation (which limited white football's income potential), as well as operational challenges pertaining to

¹⁵⁴ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 252–3.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 253.

specific regions. It has further been demonstrated that the player importation strategy employed by some clubs during the 1970s – while popular in the short-term – was unsuccessful in sustaining match attendances, and that the league's gradual erosion as a form of entertainment (due to defensive tactics) coupled with the changing economic climate within South Africa were important factors in supporters turning away from the white professional game.

Declining attendances ultimately exposed the NFL's vulnerability, thereby laying a platform for additional factors such as the rise of multinational football and other political and administrative developments to hasten the league's downfall. In the midst of a highly uncertain football (and political) environment the NFL was disbanded after its 1977 season. Five of its former clubs joined the National Professional Soccer League (NPSL, previously a black league) which became multiracial from that point onwards. Other teams opted for the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL) instead, but this experiment was short-lived and some of these teams either dropped out or migrated to the NPSL in 1979. The ensuing chapters offer a multifaceted analysis of the unpredictable context within which these changes occurred.

Chapter 3 – Moving the Goalposts: The Influence of the Multinational Sports Policy on White Professional Football, 1971–5

The preceding chapter's analysis of the NFL's decline emphasised factors outside the political realm, namely the league's declining entertainment value (primarily as a result of defensive tactics) as well as deteriorating economic conditions within South Africa at the time. Football administrators and observers were certainly aware of these factors and their potential negative impact on the NFL, and as a result efforts were made to counteract these forces through various measures, as previously discussed. What was perhaps less obvious at the time was the potential impact of a drastically shifting political landscape during the 1970s, particularly as it related to sport in general and football in particular. This chapter will extend the analysis of the NFL's decline into the political domain by considering the effects of the "multinational"¹ sports policy introduced by the Vorster government in 1971.

This policy provided a framework within which three notable multinational football tournaments took place during the period 1973–5, eventually culminating in multiracial matches being played at both international and club level towards the second half of the decade. These multinational tournaments are analysed in order to highlight their impact on the whites-only NFL, during a time when the league was already beginning to suffer as a result of factors previously analysed. FASA's 1977 Annual Report notably also refers to "the desire of almost everybody for multi-racial soccer" as one of the reasons for the league's eventual decline.² Consequently it is argued that the political dimension is an important axis of analysis when considering the context of this statement and the factors which led to the NFL's disbandment after the 1977 season.

The Genesis of Multinationalism

The increasing pressure directed towards South African sport during the late 1960s and early 1970s from within the international community was a byproduct of broader social and political trends internationally. Booth points to the fact that while "apartheid tightened during

¹ The term "multiracial" denotes activities in which South Africa's four racial groupings, namely Africans, coloureds, Indians and whites (as defined by the Population Registration Act of 1950), participated together. Standing in opposition to this is the term "non-racial", which represents a colour-blind concept rejecting the notion of racial groupings altogether. This distinction represents a notable historic fault line within latter twentieth century South African sport. Finally, the implication of the "multinational" sports policy was that South Africa's different "nations" – as defined under apartheid – could compete against each other in sport under certain conditions. This was in line with the apartheid doctrine of "separate development" and essentially entailed "partially mixed" sport. It was a precursor to "multiracial" (or "mixed") sport.

² FASA, Annual Report, 1977, 14, Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892–1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers).

the 1960s, other countries began dismantling racial policies and practices...In this new environment pressure mounted on the Republic to abandon racial practices".³ From a sporting perspective South Africa had been excluded from both the 1964 and 1968 Summer Olympic Games, eventually culminating in expulsion from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1970 – the first country to be dealt this fate.⁴ The Basil d'Oliveira affair, which saw the 1968–9 England cricket tour of South Africa cancelled on account of the apartheid government's refusal to accept a touring team that included a coloured cricketer formerly from Cape Town, served to focus further international attention on the situation in South Africa.⁵

Overseas cricket tours to England (1970) and Australia (1971) were also subsequently cancelled,⁶ while Springbok rugby tours to Great Britain (1969–70) and Australia (1971) were played on the backdrop of increasingly vociferous protest in those countries. During these latter tours "cordons of police kept thousands of protestors at bay, bloody clashes erupted between police and demonstrators, barbed wire encircled the playing fields, police guarded the [Springbok] team off the field, and trade unions refused to provide services".⁷ In the wake of this pressure the South African government reacted during the 1970s by amending certain apartheid restrictions previously applicable to sport, a move which Merrett describes as "the most visible sign of reform measures designed to show that apartheid had a legitimate future".⁸

The introduction of the multinational sports policy in April 1971 was the most notable reform measure within sport and represented an attempt "to satisfy both foreign opinion and the [overall government] policy of separate development".⁹ The three main threads of the policy, as summarised by Archer and Bouillon, comprised the following:

- 1) Mixed teams from countries which had traditional links with South Africa (the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, etc.) would be permitted to tour South Africa and to play, separately, against white teams and 'non-white' teams;

³ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 96.

⁴ Paul Anderson, "An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport (1970–1979)," (PhD Diss., Stellenbosch University, 1979), 72.

⁵ Christopher Merrett, "We don't Want Crumbs, We Want Bread': Non-Racial Sport, the International Boycott and South African Liberals, 1956–1990," *English Academy Review: Southern African Journal of English Studies* 27, 2 (2010): 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁷ Booth, *The Race Game*, 97.

⁸ Merrett, "We don't Want Crumbs, We Want Bread'," 85.

⁹ Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London: Zed Press, 1982), 210.

2) Black sportsmen affiliated to white federations would be permitted to take part, as individuals, in 'multi-national' competitions; within South Africa these would be strictly 'national' (race against race), but internationally (in the Davis Cup or the Olympic Games etc.) might take a relatively 'open' form;

3) No racial mixing would be permitted at provincial or club level.¹⁰

The policy reflected the National Party's belief that South Africa was a "confederation of nations" in which the identity of each individual nation was to be developed and preserved separately.¹¹ It "was the accommodation of this ideology within a sports framework".¹² Anderson aptly points out that due to the fact that these "nations were not defined by internationally recognisable boundaries, it was more correctly sport between distinct racial groups".¹³ The implementation of this policy paved the way for various multinational sport events to be organised within South Africa in subsequent years, some of which would have a notable impact on the football landscape nationally. As far as assessing the latter is concerned, a useful point of departure is the 1973 South African Games.

Multinational Football at the 1973 South African Games

The 1973 South African (Open International) Games was an Olympic-style multi-sport event held in Pretoria during the period 23 March to 7 April that year. Three similar events had previously been held in 1960 (Johannesburg), 1964 (also Johannesburg) and 1969 (Bloemfontein). In addition a South African Non-White Games (for Africans, Indians and coloureds) was hosted in Soweto in 1970.¹⁴ South Africa's expulsion from the IOC in 1970, coupled with the subsequent unveiling of the multinational sports policy the following year, drastically altered the nature and scope of the 1973 South African Games "from a national games to an open international games and an event of national interest".¹⁵ National controlling bodies were encouraged to invite a wide range of international competitors within their sporting codes "from as many countries as possible",¹⁶ and despite both internal and external protest – which led to various withdrawals – the event went ahead.¹⁷

¹⁰ Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 211.

¹¹ Booth, *The Race Game*, 101.

¹² Anderson, "An Investigation," 77.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For an overview of these previous incarnations of the South African Games see Carolina Nieuwenhuis, "n Historiese oorsig en sportkundige evaluering van die SA-Spele [a historical overview and sporting evaluation of the SA Games]," (Master's Diss., University of Potchefstroom, 1988), 54–144.

¹⁵ Nieuwenhuis, "n Historiese oorsig," 154.

¹⁶ Minutes, SAONGA Special Council Meeting, May 3, 1972, 2, Unsorted collection, Department of Sport Science, Stellenbosch University.

¹⁷ Anderson, "An Investigation," 103–4.

A total of 531 international competitors from 35 different countries competed in the event¹⁸ – almost four times the number that participated in the 1969 South African Games. The largest international contingents comprised competitors from West Germany (130), the United States (47) and Britain (40).¹⁹ In addition to the significant international flavour attached to the Games, the other major talking point was the participation of blacks, coloureds and Indians within the framework of multinationalism. A total of 71 blacks, 28 coloureds and 20 Indians competed at the Games, compared to 1,533 whites.²⁰ Despite this numeric discrepancy the mere presence of individuals from the race groups other than white at the event generated a great deal of media attention, particularly relating to the multinational football tournament which formed part of the programme.

As was the case with other sporting codes the Football Association of South Africa (FASA) – the controlling body for whites – extended invitations to international competitors or teams to participate in the Games. In football's case special dispensation was sought (and initially obtained) from FIFA for teams to be permitted in South Africa (FASA had already been under suspension from the international body since 1961, except for a short reprieve during the period 1963–4). Brazil, England and West Germany were invited to send amateur teams to South Africa to compete against the different multinational teams comprising South Africa's four racial groups.²¹ West Germany declined on account of other commitments, but Brazil and England each accepted on a provisional basis. However, upon further probing FIFA later withdrew its permission for these matches to take place, citing an erroneous interpretation of the term "multinational".²² With the possibility of including international teams now scuttled, a plea was made to the minister of sport, Dr. Piet Koornhof, to allow the multinational football tournament to proceed with the four racially defined teams – namely black (African), coloured, Indian and white – only.²³ Permission was granted and the football tournament proceeded on this basis. It proved to be both controversial and historic in terms of the broader football landscape.

Notable external resistance was directed towards the 1973 South African Games, primarily as a result of the efforts of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC). For example, in a circular sent to foreign sports bodies prior to the Games SANROC implored these organisations

¹⁸ Nieuwenhuis, "n Historiese oorsig," 150.

¹⁹ Anderson, "An Investigation," 104.

²⁰ Nieuwenhuis, "n Historiese oorsig," 164.

²¹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 10, 1973, 2, FASA papers.

²² Chris Bolsmann, "White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892–1977," *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 41.

²³ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 10, 1973, 2, FASA papers.

to refuse these invitations. We strongly urge you to dissuade your sportsmen from attending games that are tantamount to a political exercise. Such a participation would be seen as your tacit acceptance of racialism in sport and thus regarded as an insult to the dignity of Black Africa. It would inevitably lead to serious repercussions in your relations with African Olympic committees...²⁴

In addition there was also some internal opposition to the event from the other side of the political spectrum, namely the Afrikaner right. In this regard the “Verwoerd Action Committee”, a splinter group from the *Herstigte Nasionale Party* (Restored National Party, HNP), attempted to disrupt the event in its lead-up by distributing anti-Games flyers and engaging in other minor protest actions, including painting the word “SPORTVERRAAD” (sport treason) on the Magaliesberg in Mountainview, a suburb of Pretoria.²⁵ In light of these rumblings, and given the Black September attack at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games (which resulted in the deaths of a German police officer and eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team), organisers were forced to implement high level security measures for the duration of the 1973 South African Games. This was especially important given the large international contingent present at the event. What followed was a security screening process described as “...probably the most extensive ever devised on any occasion in South Africa’s history.”²⁶ This created a controlled environment in which the various sporting contests took place – an important consideration when assessing the multinational football tournament.

The South Africa Games commenced a few days before the football tournament itself and the initial reception was rapturous in some sections of the media, as the *Sunday Times* proudly announced that

...Multi-racialism stormed Pretoria, the stronghold of White South African nationalism, this week and the apparently insurmountable barriers created through apartheid laws crashed as bars, restaurants, hospitals, parks and sacrosanct playing fields were opened to non-Whites attending the South African Games...The million-rand Games, which are being staged under the sort of security blanket one might find at Fort Knox, mark a significant breakthrough in the Government’s sports policy, permitting for the first time in South Africa, contact sport between Blacks and Whites.²⁷

²⁴ Chris de Broglio, Untitled circular, February 8, 1973, 1, FASA papers.

²⁵ Nieuwenhuis, “n Historiese oorsig,” 147–8.

²⁶ Diana Powell, “Massive security check,” *Sunday Times*, March 25, 1973, 1.

²⁷ “The Great Games Breakthrough,” *Sunday Times*, March 25, 1973, 1.

The football publication, *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, also opined that the “competition could prove to be the key to the opening of the door of admission back to full time membership of the world ruling body FIFA”,²⁸ while the *Rand Daily Mail* pointed to the novelty of measuring different playing styles against one another for the first time:

For many years claims have been made about the strength of South African soccer. The Africans said they were the best. The Whites merely shrugged their shoulders, and claimed they would be too tactically advanced and experienced for the Black players. The moment of truth has arrived.²⁹

Anticipation in the black press also reached fever pitch, with the most popular black daily newspaper, *World*, pointing out that

although the S.A. Games officially kicked off in Pretoria on Friday [23 March 1973], for thousands of Blacks, the Games really start tonight with the soccer series...All soccer fans, both Black and White, will be closely watching the African XI. The whites would like to see just how good African players are while African fans want victory at all costs, to prove that without Africans, football in this country is in the doldrums.³⁰

The stakes were thus high for all parties involved – politicians, football administrators as well as supporters. As far as the latter were concerned there certainly seems to have been a great deal of “racial pride” at stake as well, as will be demonstrated below.

Outcome of Events on the Field of Play

The format of the football tournament was a two-pronged affair, comprising a round robin league competition between the four teams as well as a knock-out cup competition consisting of two semi-finals and a final. It was played at the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg over six consecutive days spanning the period Monday 26 March to Saturday 31 March 1973.³¹ It is important to note that teams were made up of amateur players³² and consequently the white side included only a few players that played in the NFL³³ (they were eligible on account of retaining their amateur status within the semi-professional league).

²⁸ Ed Gray, “S.A. Games could lead to bigger things,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, March 22, 1973, 3.

²⁹ Andre van der Zwan, “Soccer’s big kick-off today,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 26, 1973, 28.

³⁰ “Sports history will be made tonight,” *World*, March 26, 1973, 1 and 3.

³¹ The tournament was originally scheduled to be played at Pretoria’s largest rugby stadium, Loftus Versveld. However, shortly before the commencement of the South African Games, Koornhof announced that the cabinet had decided to move the tournament to the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg. The official reason provided was that most football supporters lived in Johannesburg and that the Rand Stadium was football’s home. It is likely, however, that the decision was influenced by activities of internal protest groups such as the Verwoerd Action Committee, although this was denied officially. See Nieuwenhuis, “n Historiese oorsig,” 199.

³² Vernon Woods, “The Ball is now with the World Body,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 12, 1973, 5.

³³ Ed Gray, “Whites Explode a Myth,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 5, 1973, 3.

The coloured and Indian sides were unable to call on top players competing in the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL) affiliated to the South African Soccer Federation (SASF). In this regard the league threatened its players with lifetime bans were they to take part in the multinational tournament.³⁴ This was in line with the non-racial movement's vociferous rejection of multinationalism as an affirmation of the government's racist policies. Consequently these two sides were seen as largely under strength and unrepresentative of their respective racial groups. The black (African) side was, "barring a few inexplicable decisions by the selection panel",³⁵ regarded as a closer representation of the top players within this racial group.

The opening day of the tournament saw an estimated 15,000 spectators³⁶ attend the double-header in which the whites prevailed against the coloureds 4-0 and the blacks defeated the Indians 5-0. Spectators were segregated and also used separate, but unmarked, gates.³⁷ Gate markings were removed in order to downplay the apartheid practice of allocating separate amenities for the different racial groups. In light of this both the prevailing mood and realities at the time are neatly captured by the following anecdote recounted in the *Rand Daily Mail*. It occurred at Gate 6 prior to kick-off when

...hundreds of Blacks queued before being told it was a 'White' gate. Tempers grew short before Mr. Percy Tucker, manager of Computicket [a ticket distribution outlet], came out to escort them to a 'Black' entrance. As he led the way a policeman said: 'Follow the *baas*.' [Afrikaans term for *boss*, but more accurately interpreted as *master*]. Came the quick retort from a Black spectator: 'At the Games, there's no *baas*. We're all gentlemen.'³⁸

As was to be the case with subsequent multinational tournaments the biggest drawcard proved to be the black against white encounters, and when these two teams met in pouring conditions the following day an estimated 40,000 spectators crammed into the Rand Stadium to witness the historic occasion.³⁹ The white side won 4-0 and went on to claim the league competition by winning all three their matches without conceding a goal.⁴⁰ *World* despondently reflected on the first result:

Africa wept last night at the Rand Stadium. Not even the singing of the national anthem 'Nkosi Sikele i-Afrika' helped when the South African Black

³⁴ Ed Gray, "Whites Explode a Myth," *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 5, 1973, 3.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ "Games Soccer should be Annual Affair," *Ball and Turf*, March 28, 1973, 1.

³⁷ Chris Day, "Kickoff into new era for sport," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 27, 1973, 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.* Italics used by author.

³⁹ Vernon Woods, "The Ball is now with the World Body," *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 12, 1973, 5.

⁴⁰ FASA, Annual Report, 1973, 8, FASA papers.

XI went down 4-0 against the White XI. On the shoulders of the 11 brave young men had lain the hopes of 18 million Africans.⁴¹

The whites repeated their win over the black side the following Saturday in the final of the cup competition (3-1) – this time with around 38,000 spectators in attendance.⁴² The total attendance figure for the week-long tournament amounted to over 99,000 – something which was seen as a notable success given the “unfavourable weather conditions” experienced at the time.⁴³ Much was also made of “the fact that not a single incident either on or off the field took place” during the tournament⁴⁴ – undoubtedly in part due to the strict security presence. These strictly controlled conditions possibly included the regulation of events on the field of play as well. According to the football observer and statistician, Vernon Woods: “It was obvious that all the players had been briefed to at least play like gentlemen – lifting each other after being laid low with a handshake to match. Soccer is not normally so played.”⁴⁵ It is important to bear this in mind when considering subsequent multinational football tournaments in 1974 and 1975.

⁴¹ Leslie Sehume, “Black XI goes down fighting,” *World*, March 28, 1973, 1.

⁴² Vernon Woods, “The Ball is now with the World Body,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 12, 1973, 5.

⁴³ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 2, 1974, 1, FASA papers.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Vernon Woods, “The Ball is now with the World Body,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 12, 1973, 5.



Figure 3.1 – Matches between the Black XI and White XI drew large crowds at the 1973 SA Games.⁴⁶

Significance of the 1973 SA Games Football Tournament

Many observers felt that the Games represented a step in the right direction – possibly even towards readmission into international sport – and a general feeling of goodwill between sports administrators (outside the non-racial movement) permeated the air. In this regard the *Rand Daily Mail* noted that “White and Black sports bosses...called for more frequent inter-racial contact on the country’s sportsfields” and that sports leaders were “impressed by the fantastic success of the multi-national soccer tournament”.⁴⁷ In terms of assessing the potential impact of the event it is even more illuminating to consider the attitudes and reaction within notable sections of the black press. “It could well be, that if certain people [the government] get the message from the games, that it could mean the beginning of a far better world for all,” speculated an editorial of *DRUM*.⁴⁸ “Now if a relaxation of race laws for a few weeks can benefit sport, isn’t it reasonable to take all this to its logical conclusion and

⁴⁶ From Julian Turner, *The History of South African Football 1955–1985: Segregation to Integration, Part 1*, DVD-ROM Disc 4, 2012.

⁴⁷ Don Marshall, “SA Games: Why wait 4 years?” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 3, 1973, 3.

⁴⁸ “Editorial,” *DRUM*, May 8, 1973, 3.

wonder what a continuation of race-law relaxation could do for South Africa?" it wondered further.⁴⁹ The period in which the Games, and particularly the football tournament, took place was glowingly described as the "week goodwill kicked out apartheid", and the cornerstone myth of apartheid – namely "that black and white, at least in South Africa, cannot live and play together" – was also exposed.⁵⁰ Similar views were espoused in the *World*, where a review of the South African Games compiled by Leslie Sehume, the sports editor, is worth quoting in part:

It would be tragic if this wonderful spectacle is seen and experienced only after every four years...Of course, the dream of every sports-minded person in this country is to see one day integrated sides walking onto a South African sportfield. It is a dream which would promote race relations and shatter anti-South Africanism in the field of sport. This year's SA Games have laid the foundation and it can no longer be regarded as a dream. It is coming.⁵¹

Sehume's views can by no means be regarded as a definitive barometer of black opinion,⁵² but the fact that they were carried in the country's most popular black daily newspaper – and thus transmitted to a large black readership – is significant. Undoubtedly there were those of the alternative view that black participation in the South African Games simply represented "crumbs from the master's table".⁵³ This was particularly the case within the non-racial movement, which considered the multinational sports policy – and its subsequent offshoots such as the South African Games – as window dressing designed to portray substantive change within South African sport in order to gain white South Africa's readmission into the international fold. According to Dennis Brutus, one of the movement's leading figures, multinationalism was "a new name for the old game".⁵⁴

⁴⁹ "Editorial," *DRUM*, May 8, 1973, 3.

⁵⁰ "The week goodwill kicked out apartheid," *DRUM*, May 8, 1973.

⁵¹ Leslie Sehume, "It was a dream come true," *World*, April 4, 1973, 12.

⁵² In 1974 he participated in a number of television and radio debates in Britain opposing the Anti-Apartheid Movement's SART (Stop the Apartheid Rugby Tour) campaign. During one of these televised debates Peter Hain, one of the movement's chief campaigners, accused Sehume of fighting on behalf of the South African government for the continuation of the 1974 British Lions rugby tour to South Africa. See "S.A. Bantoe sit Hain op sy plek [S.A. Bantu puts Hain in his place]," *Die Burger*, April 5, 1974, 1. Sehume was indeed an executive member of the Committee For Fairness in Sport (CFFS), a front organisation orchestrated by South Africa's Department of Information. This venture formed part of the constellation of secret projects that ultimately led to the so-called Information Scandal. See "The man who went on a mission," *DRUM*, June 22, 1974, 26 and Eschel Rhodie, *The Real Information Scandal* (Pretoria: Orbis SA, 1983), 171–2. Press reports quoting black community leaders in South Africa "condemned [Sehume's] statements and declared him unrepresentative". See Anti-Apartheid Movement, *Annual Report on Activities and Developments: October 1973–September 1974* (London: Anti-Apartheid Movement, 1974), 11. Sehume ultimately lost his job as sports editor of *World* due to his involvement in this episode. See Joe Latakomo, *Mzansi Magic: Struggle, Betrayal & Glory, The Story of South African Soccer* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010), 89.

⁵³ R. Time, "Crumbs from the master's table," *World*, March 28, 1973, 4.

⁵⁴ Richard Lapchick, *The Politics of Race and International Sport: The Case of South Africa* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975), 209.

However, it cannot be denied that the 1973 South African Games were regarded in many quarters as a significant event – for varying reasons as outlined above. Hogarth de Hoogh, a political writer for the *Sunday Times*, opined that

...[black sports leaders] must not lightly spurn a verligte [enlightened] gesture, however much they mistrust the motives behind it. It would be the height of folly, for example, to dismiss the South African Games as ‘window dressing’ and as surface multi-racialism that will go no further. These events generate their own momentum...⁵⁵

This latter comment is particularly salient when considering the Embassy Multinational Series football tournament which took place the following year in 1974. In his assessment of the significance of the Games, Anderson recognises that

it was not the end of apartheid, and the Games were at best a token gesture to Black sportsmen in South Africa; but they did indicate a flexibility previously unknown in the field of race relations and sport...[The Games] enabled White South Africans to observe Blacks [associating] with Whites at a sports level. This event may not have metamorphosed White prejudice but the occasion must have demonstrated to the more conservative White South Africa, that racial conflict was not a compulsory byproduct of racial integration, albeit in a limited, strictly controlled format. In South Africa’s gradual move away from the strict apartheid approach to sport, the Games in 1973 were a valuable development.⁵⁶

It is this newfound flexible approach by the government which paved the way for subsequent multinational tournaments to take place, and it is the effect of these tournaments on the South African football landscape with which this chapter is concerned. The significance of the Games certainly did not escape the attention of some NFL owners either, with Norman Elliott, owner of Natal-based glamour club Durban City, calling for an integrated “Super League” as a possible means for gaining readmission into international football:

“We do not want to start unnecessary controversy by suggesting that non-white players must join the National Football League. I would rather see a league having the top NFL, African, Coloured and Indian sides included. But they should be integrated sides...it must not be a league run on a race basis.⁵⁷

Such a “Super League” was still a few years away but Elliott’s comments are indicative of the new mood which existed at the time. It can therefore be argued that the 1973 South African Games football tournament acted as a catalyst for re-evaluating the future of

⁵⁵ Hogarth de Hoogh, “We can all learn from the SA Games,” *Sunday Times*, April 8, 1973, 18.

⁵⁶ Anderson, “An Investigation,” 105.

⁵⁷ Ron Steele, “Soccer boss urges new mixed league,” *Sunday Times*, April 1, 1973, 11.

particularly white professional football in South Africa. By partially lifting the veil of uncertainty that had previously existed regarding inter-racial football, the tournament provided a glimpse of an alternative football future. FASA seized on this opportunity to extend the multinational experiment the following year by organising the 1974 Embassy Multinational Series, the next important event under analysis.



Figure 3.2 – Images of harmony between black and white players accompanied the 1973 SA Games.⁵⁸

The 1974 Embassy Multinational Series

The 1974 Embassy Multinational Series was administered through the so-called Top Level Committee which consisted of representatives from FASA and the three other racially defined controlling bodies that were involved in the SA Games.⁵⁹ This committee was originally set up in 1961 under FASA leadership as a response to the white controlling body's suspension from FIFA in September of that year.⁶⁰ It fell into disuse by 1965, but was

⁵⁸ From Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

⁵⁹ These were the South African National Football Association (SANFA, for Africans), the South African Football Association (SAFA, for coloureds) and the South African Soccer Association (SASA, for Indians). FASA exerted the greatest amount of influence on the Top Level Committee since the former's president, Dave Marais, was also chairman of the latter. FASA also handled negotiations with sponsors and the government.

⁶⁰ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992," *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 2.

revived during the early 1970s under the chairmanship of Dave Marais – the FASA president (as well as chairman of the NFL) – at which point the committee took a more prominent role in the organisation of the 1974 and 1975 multinational tournaments.⁶¹

Given the fact that the 1974 Embassy Series was a stand-alone tournament not forming part of a broader event such as the SA Games, permission had to be obtained from the minister of sport in order to ensure that it adhered to the government’s multinational framework. The intention was for this tournament to take place on an annual basis. Marais duly approached Koornhof and obtained the required government permission,⁶² after which the Top Level Committee appointed an organising committee for the tournament. Sponsorship for the event amounted to R25,000, with Embassy cigarettes (one of the UTC’s sub-brands) obtaining the naming rights for the competition.⁶³ A great deal of importance was attached to the event since it was regarded as the “second step towards being reaccepted into international football”.⁶⁴ In this regard FASA’s intention was to filter the multinational football concept down to club level the following year in 1975 by suggesting a “Champion of Champions” competition, provided that the Embassy Series proved a success.⁶⁵

Whereas the latter did bare a close resemblance to the SA Games tournament, there were some notable differences. First and foremost was the fact that the Embassy Series was open to professional players (participants were paid a basic wage of R200 each for playing in the event).⁶⁶ This not only improved the standard of play, but also meant that NFL clubs were affected by player absences during the tournament which was also a week longer than the SA Games incarnation (the Embassy Series was played over the period 5 April to 20 April 1974).⁶⁷ This was exacerbated by the fact that organisers decided to include a fifth team, classified as “continentals”, in the tournament. This team was made up of players with varying foreign roots and the stated intention behind this move was “to give the competition an overseas flavour”.⁶⁸ Given the fact that this was essentially a second white side in the

⁶¹ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 4–5.

⁶² Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 2, 1974, 1, FASA papers.

⁶³ FASA, The Embassy Multinational Series Souvenir Programme, 1974, 13, FASA papers.

⁶⁴ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 2, 1974, 1–2, FASA papers.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁶ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, January 15, 1974, 3, FASA papers.

⁶⁷ FASA, The Embassy Multinational Series Souvenir Programme, 1974, 5, FASA papers.

⁶⁸ FASA, Annual Report, 1974, 6, FASA papers. Interestingly there was some criticism in the football press regarding the rather arbitrary nature in which the continental team was constructed. The team did include foreign nationals such as the German goalkeeper, Volkmar Gross (who was plying his trade at Hellenic at the time), and Israeli full-back Mordechai Lubetzky. However Nicky Howe, captain of the white side during the 1973 SA Games, wrote in *S.A. Soccer Weekly* about the “farce” which the selection process had, in his view, become. He referred to the South African, Stan Lapot, being included on the basis of his father being Polish, and also pointed out that Frank “Jingles” Perreira had been included in the white side while his brother, George, was initially selected for the continentals. Noted football journalist, Sy Lerman, also raised an eyebrow over these selections by describing the composition of the team as “curious” and calling players such as Des Backos and Ricky Flynn “as South

competition – also made up of NFL players – it meant that an extra layer of profitable black *versus* white encounters was added to the tournament.

Another important difference between the Embassy Series and the SA Games tournament was the fact that the former event was played at three different venues, namely the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg, New Kingsmead in Durban, as well as Hartleyvale in Cape Town.⁶⁹ This was done in order to ensure that “a greater percentage of the population [could] see the best players in South Africa”.⁷⁰ From a logistical standpoint this meant increased travelling costs for organisers, and also that three different venues had to be managed in terms of aspects such as ticketing and security, as opposed to the solitary venue a year before. Most importantly the Embassy Series was not played in the same tightly controlled “artificial” conditions which prevailed during the South African Games, where portraying goodwill was a key objective both on and off the field of play. Consequently this “natural” football setting gave a notably different character to the competition.

In terms of the build-up to the event media anticipation was mostly limited to the football press, as opposed to the widespread national coverage provided to the SA Games the previous year. From a purely competitive standpoint there was again the prospect of seeing the different playing styles of particularly the black and white sides clashing on the field of play – something that was eagerly awaited by the black press in particular. For example, a few weeks before the tournament *DRUM* led with a dramatic front page headline referring to the black team as the “death or glory soccer squad”.⁷¹ Clearly black supporters were eager for their team to overturn the disappointment of the SA Games the year before:

For the Africans in particular, there’s more at stake than money. In the first multinational tournament they were disgraced. Now the National Football Association has formed a 22-man squad to try to win back the prestige they so desperately need.⁷²

In this regard it is worth reflecting on the emergence of Black Consciousness in South Africa at this time and how that possibly fed into the anticipation felt towards and importance attached to the outcome of these multinational encounters. According to Alegi

African as biltong”. See Nicky Howe, “Continental team selection is a joke,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, March 28, 1974, 5. and Sy Lerman, “Some strange Continentals,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 18, 1974. Biltong is a form of dried meat common in South Africa.

⁶⁹ FASA, The Embassy Multinational Series Souvenir Programme, 1974, 5, FASA papers.

⁷⁰ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 2, 1974, 1, FASA papers.

⁷¹ “It’s the death or glory squad,” *DRUM*, March 22, 1974, 12.

⁷² *Ibid.*

Black Consciousness [during the early 1970s] found an expression in clubs like Kaizer Chiefs in cultural ways. Being proud of being black and expressing it, not only loudly, but flamboyantly and creatively and assertively, and also the way in which black football clubs increasingly acted autonomously, which is an important feature of Black Consciousness – self-development and self-improvement.⁷³

Consequently the Embassy Series in some ways represented a platform for measuring such self-development and self-improvement within the context of football. The tournament kicked off at Hartleyvale in Cape Town on Friday 5 April, thereby seeing multinational football being played outside Johannesburg for the first time.

Developments on the Field of Play

As was the case during the SA Games the year before the coloured and Indian sides were deprived of their top players on account of the fact that they played their club football in the non-racial FPL. Consequently these two teams finished at the bottom of the tournament table; the Indians losing all four of their matches, and the coloureds losing all their matches bar the encounter against the Indians.⁷⁴ This was seen as a potential weakness in the tournament since these one-sided results against the three other teams (the coloureds, for example, lost 8–1 to the whites and 4–0 to both the blacks and continentals, while the Indians lost 5–0 to the whites)⁷⁵ would potentially have a negative impact on attendances in future.⁷⁶ Another point of contention was the length of the tournament, which resulted in the cancellation of some NFL fixtures, thereby leading to fixture congestion and unhappiness by some clubs in the weeks following the tournament.⁷⁷ At the time Sy Lerman opined:

The main cause of the confusion in South African soccer over the last week, notably in the organisation of fixtures, has been due to the unnecessarily long period over which the multinational series is played. NFL fixtures have suffered, club training sessions have been disrupted and ironically, the multinational series itself has been affected through the drawn-out fixtures.⁷⁸

These logistical difficulties certainly would not have done the NFL any favours in a year which saw a drop in paid attendances of approximately 140,000 compared to 1973, as explored in the previous chapter.⁷⁹

⁷³ Peter Alegi interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, dir. Catherine Muller (South Africa: Little Bird Company Limited, 2006).

⁷⁴ FASA, Annual Report, 1974, 8, FASA papers.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ed Gray, "There will be changes next year," *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 18, 1974, 3.

⁷⁷ Ed Gray, "Fixture foul-up hard to avoid," *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, May 16, 1974, 3.

⁷⁸ Sy Lerman, "Series goes on too long," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 9, 1974, 33.

⁷⁹ FASA, Annual Report, 1974, 9, FASA papers.

However the Embassy Series forged on towards the headline fixture of the tournament, namely the encounter between the black and white sides. This constituted the last match on the schedule and was played at the Rand Stadium on Saturday 20 April 1974. Clearly it was hoped that the match would effectively represent the tournament “final”, but surprisingly by kick-off the tournament had in fact already been wrapped up by the continental team which had defeated the Indians during the curtain raiser that night, thereby finishing with a perfect record of four wins from their four encounters.⁸⁰ This included a 1–0 win over the white side earlier in the tournament – an unexpected result since the continentals were considered to be a “Whites B-team”.⁸¹ The white side ended up defeating the black side 2–0 in the highly anticipated final encounter, but the significance of the match lay not in the result, but rather in the cracks which were beginning to appear in the multinational concept. In order to illustrate this, a detailed account of certain aspects of the tournament is necessary.

It has been pointed out earlier that, unlike the SA Games, the Embassy Series did not take place in a tightly controlled “artificial environment”. This much already became clear on the opening night of the tournament when “disappointed Coloured supporters threw bottles and cans on to the field as their team slumped to an 8–1 defeat against the Whites” in Cape Town.⁸² These types of incidents were not uncommon in the NFL, where Hartleyvale in particular was the scene of many similar occurrences. The letters column in *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly* makes regular references to the topic of crowd behavior in Cape Town, referring for example to Mario Tuani, the opposing manager of Berea Park at the time, having bottles “hurled at him” at Hartleyvale during September 1974.⁸³ By August of that year crowd behaviour was also becoming a matter of concern in Durban where incidents at the New Kingsmead stadium were taking place “on a relatively minor scale but with increasing regularity”:⁸⁴

More often than not it has been the referee and his linesmen who have been the target for fruit, cans and the occasional bottle. But visiting teams, particularly their goalkeeper, are also the target of these hooligans, many of whom gather at the Umgeni end of the stadium.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ FASA, Annual Report, 1974, 8 and FASA, The Embassy Multinational Series Souvenir Programme, 1974, 5, FASA papers.

⁸¹ Sy Lerman, “Continental are cockahoop,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 10, 1974, contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

⁸² Sy Lerman, “Bottles fly at soccer,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 6, 1974, 1.

⁸³ Avril Little, “Letters,” *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, September 20, 1974, 30.

⁸⁴ John Holliday, “Clubs Talk On Hooliganism,” *Football & Turf*, August, 1974, 12.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

This venue was also the scene of a tense situation during the Embassy Series. On Wednesday 17 April the black and continental sides faced each other at New Kingsmead and a crowd of 35,000 turned up for the fixture. This figure eclipsed the attendance for the 1972 Castle Cup final (white football's premier knockout competition) which was a Natal derby between Durban City and Durban United.⁸⁶ This again served as an indication as to the popularity of multinational encounters between black and white teams, particularly among black (African) supporters. According to Norman Elliott

Hundreds of Black fans were unable to get into New Kingsmead [for this encounter]. Many of them had bought tickets before the game but because of the mass of people near the turnstiles they were unable to get a passage to the ground. Some of them, and others without tickets, took matters into their own hands and scaled over the walls round the stadium. Not much has been heard about it but they did considerable damage to the fencing and also club houses on the perimeter of the walls, including the Durban City Supporters Club house. The crowd once inside the ground was well behaved but soccer is an emotional game. Hot heads can start off all kinds of trouble.⁸⁷

This incident prompted Elliott to call for enlarged football stadiums in South Africa equipped with dry safety moats and walls designed to prevent potential pitch invasions. Such measures were common in South America at the time and Elliott, given the popularity and somewhat volatile nature of the black *versus* white multinational encounters, was trying to pre-empt any potential trouble that could be sparked by events on the field of play during subsequent tournaments.⁸⁸

In this regard on-field controversy indeed reared its head during the final match between the black and white sides at the Rand Stadium. Unlike the encounters during the SA Games, this match was characterised by tough tackling and aggression on both sides. According to *S.A. Soccer Weekly* the black side had “forgotten the much publicised ‘master-servant’ inferiority complex when tackling”.⁸⁹ There appears to be merit in the assertion that such a complex had previously existed. According to goalkeeper Patson Banda, a member of the black squads during both the 1973 SA Games and 1974 Embassy Series, the black team’s poor showing at the SA Games was, in his view, partly due to the fact that “[we] had what we called an inferiority complex. That hit us very very badly. We still had that respect for the other races...we never performed”.⁹⁰ This had evidently subsided by 1974. Neill Roberts,

⁸⁶ “Crowd forces gate,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 18, 1974, 28.

⁸⁷ Norman Elliott: “Soccer urged to dig for safety,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, June 13, 1974, 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ “Hollow win for Whites as Continentals lift Embassy trophy,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 25, 1974, 7.

⁹⁰ Patson Banda interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, 2006.

the twenty-year-old forward of the white side at the time (and top scorer in the tournament), recounts the antagonistic nature of the match:

[Jomo Sono] got nailed. We had made him sort of a target if you will, because he was 18. I know Hennie [Joubert, a tough tackling defender] whacked him a few times, and the intent was to intimidate him, because these guys – everytime they did a little shimmy on the ball, or a little dance, or a little stepover, or a little trick – of course 40 000–45 000 black fans went absolutely ballistic, and it was deafening...I remember Alec Forbes [coach of the white side] saying ‘just keep the ball in front of you. Don’t dive into the tackles cause they’ll shimmy one way and dance on the ball. Just let them do whatever they want’. And then...we’d dish out the treatment as the game went on to people like Jomo.

...fifteen minutes into the game – there were pictures in the paper – Chilliboy Koloba walked past me and he slammed his elbow into my solar plexus and I went down. And then he let me have it with some...some colourful language about...you know, because I was a white boy. And Jomo told me this [in April 2014] that ‘you were a target’. They were gonna do the same to me as we had planned to do to Jomo – [to] stop him, kick him, intimidate him so that he can’t perform, and that’s exactly what they did to me as well because I was the youngster, the young kid.⁹¹

Media reports corroborate these views. *S.A. Soccer Weekly*’s match report refers to Roberts being felled by Koloba in the “first unsavoury incident” of the encounter. It also describes Joubert as having been “lucky not to be sent off when he chopped down a Black forward and then kicked the ball away in disgust when a free kick was given”.⁹² A subsequent article in *DRUM* also carried a photo of Jomo Sono writhing in pain on the ground – an image which it regarded as “a symbol of the future of multinational soccer”.⁹³

But the major controversy lay not in the robust nature of the tackling on the field, but rather in events which occurred shortly before half time when the black side had a goal dubiously disallowed for offside by the white referee. Frustrated black supporters “showered the pitch with stones, bottles, and other missiles” as a tense, volatile situation developed inside the stadium.⁹⁴ Roberts recounts:

...there was mayhem. Alan Watt in our goal had chicken pieces, legs, chicken breasts, bottles – you name it – rocks thrown at him in the goal. The game came to a standstill and it was at a very, very delicate point at that

⁹¹ Neill Roberts, telephonic interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁹² “Hollow win for Whites as Continentals lift Embassy trophy,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 25, 1974, 7.

⁹³ “Soccer in the dock,” *DRUM*, May 22, 1974, 7.

⁹⁴ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 141.

stage. We didn't know whether anything would happen with regards to a riot or unrest in the crowd.⁹⁵

An extended half time break ensued as the black side refused to take the field for the second period and demanded that the referee, Wally Turner, be changed for a black referee.⁹⁶ After some delicate pleading by various football officials behind the scenes the match eventually resumed in a tense atmosphere which saw the 26,000 black supporters seething.⁹⁷ To their disappointment the white side went on to score two goals in the second half to clinch the match 2–0 – a result which was described by *S.A. Soccer Weekly* as “a victory for the mundane and efficient over the fluid but terribly unlucky Blacks”.⁹⁸ Whereas, according to Alegi, this “injustice seemed to symbolise black life under white minority rule”,⁹⁹ it is worth noting that the white side also had a goal disallowed shortly before the controversial decision prior to half time. *DRUM* provided an insightful and balanced summary of the situation:

Now DRUM knows that this element [controversial decisions] crops up in many, if not most soccer games. One side always feels hard done by and accuses the ref. and linesmen of partisanship. It is unthinkable that either the ref. or the linesmen in the African-White game would deliberately or even unconsciously favour the Whites. But, by its very nature, multinationalism, had put Black soccer on trial and Black pride was at stake. And the referee and linesmen are Whites. It was inevitable, therefore, that any wrong decision – if indeed there were wrong decisions – would be seen as racial partisanship. Multinationalism breeds racialism and the Black crowds themselves were racial and partisan: when the Whites played the Continentals they cheered the Continentals; when the Continentals played the Indians, they cheered the Indians. There you have the case against multinational soccer, summed up by one word, racialism, and highlighted during the Africans-Whites match.¹⁰⁰

Significance of the 1974 Embassy Series

Despite the controversial nature of the encounter post-match media reports still carried powerful images of black and white players embracing each other after the final whistle.¹⁰¹ Roberts also recounts “white players and the black players arm-in-arm congratulating each other, thanking each other – very good sportsmanship. As antagonistic as the game was, it was played in a very...high spirit”.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Neill Roberts, telephonic interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

⁹⁶ “Soccer in the dock,” *DRUM*, May 22, 1974, 7.

⁹⁷ “Hollow win for Whites as Continentals lift Embassy trophy,” *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, April 25, 1974, 7.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 141.

¹⁰⁰ “Soccer in the dock,” *DRUM*, May 22, 1974, 7.

¹⁰¹ See for example Mike James and Frank “Jingles” Perreira congratulating Jomo Sono after the match in “Bridge for the future,” *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, August 23, 1974, 2–3.

¹⁰² Neill Roberts, telephonic interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

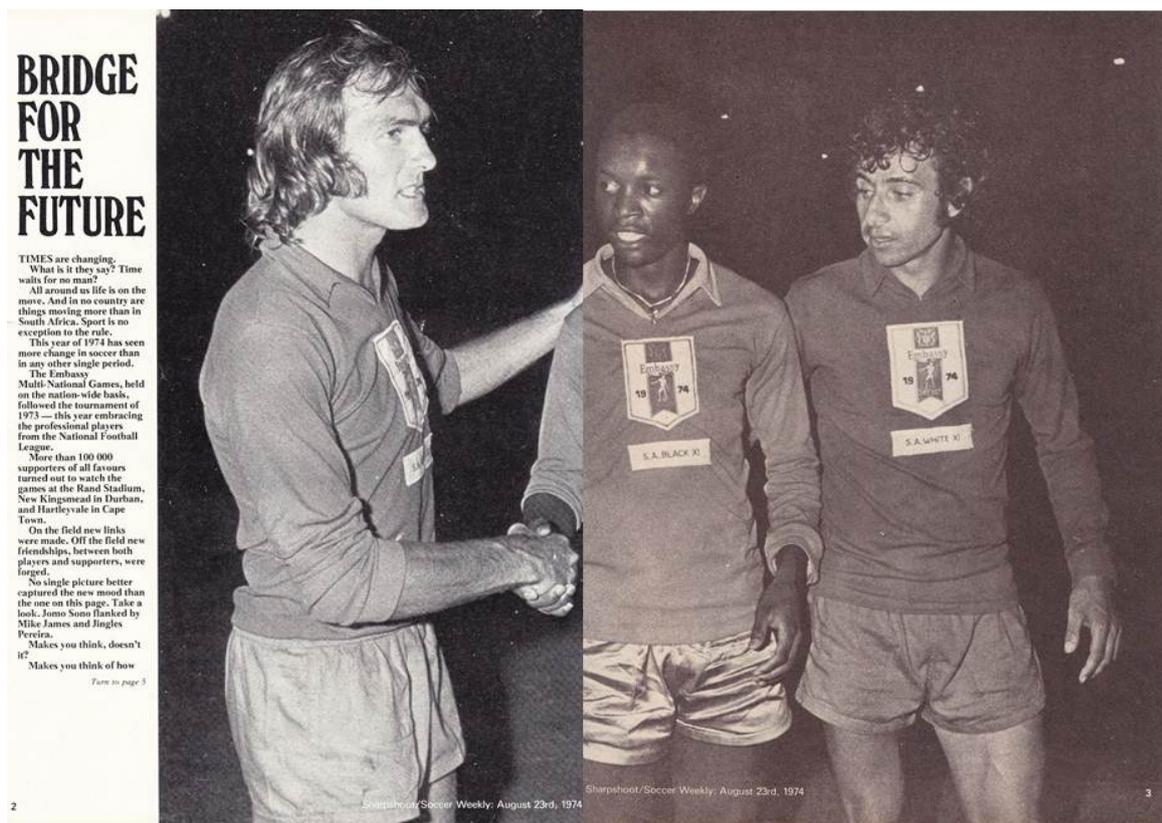


Figure 3.3 – Despite the robust nature of the encounters a feeling of sportsmanship still permeated the air during the 1974 Embassy Multinational Series.¹⁰³

From an organisational perspective these positive sentiments outweighed the negatives and as a result the platform was laid for the multinational football experiment to be filtered down to club level the following year in 1975. The latter development will be analysed in the next section. In terms of finances the 1974 Embassy Series produced a gross income of R127,500 from gate receipts (total attendance was more than 110,000) with an estimated profit of R30,000 – a similar figure to the profit from the previous year's SA Games tournament.¹⁰⁴ The SA Games tournament was regarded as a more profitable venture, however, on account of the “huge expenses involved” in running the Embassy Series.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Picture from *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, August 23, 1974, contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

¹⁰⁴ Minutes, FASA Meeting of Executive Committee, August 10, 1974, 2 and Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 8, 1975, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, October 26, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

There was a general feeling among white football administrators that the Embassy Series represented further progress within the context of multinationalism, but there was also the realisation that multinational matches alone would not be enough to obtain the primary objective of gaining readmission into FIFA. Ian Taylor, president of the Western Province Football Association (which owned the professional club Cape Town City at the time), pointed out that readmission would only come with integrated matches at club level:

There is no doubt that [South Africa] will have to go all the way if there is to be a return to FIFA, and personally I feel that this will come soon. Soccer is a team game and a mixed international team cannot be chosen on merit unless the players are playing together. That is the only way to get a true assessment of a player's ability.¹⁰⁶

Norman Elliott echoed these views:

...the concept of Multinational sport is all wrong. It must be multiracial. You are just looking for trouble selecting soccer teams by the colour of their skin. The real boost will come when you have Blacks and Whites playing alongside each other in the same team.¹⁰⁷

It is revealing to note these calls for full integration by prominent figures within professional white football. White officials also attempted to make an integrated national team a reality when they chose a "shadow" Springbok football squad – which included six black (African) players – after the tournament with the intention of playing against Australia after the latter had completed its commitments at the 1974 FIFA World Cup in Germany.¹⁰⁸ It was hoped that, given the mixed composition of the Springbok team, FIFA would give permission for such a match to take place and that Australia would accept such an invitation. FASA was ultimately unsuccessful in these efforts and it would take two years – and the use of alternative avenues – before an integrated national team would play an "international" match against a so-called "Argentine Stars XI". The latter development will be analysed in the next chapter.

What is important to note at this juncture is the fact that the successful staging of the 1974 Embassy Series provided further support to the notion that the football landscape was changing. This even led to a merger in August 1974 between *S.A. Soccer Weekly* magazine – which provided coverage of white football – with its sister publication, *Sharp Shoot*, which provided coverage of black, coloured and Indian football. The new publication was called

¹⁰⁶ "Mixed club games tipped," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 12, 1974, 20.

¹⁰⁷ Sy Lerman, "Elliott: Sono is worth R20 000," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 19, 1974, 32.

¹⁰⁸ Ed Gray, "Team announcement heard throughout the world," *S.A. Soccer Weekly*, May 2, 1974, 3.

Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly and the motivation behind the merger was spelled out in a preview article shortly before the merger:

We, the proprietors of South African Soccer Weekly, feel that a change is imminent in the sports policy of this country. To help with the INEVITABLE, we will soon be producing this magazine on a completely multi-National basis. We feel that you, our reader, and an ardent soccer fan, are entitled to know who our soccer stars are, whether they be Black or White.¹⁰⁹

The first editorial of the new publication further explained:

We intend giving full coverage to the South African Soccer Federation, the National Football League, the National Professional Soccer League – and the many, many other leagues and competitions spread across the country...We have no affiliation to any one group over any other.¹¹⁰

This merger was symbolic of the mood within football circles at the time. The move elicited a largely positive reaction from the magazine's diverse readership and according to the editor, Ed Gray, the "postbag [indicated] overwhelming support for [the magazine's] recent changes".¹¹¹ However, despite these positive sentiments, there is no doubting the fact that the second incarnation of the multinational football experiment, namely the 1974 Embassy Series, also provided some warning signs as to the future feasibility of such racially-based encounters. It can be argued that, even though these matches represented the first form of partially integrated professional football in South Africa (with players from different races at least sharing the same field), it also served to further entrench racial division given the format of these contests. This is an important consideration in the context of events at the first club-based multinational tournament, namely the Chevrolet Champion of Champions competition which took place the following year.

The 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions Tournament

Given the successful staging of the 1974 Embassy Series it was felt by leading administrators within white football that an extension of the multinational concept to club level "was the next logical step in the interests of soccer and of the ethnic groups".¹¹² The idea of a black club taking on a white club was previously attempted in 1969 when a match between Orlando Pirates and Highlands Park was scheduled (with the blessing of both FASA and FIFA) in Mbabane as part of Swaziland's independence celebrations. This led to

¹⁰⁹ "A change is coming," *S.A Soccer Weekly*, August 1, 1974, 18.

¹¹⁰ "Bridge for the future," *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, August 12, 1974, 3.

¹¹¹ "Letters," *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, September 27, 1974, 30.

¹¹² Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, October 26, 1974, 3, FASA papers.

a great deal of media anticipation in the run-up to the match as the winner would have been regarded as the unofficial champion team of South Africa.¹¹³ However, the match never took place as South Africa's minister of the interior, S.L. Muller, announced two weeks before the scheduled date that it was contrary to government policy for such a match to take place.¹¹⁴

Interested spectators would have to wait six years for such a clash to become a reality when permission was obtained from the government to move ahead with the 1975 Champion of Champions tournament which again fell under the auspices of the Top Level Committee.¹¹⁵ It is important to note, however, that the boundaries regarding organisational control for the tournament were quite vague since FASA originally entered into the contractual sponsorship agreement (for three years) with General Motors South Africa. FASA also acted as the link to the Department of Sport and Recreation, and officials such as Dave Marais (who headed up FASA, the NFL and the Top Level Committee) and Dudley Zagnoev (who was secretary of FASA and also convenor of the tournament organising committee) wore multiple organisational caps, so to speak.¹¹⁶

The original intention was to repeat the multinational Embassy tournament for 1975 as well, scheduling it towards the latter part of the season. However this never came to pass as the Top Level Committee decided on 8 September 1975 not to go ahead with it after an acrimonious meeting which involved heated discussions particularly between SANFA representatives and Vivian Granger, the general manager of the NFL. The latter was in charge of fixture scheduling and attended the meeting as an observer. According to a statement issued by SANFA in response to a subsequent press report, Granger vented his frustration at the meeting through "inexplicable and harmful outbursts", and by referring to the "relationship between the FASA and Non-White associations [as one] of Master and Pupil, FASA being the master".¹¹⁷ Granger was undoubtedly frustrated at the potential fixture

¹¹³ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 138.

¹¹⁴ Lapchick, *The Politics of Race and International Sport*, 144. There was more to this cancellation than meets the eye, however. At FASA's 1970 AGM Dave Marais accused Bethuel Morolo, president of the FASA-affiliated South African Bantu Football Association (SABFA) – the forerunner to SANFA – of having sent a letter to the Minister of Sport, Frank Waring, requesting the cancellation of the match. Marais termed this "a shocking disservice to soccer and to all Non-White players". The Orlando Pirates website also makes reference to Morolo having felt "snubbed and undermined" on account of Pirates not having sought prior permission for the match from SABFA. Veteran journalist, Joe Latakomo, also recounts that it was Morolo who convinced the South African government to cancel the match. Power dynamics within black (African) football was therefore a primary contributing factor towards this episode. See Minutes, *FASA Annual General Meeting*, March 7, 1970, 4–5, FASA papers; "Chapter III," Orlando Pirates Football Club, accessed April 1, 2015, <http://www.orlandopiratesfc.com/default.asp?cld=14417> and Latakomo, *Mzansi Magic*, 119–20.

¹¹⁵ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, December 21, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

¹¹⁶ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, November 11, 1975, 2, FASA papers.

¹¹⁷ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, September 8, 1975, 2 and SANFA, Statement, September 27, 1975, 1–2, FASA papers. Interestingly the minutes of the meeting reveal very little regarding the actual debate which took place, only stating that "considerable discussion took place, with all members of the Committee taking part", and that eventually "the Committee had agreed that the Tournament would not take place in 1975". The

disruptions and logistical headaches caused to the NFL, which was incidentally not deriving any financial benefits from the Embassy Series. This episode demonstrates, therefore, that organising these tournaments did not always result in plain sailing behind the scenes. In this regard it is important to note the growing confidence of SANFA, and the realisation that the success of the multinational experiment depended largely on mass black spectatorship. SANFA was unequivocal in its response:

May we spell it out loud and clear right at the outset that the FASA and NFL need the multinational soccer tournaments more than this Association. Their genius and expertise to run the fixtures of those tournaments would be futile without the vast numbers of black soccer followers that we have carried to multinational football games.¹¹⁸

This gradual shift in the balance of power is worth reflecting on again when considering the impact of the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament, which included two clubs from each of the four participating associations.¹¹⁹ Clubs from the non-racial FPL were barred by the SASF from participating in the event. The participating teams were Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates (blacks), Blackpool United and Claremont United (coloureds), Aces United and Bluff Rangers (Indians), as well as Arcadia Shepherds and Hellenic (whites). The tournament was run on a straight knock-out basis, with the final played over two legs.

A sponsorship to the value of R40,000 was obtained from General Motors South Africa for the event, and consequently it was named after the General Motors sub-brand, Chevrolet. This represented “the biggest sponsorship in the history of the game” in South Africa up to that point.¹²⁰ From this total R10,000 was set aside for administrative expenses while the remaining R30,000 was allocated as prize money for the eight participating teams. Income from gate receipts was to be shared equally between the four participating entities.¹²¹ Dave Marais made reference to the fact that, in terms of bringing the tournament to fruition, the negotiations between these associations did not proceed smoothly initially, but eventually an agreement was reached and the organising committee was able to proceed with the arrangements.¹²²

length of the meeting is indicated as an hour and forty minutes, despite there having been no other notable discussion points other than the Embassy Series – indicative of the protracted debate which took place that day.

¹¹⁸ SANFA, Statement, September 27, 1975, 1, FASA papers.

¹¹⁹ Chevrolet Champion of Champions 1975 Souvenir Programme, FASA papers.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²¹ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, December 21, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

¹²² Chevrolet Champion of Champions 1975 Souvenir Programme, 7, FASA papers

The draw was done in such a way as to maximise the probability of a black club taking on a white club in the final, thereby guaranteeing a showpiece final and a handsome profit no less. Football journalist Sy Lerman called this “a contrived formula” and lamented the fact that a black *versus* white match would only materialise in the final. He wondered about the possibility of introducing a third-place play-off since this would have ensured a second such encounter.¹²³ Such a fixture was not initially included in the programme, but was eventually added to the tournament after the final. The tournament commenced on Friday 21 March and lasted just over three weeks, with the second leg of the final played at the Rand Stadium on Saturday 12 April.

In terms of the buildup to the event there was again a great deal of fanfare in the football press, with *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly* calling the tournament “the biggest leap forward” for South African football.¹²⁴ John “Budgie” Byrne, a former England international who was managing Hellenic at the time, also described it as a “great breakthrough” in the fight against South Africa’s “enemies at FIFA”.¹²⁵ In the popular press the *Rand Daily Mail* carried a large advertising spread urging supporters not to “miss these historic and exciting games”,¹²⁶ while *DRUM* published an in-depth preview of each of the black and white sides’ respective chances in the tournament.¹²⁷

The first round of the tournament was characterised by lopsided scores in all four matches as the four coloured and Indian sides – essentially amateur teams – found the going tough. Arcadia Shepherds and Orlando Pirates each won 5–0 (against Claremont United and Blackpool United respectively), while Hellenic thrashed Aces United 11–1 and Kaizer Chiefs dealt a similar fate to Bluff Rangers (12–1).¹²⁸ “It just wasn’t soccer”,¹²⁹ lamented *African Soccer Mirror*, again pointing out that the “strength of Indian and Coloured soccer lies in the South African Soccer Federation, which turned down an offer to feature in the games”.¹³⁰ Tournament rules dictated that teams from the same racial group would automatically face each other in the semi-finals in order to avoid such an eventuality in the final. Kaizer Chiefs subsequently defeated Orlando Pirates on penalty kicks (after a 2–2 draw), while Hellenic did the same to Arcadia Shepherds after a 1–1 draw. Incidentally the use of penalty kicks as

¹²³ Sy Lerman, “Why not a third place showpiece?” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 27, 1975, 31.

¹²⁴ Ed Gray, “Opinion,” *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, October 25, 1974, 3.

¹²⁵ John Byrne, “This news is simply terrific,” *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, October 25, 1974, 25.

¹²⁶ “Breakthrough For South Africa,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 18, 1975, 12–13.

¹²⁷ “Money on the blacks?” *DRUM*, March 22, 1975, 4–7.

¹²⁸ Chevrolet Champion of Champions 1975 Souvenir Programme, FASA papers.

¹²⁹ Franklin Dhlamini, “Massacre of the innocents,” *African Soccer Mirror*, April, 1975, 8.

¹³⁰ “Nothing to shout about for Arcs,” *African Soccer Mirror*, April, 1975, 5.

a tie-breaking procedure proved highly controversial in both encounters.¹³¹ The outcome of these matches set the stage for a highly anticipated final between Hellenic and Kaizer Chiefs, played over two legs at Hartleyvale and the Rand Stadium respectively. The importance of these matches was highlighted by the fact that English referee, Jack Taylor – who had taken charge of the 1974 FIFA World Cup final – was recruited to handle both legs. In this regard organisers were keenly aware that any controversial decisions would potentially be viewed as “anti-black” or “anti-white”, particularly given what had occurred during the previous year’s Embassy Series.¹³²

Controversy Erupts

Some of the warning signs which appeared during the 1974 Embassy Series as far as multinational football was concerned have been highlighted. Similar warning signs were evident during the first leg of the 1975 Chevrolet tournament final when more than 30,000 spectators turned out at the 26,000-capacity Hartleyvale Stadium in Cape Town. Media reports referred to an uncontrollable crowd prior to kickoff, the collapse of a grandstand canopy after spectators had climbed on top of it, as well as three people being injured as a result of bottle throwing and fights between groups of spectators.¹³³ This again served to emphasise the popularity – and volatility – of these highly anticipated multinational encounters between black and white teams. Hellenic won the first leg 4–0, but the final as a whole would be remembered for the highly controversial second leg played at the Rand Stadium a few days later.

¹³¹ After extra time failed to separate Chiefs and Pirates the teams demanded a replay instead of deciding the drawn encounter on penalty kicks, as required by the tournament rules. A 20-minute standoff ensued with Dave Marais, chairman of the organising committee, threatening the teams with fines and disqualification. The penalties were subsequently taken with Chiefs progressing to the final. The other semi-final between Arcadia Shepherds and Hellenic was decided in even more bizarre circumstances. With the two teams deadlocked at 2–2 after extra time, penalty kicks ensued and the referee subsequently made a counting error during this process! It is worth noting that the procedure of deciding drawn encounters on penalties was a new development in South African football at the time. A replay was ordered as a result of this refereeing error, and somewhat appropriately this encounter, which took place a few days later, again resulted in the use of penalty kicks after a 1–1 draw. Hellenic advanced. See Chevrolet Champion of Champions 1975 Souvenir Programme, FASA papers.

¹³² Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹³³ Sy Lerman, “Big game violence,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 10, 1975, 1. The Western Province Football Association, which controlled Hartleyvale, subsequently withheld an amount of R5,000 that was due to the Top Level Committee as a result of the damages incurred at the stadium. This issue dragged on for more than a year. See Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, June 4, 1975, 1 and Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, August 21, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

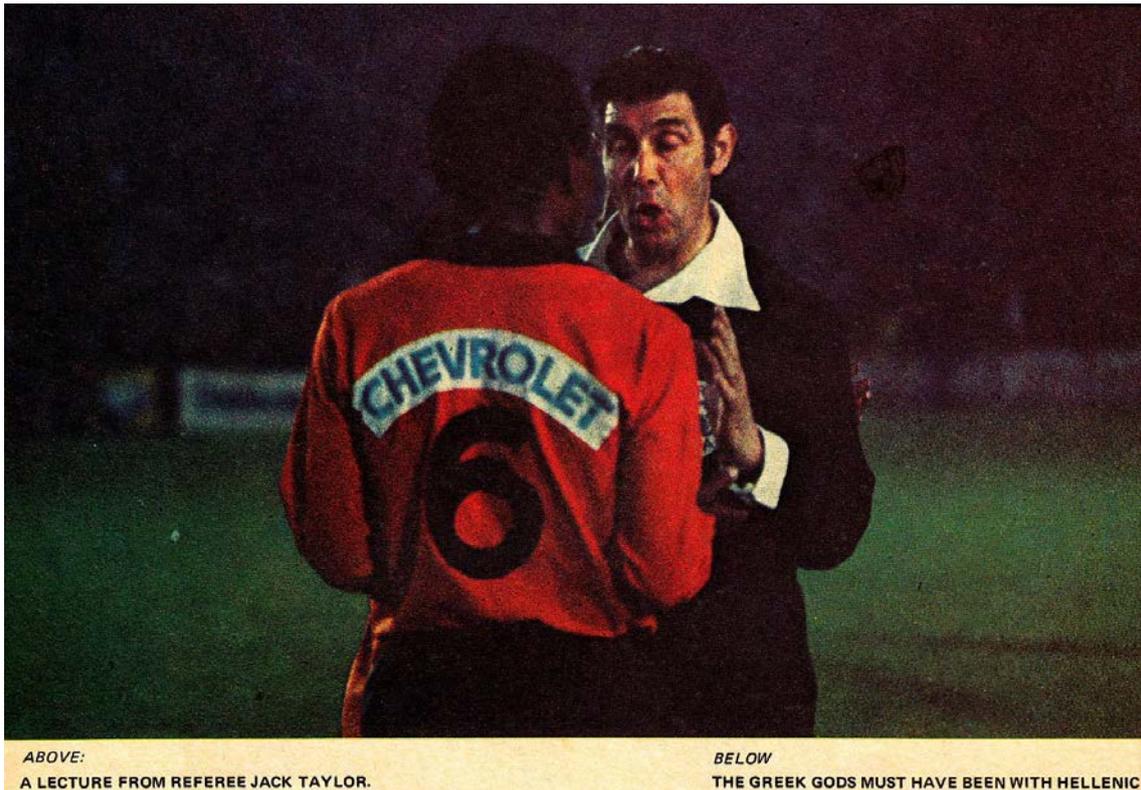


Figure 3.4 – English referee, Jack Taylor, lectures a Chiefs player during the second leg of the Chevrolet final in front of a packed Rand Stadium.¹³⁴

An estimated 35,000 spectators turned up for the match that saw Hellenic open the scoring in the 20th minute. However, to Kaizer Chiefs players and sections of the black supporters the goal appeared to have been scored from an off-side position, resulting in a break in play as arguments with the officials ensued. At the same time cans and bottles were thrown onto the field and this continued in one section of the crowd behind the Hellenic goal once play was restarted.¹³⁵ One of the linesmen, Fred Marsh, and a policeman were subsequently struck in the process. Amid this toxic atmosphere Taylor, fearing for the safety of the players, decided to abandon the match as a large police presence moved onto the field in an attempt to maintain order.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ From Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

¹³⁵ Desmond Blow, "Hero ref...fiery final," contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4. Incidentally match footage contained in the 2006 documentary, *Pitch Revolution*, shows that the Hellenic goal scorer was in fact in an on-side position on account of clearly being behind the ball when the pass was played. Allowing the goal was therefore the correct decision (author's own interpretation of the footage).

¹³⁶ Blow, "Hero ref...fiery final," and footage contained in *Pitch Revolution*, 2006. At least 60 police officers can be counted in the footage. See Figure 3.6 below.

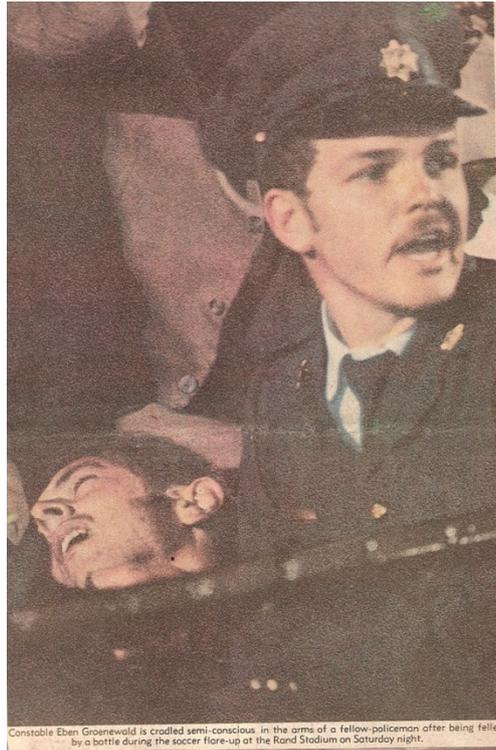


Figure 3.5 – A policeman was struck by a bottle during the crowd trouble at the second leg of the final played at the Rand Stadium.¹³⁷

The Rand Stadium had been turned into a fiery cauldron with loud chanting from incensed spectators clearly captured on the match footage.¹³⁸ A 25-minute delay ensued as officials pleaded with Kaizer Chiefs players and Taylor in the changing rooms to restart the match for fear of a full-scale riot breaking out if the match was in fact to be abandoned. Taylor eventually agreed, re-entered the cauldron, and – with the assistance of Kaizer Chiefs players, officials and some police officers – managed to placate “the most unruly section of the stands”.¹³⁹ The match restarted and Chiefs proceeded to score an equalising goal, followed by a late winner to finish 2–1 victors on the night. However, Hellenic claimed the R14,000 first prize as 5–2 winners on aggregate over the two legs.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ From Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

¹³⁸ *Pitch Revolution*, 2006.

¹³⁹ Blow, “Hero ref...fiery final”; “Brave men plead for peace,” *African Soccer Mirror*, May, 1975, 25 and Eddie Lewis, coach of Kaizer Chiefs at the time, interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Blow, “Hero ref...fiery final.”



Figure 3.6 – Police officers occupy the playing field as the second leg of the Chevrolet final is halted amid controversy.¹⁴¹

Despite the overall result the outcome of the Rand Stadium leg was greeted with great admiration and fanfare in the black football press since this represented the first victory by a black side over a white side in a multinational encounter.¹⁴² Joseph “Banks” Sethlodi, Kaizer Chiefs’s goalkeeper at the time, reflected on the significance of the result 35 years later: “By defeating Hellenic FC we showed that we were not only able to play beautifully, but that we were also able to win. We freed the black population of a complex.”¹⁴³ Sergio dos Santos, who played for Hellenic at the time, offered a different view, claiming that Hellenic conceded the match at the Rand Stadium “to prevent unrest” – a notion supported by most of his team mates and regarded by Chiefs players as “scandalous”.¹⁴⁴ The fact that this encounter is still the source of such contrasting debate many years after the fact is further testament to its controversial nature. At the time it undoubtedly further underlined the fact that multinationalism was a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.

¹⁴¹ From Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4.

¹⁴² Ratshilo Talane, “Those fantastic gladiators from Soweto,” *African Soccer Mirror*, May, 1975, 16.

¹⁴³ Mathieu Ropitault, “Eine Geschichte in Schwarz-weiss [A tale in black and white],” *11 Freunde*, July, 2010, 97–8, contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4. Quote translated from German.

¹⁴⁴ Ropitault, “Eine Geschichte in Schwarz-weiss.” Quote translated from German.

This was further supported by the atmosphere surrounding the third-place play-off match between Arcadia Shepherds and Orlando Pirates, played a few days later at the New Kingsmead Stadium in Durban.¹⁴⁵ Arcadia scored in the last minute to win the match 2–1, with *African Soccer Mirror* describing and condemning resulting abuse hurled by Pirates supporters at white fans after the game:

It was horrifying to hear the abuse hurled at the White fans after the game. In an atmosphere seething with Black-White tension, fans were assaulted – even elderly women – cars were damaged and bottles rained down like a New Kingsmead cloudburst.¹⁴⁶

Reference is also made to the referee having handled the match “under great strain when it nearly got out of hand as tempers flared [in the second half]”, while “a section of the Black supporters continued to roar disapproval, obviously incensed over some off-sides ruled by the referee”.¹⁴⁷ In a post mortem editorial *African Soccer Mirror* described the match as a farce:

The referee, for the sake of peace – and conscious of the highly charged Black-White tension in which the game was played – was forced to bend the rules. Once he even failed to award a penalty for a glaring infringement. There is only one answer. Fans – and players too – must learn the rules of the game. They must understand the reason for the ref’s decisions – and accept them.¹⁴⁸

The issue of varying rule interpretations by the respective supporter bases is worth considering as an additional element that possibly created a breeding ground for controversy in these matches. Neill Roberts’s reflections regarding integration – which came about when the NFL eventually disbanded after its 1977 season – are insightful in this regard:

...from my perspective as a young kid [in 1978]...the only thing...we’ve ever heard about black football [up to that point] is that it’s wonderfully entertaining, there is a very liberal – quote unquote – off-side rule, and there...are often lots and lots of goals because of the liberal offside rule. But they’re fantastic footballers, it’s fantastic [action], but there’s often a lot of violence.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ The third-place play-off was not originally included in the tournament schedule, but FASA’s 1975 Annual Report indicates that it was organised as “a special game” after the final. See FASA, Annual Report, 1975, 4, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁶ Amos Mngoma, “The R2 000 Blinder,” *African Soccer Mirror*, May 1975, 4.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Neill Roberts, telephonic interview with the author, February 25, 2015.

This was only one white player's perception at the time, but there is no denying the fact that the off-side law had the potential to spark controversy at any time – as was (and still is) the case in football around the world. *Sharpshoot Soccer* (previously known as *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly* prior to March 1975 when it became a monthly publication) summarised the situation:

...we believe that for every occasion of referee error, there are at least 10 occasions when the spectators, and even the players, wrongly feel that a mistake has been made for the simple reason that they do not know what is off-side and what is not. As our contribution to ending this ignorance, you will find elsewhere in this issue, a diagrammatic explanation of the off-side law.¹⁵⁰

Given differing law interpretations, coupled with the racialised atmosphere which existed at multinational matches, it is clear that controversy and volatility were becoming part and parcel of these encounters – a fact that did not escape the attention of key white officials.

Aftermath

In the wake of the Chevrolet tournament a number of prominent personalities called for the multinational experiment to be ended in favour of full integration.¹⁵¹ The fact that some of these personalities were notable role players in the NFL itself is revealing. The league's general manager, Vivian Granger, said that he was "frightened" by "the animosity" which existed at the Rand Stadium that night: "Why delay the inevitable? Integrated teams must come. What are we waiting for? A rethink of the present concept is needed, we have had two warnings in two years. It might be a disaster next time."¹⁵² Similarly, Ken Funston, chairman of Arcadia Shepherds, was quoted as saying: "Multinational soccer as an ultimate concept scares me."¹⁵³ During a FASA executive meeting, held on the morning following the Chiefs-Hellenic match, Ian Taylor of the Western Province Football Association also expressed the opinion that "if mixed [integrated] soccer was played there would be no incidents during tournaments".¹⁵⁴

From a financial perspective handsome profits were generated. FASA's 1975 Annual Report refers to "record gate monies" of R234,520 – the result of a total paid attendance of just over 193,000 spectators.¹⁵⁵ A total profit of approximately R155,000 was available for distribution

¹⁵⁰ Charles Brown, "Sharp shoot opinion," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1975, 3.

¹⁵¹ Sy Lerman, "Mix teams, says top soccer ref," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 14, 1975, 1.

¹⁵² I. Palmer, "Letter from the publishers," *African Soccer Mirror*, May, 1975, 3.

¹⁵³ Sy Lerman, "Mix teams, says top soccer ref," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 14, 1975, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Minutes, FASA Meeting of the Executive, April 13, 1975, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁵⁵ FASA, Annual Report, 1975, 5, FASA papers.

after the tournament, and the Top Level Committee decided to allocate R35,000 to each of the four participating entities, namely the three racially defined bodies for Africans, coloureds and Indians respectively, as well as the NFL (given that Arcadia Shepherds and Hellenic were professional clubs under the auspices of the NFL, not FASA).¹⁵⁶ In light of these profits, and despite the preceding controversy, the Top Level Committee decided towards the end of 1975 to hold another Champion of Champions tournament the following year.¹⁵⁷

However, these discussions were also indicative of the changing football landscape in South Africa, with FASA in particular beginning to lose traction. The minutes of the Top Level Committee meeting held on 11 November 1975 indicate that the future role of FASA in organising the event was a contentious point, particularly the fact that an allocation of 2½% of the tournament's gross gate takings was made towards FASA in 1975 for covering administrative expenses. This was challenged by George Thabe, president of SANFA, who was to become the most influential football official in the coming years. Thabe also suggested the appointment of a special tournament committee and an accountant to "prevent the holding and delay of accounts".¹⁵⁸

Eventually it was decided to ask General Motors to cede the tournament sponsorship contract to the Top Level Committee, as well as to ask the Department of Sport and Recreation to grant permission for the 1976 tournament to be organised by the Top Level Committee, and not FASA.¹⁵⁹ The growing confidence and influence of Thabe and SANFA should also be seen in the context of the cancellation of the 1975 Embassy Series which, as mentioned earlier, took place in acrimonious circumstances. Importantly, Dave Marais also emphasised the fact that the 1976 Chevrolet tournament should "have absolute iron control, and that this should be publicised". Furthermore he stated that any player "found guilty of inciting [the crowd] should be suspended from all football for a period of at least six months". These suggestions – undoubtedly made with reference to the controversial nature of the

¹⁵⁶ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, June 4, 1975, 1, FASA papers. The NFL was affiliated to FASA but maintained a great deal of autonomy in terms of being the sole entity responsible for (white) professional football. Incidentally the fact that the NFL shared in the profits of the Chevrolet tournament – and not FASA – was indeed a contentious point at the latter's annual general meeting the following year. Dave Snaier, representing the Southern Transvaal Football Association, questioned this allocation which led to a rather protracted discussion during which Dave Marais had to clarify the role of the Top Level Committee, which acted autonomously. Eventually it was decided that the NFL would again receive the profit distribution for the 1976 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament. See Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1976, 4 and 9, FASA papers.

¹⁵⁷ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, November 11, 1975, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

1975 tournament – were accepted by the committee.¹⁶⁰ The stage was therefore set for further dabbling with multinational football in 1976.

The 1976 incarnation of the tournament never took place, however. In the months leading up to the event the proposed seeding of teams became a contentious point, with the SA (coloured) Football Association not in favour of such an arrangement. Both FASA and SANFA wanted seeding for the competition since this would have ensured that the two black clubs and the two white clubs – being much stronger than their coloured and Indian counterparts – would not meet each other in the opening round.¹⁶¹ An early elimination of any of these four teams would have dented the profit potential of the tournament, and it was stressed that “it was necessary to earn as much money as possible from these tournaments so as to be able to plough it back into the game”.¹⁶² SAFA would not budge, however, and stated that “they would rather stay out of the tournament than agree to seeding”.¹⁶³ They subsequently withdrew from the competition – a move which “disappointed” the sponsors, General Motors, and which meant that the “sponsorship money would be reduced accordingly”.¹⁶⁴

The uncertainty over fixtures at this stage led to the tournament – first postponed to May 1976 – being further delayed with the finals scheduled for 28 August 1976.¹⁶⁵ The interem period saw major changes sweeping across the South African football landscape (and South Africa as a whole), most important of which was FASA’s expulsion from FIFA at the latter’s Montreal Congress in July. It is important to note that the township uprisings, commencing with the Soweto riots on 16 June 1976, finally destroyed FASA’s (already weak) case for having its FIFA suspension lifted. Dave Marais subsequently resigned his positions at both the NFL and FASA.¹⁶⁶ In August a Top Level Committee was called under the chairmanship of George Thabe to discuss a letter received by General Motors requesting the cancellation of the 1976 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament. According to the letter “it [was] not in the best interest of football in South Africa to have the tournament played [that] year”. The Top Level Committee acceded to this request.¹⁶⁷ November 1976 saw the formation of

¹⁶⁰ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, November 11, 1975, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁶¹ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, March 16, 1976, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, April 8, 1976, 4, FASA papers.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, June 9, 1976, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 9–11, FASA papers.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, August 21, 1976, 1, FASA papers. The content of the letter is not provided in the minutes and as a result it is difficult to gauge General Motors’ exact reasoning for this request. It is instructive to note that SAFA representatives were not present at the meeting, having previously withdrawn from the Chevrolet tournament. Their non-participation could have been a factor since a sponsor representative previously stated that “it was very important that all groups should participate”. See Minutes, FASA Top Level

the Football Council of South Africa, with Thabe as president.¹⁶⁸ This entity, which still included representatives from the different racially defined controlling bodies,¹⁶⁹ replaced the Top Level Committee from that point on with the intention of “normalising” football in South Africa.¹⁷⁰ It represented a drastic power shift within South African football at the time – the fallout of which will be explored in the next chapter.

Reflecting on the Initial Impact of Multinationalism

This chapter at the outset noted that the South African government’s introduction of the multinational sports policy in 1971 was a response to the country’s increased international sporting isolation at the time. The 1973 South African Games was intended to ease this pressure further by portraying racial harmony within the context of separate South African “nations” competing against international athletes in various Olympic sport codes. Circumstances surrounding FASA’s suspended membership from FIFA at the time meant that the South African Games football tournament – which was to include amateur international teams as well – ended up comprising of the four racially defined South African “national” teams only (consisting of amateur players). This created an eagerly awaited situation whereby these teams competed against each other – a first for “body contact” team sport in South Africa. The fact that the South African Games was an event of immense national and political interest also meant that it was accompanied by heavy security measures, which in turn resulted in competition taking place in a tightly controlled, “artificial” environment, as argued earlier. Given the absence of any spectator violence or major on-field controversies, coupled with images of black and white players embracing each other after the final match, the South African Games football tournament was hailed as a resounding success in many quarters. In the wake of this reaction white football administrators took the initiative in repeating this multinational experiment the following year by obtaining permission from the government to hold the 1974 Embassy Multinational Series on the same racial basis, but including professional players this time.

Committee Meeting, June 9, 1976, 2, FASA papers. The turbulent changes in the wake of FASA’s expulsion from FIFA, as well as the unstable political climate nationally after the township uprisings, would almost certainly have been a factor as well.

¹⁶⁸ Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Inaugural Meeting, November 21, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁶⁹ SAFA (coloureds) originally opted out of the Council on the grounds that it disagreed with the proposed vote allocation as laid down in the constitution. However in February 1977 it made an about-turn and took up Council membership under the prescribed conditions. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 8, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁷⁰ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 7. Essentially the Football Council intended to become the sole controlling body for football in South Africa, although this was never achieved since an agreement could never be reached with the non-racial SASF. The latter demanded that all racially defined bodies be dissolved and that a new non-racial body be formed in their place. The Football Council functioned on a federal structure and while the aim was to create competitions that included all professional clubs in the country, this did not translate to an immediate push towards full integration at club level. Thabe’s views in this regard will be expanded upon in the following chapter.

As was the case with the SA Games tournament before it, the 1974 Embassy Series also proved to be a financial success, despite incurring greater expenditure on account of being played at three venues around the country. The important difference however – as was argued earlier – is the fact that the Embassy Series took place within a typical football environment, as opposed to a tightly controlled multi-sport event of national importance. Matches were characterised by forceful play, tough tackling and a highly competitive atmosphere – particularly the black-white encounters. As a result the tournament saw the emergence of elements such as bottle throwing, large crowds that were difficult to control, as well as a controversial incident in the final black-white encounter where a contentious decision led to an extended half time break and a charged atmosphere. Despite these warning signs regarding the volatile nature of multinational football, white administrators pressed on for further experimentation down to club level. This was seen as the next logical step towards trying to achieve their primary goal of having the FIFA suspension lifted. They were undoubtedly also encouraged by the profit potential of multinational encounters, largely brought about by the influx of black supporters to these matches.

The 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament proved to be the final – and most controversial – multinational football tournament. The heated encounter at the Rand Stadium between Hellenic and Kaizer Chiefs showed that such high-stakes matches, coupled with the highly racialised atmosphere surrounding them, created a dangerous cocktail that made a full-scale football disaster highly probable, if not inevitable. This notably led to prominent white football administrators calling for an end to multinational experimentation in favour of multiracial integration. Such sentiments are important when considering the difficulties that the NFL were already experiencing at the time (as analysed in the previous chapter). The fact that full integration was seen as the only viable avenue towards being readmitted into international football meant that the NFL's position as a racially exclusive white league was becoming more and more tenuous, even from within.

The policy of multinationalism was originally introduced as a means of portraying partial integration in sport within the framework of apartheid. It was certainly not implemented as a transitional measure towards removing apartheid barriers on the path to full integration, but rather to retain these barriers in an amended form. However, in terms of professional football it is argued here that the implementation of this policy inadvertently set in motion processes that eventually culminated in exactly that – namely full integration within football on a multiracial basis (see following chapter). This argument supports Anderson's evaluation of the significance of multinationalism:

...multi-nationalism derives significance from its historical alignment. When viewed in historical perspective, it can be ascertained that the advent of multi-nationalism in sport in South Africa in 1971 marked the beginning of an evolution away from the strict apartheid approach of the 1950s and 1960s. In May 1971 this was not a stated objective; subsequent statements confirmed the theory that multi-nationalism at least initially was intended to be an absolute concept. That in the long term it proved not to be so, is again significant.¹⁷¹

Within the context of professional football, the multinational policy ushered in a period of significant change in the South African football landscape, particularly at administrative level. The success of initial multinational experimentation in 1973 resulted in its expansion in 1974 and extension to club level in 1975. These subsequent tournaments showed that multinational football was fraught with danger and led to increasing calls for full integration. At the same time the balance of administrative power was slowly being tipped away from FASA towards SANFA as black administrators such as George Thabe grew in confidence and influence – particularly as a result of the significant role that black footballers and supporters played within the multinational tournaments. FASA's expulsion from FIFA in 1976 was the final blow that changed the power dynamics within South African football, with the Football Council of South Africa (with Thabe as president) formed soon thereafter. The period 1976–7 saw substantial steps taken towards establishing multiracial integration and culminated in a number of significant football developments, including the first integrated “international” football matches in South Africa as well as a further extension of multinationalism at club level. These events – and the context in which they occurred – are analysed in the following chapters with a particular focus on the resulting impact on the vulnerable NFL.

¹⁷¹ Anderson, “An Investigation,” 80.

Chapter 4 – Slippery under Foot: FASA’s Deteriorating Position Locally and Internationally, 1974–6

The previous chapter argued that the introduction of the government’s multinational sports policy – and its subsequent adoption by white football authorities during the period 1973–5 – drastically altered the landscape of professional football in South Africa. This chapter seeks to build on this argument by considering events in the immediate aftermath of the multinational tournaments, as well as FASA’s relationship with the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (locally) and FIFA (internationally). It has been argued that multinationalism was regarded as successful in terms of breaking down previous barriers of competition between the different racial groups, but that notable danger signs also emerged. The controversial nature of these highly racialised encounters led to calls for full integration at club level, even from within the ranks of white administrators. This chapter will argue that such calls for integration also need to be considered on the backdrop of another notable event, namely FIFA’s 1974 congress in Frankfurt.

The latter saw FASA move closer to the precipice of FIFA expulsion – a development that impacted on the strategy employed by white football’s governing body from that point onwards. Consequently the year 1976 saw a desperate attempt to retain (suspended) FIFA membership by arranging quasi-international matches against a touring team from Argentina. This was a significant development since the South African team was racially mixed – a first for football. This event also serves as a useful prism through which to analyse FASA’s relationship with the non-racial SASF – an important consideration since this relationship impacted on attempts to form a single controlling body for football in South Africa during this period. Additional developments under consideration in this chapter include the growing power shift towards black (African) professional football (with SANFA’s George Thabe as the leading figure), as well as FASA’s ultimate expulsion from FIFA in July 1976.

The Power Shift towards Black Professional Football

The shifting balance of power within South African football administration serves as a useful point of departure for analysing FASA’s standing during the mid-1970s. This dimension has been alluded to previously. In this regard the important component that black footballers and supporters represented within the multinational experiment led to increased confidence on the part of black administrators such as George Thabe. Reference has been made to the behind-the-scenes clash of personalities between the NFL’s general manager, Vivian Granger, and SANFA representatives that apparently led to the cancellation of the 1975

Embassy Multinational Series. In the wake of this cancellation *Sharpshoot Soccer* also speculated about the possible formation of “a new strong Black soccer power group” which would have included Thabe and possibly even Norman Middleton, the leader of the SASF.¹

Developments within the football press also seemed to symbolise this shift. In March 1975 the NFL’s official mouthpiece, *Ball and Turf*, was absorbed by *Sharpshoot Soccer* which became a monthly publication from that point onwards. It had, since August 1974, been published on a multiracial basis in the form of *Sharpshoot Soccer Weekly*, covering all professional leagues in South Africa. *Ball and Turf* had been the NFL’s officially sanctioned publication under the editorship of Vivian Granger for 15 years. Its absorption by another magazine was perhaps indicative that there was no longer a sufficient market for an NFL-only publication within the difficult prevailing economic climate at the time. Interest in the NFL was also dwindling in terms of attendances, as previously highlighted. The exact reasons behind the move are unclear, with *Ball and Turf*’s final editorial simply explaining that the decision was the result of discussions which had “been in progress for several months” between the two respective publishing companies.²

It is also worth considering the editorial path of *Sharpshoot Soccer* over the course of the ensuing year. During this time it continued to provide coverage to the three major professional leagues in South Africa, namely the NFL, NPSL and non-racial FPL. Whereas it still functioned as the official organ of the NFL, the reality was that the latter was now competing for editorial space with the two other leagues and as a result the magazine contained less in-depth coverage of the NFL compared to what had previously been the case with *Ball and Turf*. During this period the magazine was under the editorship (since April 1975) of Charles “Topper” Brown – a former manager of three Durban-based clubs in the NFL during the league’s early years.³ Then, suddenly in March 1976, the magazine’s structure and content changed completely. Richard Lyon, a suave businessman who was educated at the elite Michaelhouse private school in the Natal interior, purchased the magazine and took over as editor.⁴ Notably the senior assistant editor, Derrick Thema, and all contributing journalists were black. Consequently the publication’s sole focus from that

¹ “Soccer power group,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, October, 1975, 2. In the context of this magazine article the term “black” was used as an umbrella reference to Africans, coloureds and Indians. Under apartheid terminology Middleton was classified as coloured, even though he represented a non-racial organisation that rejected racial classifications altogether.

² “Ball and Turf’ in Merger,” *Ball and Turf*, February, 1975, 2.

³ *Sharpshoot Soccer*, April, 1975, 3.

⁴ Winsor Dobbin, telephonic interview with the author, April 23, 2015. Dobbin also points out that in reality “Topper” Brown was more of a figurehead editor whose name had been attached to the publication in the wake of the retirement of Ed Gray, the previous editor.

point onwards was black professional football.⁵ According to Winsor Dobbin, a football journalist who had been a contributor to *Sharpshoot Soccer* prior to the editorial change,

...[Lyon] was very aware that there was a...growing black middle class whose...soccer needs were not being catered for. So [he] bought the magazine and then...basically they then started looking at the black scene and [were] covering Kaizer Chiefs and Pirates et cetera rather than the white league.⁶

This development was symptomatic of a broader process within professional football at the time, namely the rise of the SANFA-run NPSL. The erasure of the NFL from the pages of *Sharpshoot Soccer* symbolised its decreasing relevance and increasing challenges experienced during this period. The fact that a businessman such as Richard Lyon saw an opportunity to seize on the rising popularity of black professional football within this milieu is highly instructive in terms of the overall power shift during this time.

In this regard it is also important to note trends relating to sponsorship. The 1975 FASA Annual Report indicates that the NFL was “having its ups and downs” in terms of this facet. The previous league sponsorship with British Petroleum (BP) was not renewed in 1975, although a “bumper” R50,000 sponsorship was obtained from Datsun-Nissan in its place. A smaller sponsorship from Coca Cola was also lost, whereas South African Breweries (SAB) did increase the Castle Cup sponsorship from R30,000 to R50,000.⁷ The Datsun-Nissan league sponsorship lasted only three years and was withdrawn after the 1977 NFL season which proved to be the league’s last.⁸ These developments were indicative of the league’s waning popularity during this period, and a far cry from what was happening within black football at the same time. The February 1976 issue of *Sharpshoot Soccer* contained a full page message from SANFA president, George Thabe, proudly previewing the final of the 1976 Sales House Cup, a SANFA-run competition:

After what was definitely our best ever year in 1975, the Sales House cup has got the new season off to such a tremendous start that I am now more confident than ever that this year will be even better than last year. We at SANFA are deeply indebted to Sales House for coming forward with the grand offer of [R10,000] sponsorship for this competition, and we must count ourselves fortunate that while sponsors are dropping out of the White NFL,

⁵ *Sharpshoot Soccer*, March, 1976, 3.

⁶ Winsor Dobbin, telephonic interview with the author, April 23, 2015.

⁷ FASA, Annual Report, 1975, 10, Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892–1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers).

⁸ FASA, Annual Report, 1977, 13, FASA papers.

SANFA's professional division is still attracting more and more potential sponsors.⁹

This serves to illustrate the growing attraction that black football represented to potential sponsors, as already pointed out by academics Alegi and Bolsmann.¹⁰ Whereas the R10,000 Sales House sponsorship referred to above could be viewed as a relatively small amount compared to existing NFL sponsorships at the time, this state of affairs soon changed – largely as a result of the advent of television in South Africa in January 1976. According to Alegi “companies relished the advertisement potential of soccer on television – a mass medium that allowed potential access to millions of black households”.¹¹ In this regard SAB – in addition to sponsoring white football's Castle Cup – increased its title sponsorship of the black NPSL (known as the Castle League) from R15,000 to R50,000 in 1976, and then even further to R75,000 in 1978, R200,000 in 1979 and R250,000 in 1980 – nearly a seventeen fold increase in the space of only five years.¹²

Another significant development during this period was the arrival in 1977 of the Mainstay League Cup – an experimental tournament which represented a further tentative step towards integration at club level. A comprehensive analysis of this competition follows in the next chapter. At this point it should simply be noted that it was organised under the auspices of the Football Council of South Africa (headed up by Thabe) and that a R70,000 sponsorship was obtained from Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery. The latter produced Mainstay, a cane spirit, as a sub-brand. The sponsorship was set to rise to R100,000 for the 1978 edition of the competition.¹³ As such these developments within football finance serve as an example of shifting sponsor attitudes – an important marker regarding the changing football landscape at the time. It is argued here that the overall power shift away from white professional football towards black professional football – both administratively and financially – constitutes a significant backdrop upon which the fates of both FASA and the NFL need to be considered.

⁹ George Thabe, “President's message,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, February, 1976, 9.

¹⁰ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 8–12.

¹¹ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 142.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Football Council of South Africa, Memorandum of Agreement with Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Ltd, March 4, 1977, 7, FASA papers.

Attempts to Avoid FIFA Expulsion: The 1976 Incoming Tour by the “Argentine Stars”

The multinational sports policy was originally intended to portray partial integration which still conformed to the apartheid doctrine of separate development. As a result the policy was dismissed as window dressing by critics both locally and internationally. It is important to note, however, that after FIFA's 1974 congress in Frankfurt even FASA officials realised that the policy's application within football would probably not be enough to stave off expulsion from world football's governing body. This became increasingly probable after events at the Frankfurt congress. During the latter a motion was tabled by Ethiopia proposing an amendment to the FIFA constitution whereby the issue of discrimination in sport by law gained centrality. The motion was carried and consequently Article 2 of the FIFA Statutes was altered to include the following point:

4.5. A National Association which tolerates, allows or organises competitions marked by discrimination or which is established *in a country where discrimination in sport is laid down by law* should not be admitted to FIFA or should be barred if it was...¹⁴

Given the South African government's apartheid policy and its effects on football (and sport in general) this placed FASA in an extremely precarious position as far as its (suspended) membership was concerned. Complete expulsion from FIFA had now become highly likely. In this regard Ethiopian Ydnekatchew Tessema, the president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), attempted to have FASA expelled immediately after the Frankfurt congress by writing to the FIFA executive committee to this effect. However, the committee ruled that such a decision could only be taken at a full FIFA congress meeting – the next incarnation of which was to take place at Montreal in 1976.¹⁵

In the wake of these developments FASA president, Dave Marais, opined that “the only chance [FASA] had of getting back into F.I.F.A. or getting back [temporarily was] to have multi racial soccer...[Multinational] soccer was making no impression on people overseas. The entire [setup] was politically motivated”.¹⁶ This marked an important shift in FASA strategy. As a result of this development the coming months were seen as a “critical stage”, leading to suggestions for the formation of a sub-committee consisting of representatives from FASA, the NFL as well as the other racially defined controlling bodies in order to “deal

¹⁴ Helmut Käser, Confidential letter to Dudley Zagnoev, April 15, 1976, 1, FASA papers. Emphasis included by author.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, August 10, 1974, 5, FASA papers.

with the situation".¹⁷ Marais and NFL general manager, Vivian Granger, also met with the minister of sport, Dr. Piet Koornhof, to discuss the FIFA membership issue.

Consequently it was decided to set up a meeting with all national football associations, including the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) headed up by Norman Middleton, in order to pursue the idea of forming a single controlling body for football in South Africa.¹⁸ However, the SASF backed out of this meeting at the last minute, thereby scuttling FASA's hopes of forming such a body at the time.¹⁹ In this regard the cold relations between FASA and the SASF – and the effect of this relationship on the former's quest to stave off FIFA expulsion – will be contextualised at a later juncture.

During the ensuing months FASA's international position did not improve, despite Granger and FASA secretary Dudley Zagnoev writing to various FIFA member countries pleading South Africa's case.²⁰ An extract from the minutes of FASA's 1975 AGM – this being approximately seven months after the FIFA congress in Frankfurt – summarises Dave Marais's views regarding the future of South African football at the time:

[Marais] felt that even if F.A.S.A. were given permission to play multi racial football at all levels he doubted whether [the body] would be back in F.I.F.A. He had to make the decision as to whether to have a confrontation with the Government in regard to multi racial football at all levels or to co-operate fully with the Government and try to have football across the colour line in this way [through multinationalism]. He believed that because of this attitude football in South Africa had progressed more than any other sport. Government policy did not allow mixed sport at Provincial or club level, and [Marais's] personal view was that until such time as there was a change in Government, some contact was better than no contact.²¹

Part of FASA's efforts to stem the deterioration of its position within FIFA was to entertain the possibility of hosting incoming tours by invitational teams comprising players with some international standing. The intention initially was for these teams to compete on South African soil within the multinational framework, thereby creating contact with teams from the racially defined controlling bodies in South Africa. During 1975 negotiations with two such groups – one from Argentina and one from Britain – commenced. An extract from Zagnoev's correspondence with Juan Carlos La Terza, a sports journalist in Argentina, is insightful in this regard:

¹⁷ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, August 10, 1974, 5, FASA papers.

¹⁸ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 6, 1974, 2–3, FASA papers.

¹⁹ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 27, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

²¹ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 8, 1975, 5, FASA papers.

We are continuing to try and retain our membership with F.I.F.A. and we are corresponding with numerous countries...Your idea of sending teams to South Africa is excellent and if you could ensure that the players you pick are TOP CLASS and WELL KNOWN, I would sort out the finance side...For your information, there is no restriction on colour, Black or White may come. This is despite what some newspapers say...Perhaps you could assist us and write an article in the various South American newspapers, or even in the European newspapers, on South Africa. It is very important that at the next Congress, South America votes for our continued membership with F.I.F.A. It is also very important that they vote and not abstain.²²

At the same time there were also discussions with Charles Mitten, a former Manchester United player and Newcastle United manager who was running his own sports promotion business. Mitten was interested in bringing an invitational team comprising prominent British footballers – most of whom were nearing the end of their playing careers – out to South Africa. Potential names included the likes of Gordon Banks, Peter Thompson, Denis Law, Bobby Charlton and Alan Ball. Mitten also attempted to obtain the signature of Portuguese star Eusebio, but the latter was under contract at a Mexican club for the proposed period in question (May 1976).²³

General Motors South Africa, in the form of its Chevrolet Dealer Team, agreed in principle to underwrite the costs for this incoming tour. Given South Africa's suspended FIFA membership the incoming British team would have been limited to matches against registered club teams locally, the likes of which would possibly have included the NFL's Highlands Park, Durban City and Cape Town City, as well as the NPSL's Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates.²⁴ Such matches would have avoided any repercussions in terms of violating the international suspension. The alternative of playing against a South African national team could, for example, have been construed as being an illegal international match. Mitten himself suggested that his touring side be registered as a club in South Africa in order to stay within FIFA rules.²⁵

Tentative negotiations for both tours proceeded, with General Motors also indicating a potential interest in sponsoring the Argentine visit (provisionally scheduled for February–March 1976) on condition that FASA could obtain government permission for this proposed venture and that the South African teams involved in the fixtures would “consist of players from across all the four ethnic groups”.²⁶ It would appear as if FASA then decided to proceed

²² Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Juan Carlos La Terza, October 21, 1975, FASA papers. Emphasis as contained in original letter.

²³ Charles Mitten, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, December 6, 1975, FASA papers.

²⁴ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Peter Ray, February 3, 1976, FASA papers.

²⁵ Charles Mitten, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, December 6, 1975, FASA papers.

²⁶ Peter Ray, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, January 15, 1976, FASA papers.

only with the British tour as Zagnoev sent word to Argentina on 29 January 1976 requesting the tour to be postponed to the following year. The reason cited was a supposed truncation of the South African football season “as a result of some of the problems in Angola”, therefore rendering February and March unsuitable for football at that stage.²⁷ There is no clear indication as to the reasons behind this decision since the war situation in Angola almost certainly had very little to do with the local football schedule, apart from troops – some of them professional footballers – being called up.

However, a week later there was a sudden about-turn by FASA, and Zagnoev sent an urgent telegram to Argentina cancelling the contents of his previous letter. He informed La Terza that he had “managed to arrange everything for the tour to take place” and that the first match would be scheduled for 16 March 1976.²⁸ This came a day after Zagnoev, Dave Marais and Peter Ray of General Motors had held a meeting with Piet Koornhof in Cape Town.²⁹ During that meeting the possibility of a South African XI (selected on merit) playing against an overseas team was discussed, and Marais subsequently reported to the Top Level Committee that Koornhof “would be very happy to sanction such a game”.³⁰ This development clearly transformed the proposed Argentine visit into a much more attractive proposition for FASA, leading to the sudden turnaround which ultimately brought the tour to fruition.

Negotiations continued with General Motors from this point onwards to sponsor the Argentine visit in addition to the Charles Mitten team from Britain.³¹ However, whereas the Argentine venture soon became a reality, the Mitten tour never materialised despite General Motors initially having agreed to underwrite it as well. After the meeting with Koornhof on 5 February 1976 Zagnoev directed a formal written request to the Department of Sport and Recreation for the Mitten tour to take place. The same protocol was followed for the Argentine tour.³² This indicates that both tours were still in line to take place at this point. However, communication with Mitten appears to have been sporadic from that point onwards. He wrote to Zagnoev on 17 March 1976 requesting “a definite yes or no” on the tour,³³ after which he was sent a telegram and follow-up letter dated 28 April 1976 and 29 April 1976 respectively. The latter items stated that “certain problems [had] arisen” and

²⁷ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Juan Carlos La Terza, January 29, 1976, FASA papers.

²⁸ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Juan Carlos La Terza, February 6, 1976, FASA papers.

²⁹ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Beyers Hoek, February 10, 1976, FASA papers.

³⁰ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, February 13, 1976, 3, FASA papers.

³¹ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Peter Ray, February 6, 1976, FASA papers.

³² Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Beyers Hoek, February 12, 1976 and Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Beyers Hoek, February 10, 1976, FASA papers.

³³ Charles Mitten, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, March 17, 1976, FASA papers.

suggested that the tour be postponed to the following year.³⁴ The nature of the problems was not divulged, but it is possible that General Motors might ultimately have been reluctant to follow through with this sponsorship given the potential costs involved. Zagnoev's proposed breakdown for the Mitten tour totalled R102,000, which was appreciably more than the proposed R72,220 for the Argentine tour.³⁵

At a Top Level Committee meeting held on 13 February 1976 Dave Marais announced that a FIFA delegation would be visiting South Africa in March of that year.³⁶ The delegation's visit sprouted from the aforementioned developments at FIFA's 1974 Frankfurt congress, after which the FIFA executive determined that such a delegation should visit South Africa before the Montreal congress in 1976. The purpose of such a visit would be to conduct interviews with all football stakeholders nationally and to submit a report to the FIFA executive regarding the state of affairs in the country.³⁷

At the same meeting Marais also requested the Top Level Committee's permission for a South African team "selected on merit" to compete against an overseas team during the delegation's visit – provided that such a visiting team could be sourced. He clearly already had the potential Argentine visit in mind and mentioned Koornhof's blessing for such a match to take place, and that a sponsor had also been lined up to underwrite the venture.³⁸ The Top Level Committee gave its permission and Marais and Zagnoev proceeded to fly to Argentina to finalise arrangements for the composite team, known as the "Argentine Stars", to visit South Africa.

The team consisted of ageing Argentine players (some with previous international experience) that had either retired or even been suspended for offenses such as bribery.³⁹

³⁴ Dudley Zagnoev, Telegram to Charles Mitten, April 28, 1976 and Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Charles Mitten, April 29, 1976, FASA papers.

³⁵ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Peter Ray, February 12, 1976 and Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to Peter Ray, February 11, 1976, FASA papers. In a telephonic interview conducted on May 7, 2015, Zagnoev could not recall the correspondence with Mitten and hence this remains a point of speculation on the part of the author.

³⁶ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, February 13, 1976, 2, FASA papers.

³⁷ Report of the FIFA Delegation on the Visit to South Africa: 14 to 17 March 1976, 1, PV476/1/34/21/2, Piet Koornhof Private Documents, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, South Africa (hereafter cited as Koornhof papers).

³⁸ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, February 13, 1976, 2–3, FASA papers. General Motors agreed to underwrite any potential losses from such a tour provided that it was run by the Top Level Committee and that profits were split between the four racial groups. See Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1976, 3, FASA papers.

³⁹ Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015 and Sy Lerman interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, dir. Catherine Muller (South Africa: Little Bird Company Limited, 2006). The team was managed by Argentina's captain at the 1966 FIFA World Cup in England, Antonio Rattín, who was famously sent off during the quarter-final against the hosts. See "S.A. mixed soccer first for team tourists," *Natal Mercury*, March 3, 1976, in Report of the FIFA Delegation. Incidentally the starting XI for the opening match against the South African XI contained a former international defender, Carmelo Simeone, who was 41 at the time – hence *African Soccer*

Consequently they fell outside the jurisdiction of their own football association (and FIFA) and the tour could proceed on an “international” basis without incurring the wrath of the world body. There was, however, some controversy regarding this issue during the buildup. Sam Ramsamy of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) confirmed that telegrams were sent to Argentina’s Foreign Ministry, the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa as well as FIFA, demanding action to be taken in this regard. “We are shocked that the Argentine federation has collaborated with apartheid and are asking Fifa to take immediate action against South Africa,” he said.⁴⁰

This prompted FIFA’s general secretary, Dr. Helmut Käser, to look into the matter, but ultimately the venture went ahead as a result of the fact that it was not organised in conjunction with the Argentine federation, but rather outside the scope of FIFA. The fact that the tour was scheduled in such a way as to coincide with the presence of the FIFA delegation is an important dimension to this episode. This represented a final roll of the dice by FASA in terms of trying to stave off FIFA expulsion at the latter’s upcoming congress in Montreal that year, and Marais stated his hope that the first tour match “would be against a mixed S.A. team, selected on merit to show the FIFA delegation that blacks and whites can and want to play together”.⁴¹

The buildup to the much anticipated opening fixture on 16 March 1976 at the Rand Stadium was marred by further controversy. Firstly there was uncertainty over the proposed colours of the South African team’s playing kit, with the *Rand Daily Mail* speculating that *verkrampptes* (ultra conservatives) within the National Party were influencing the organisers in this regard. Despite the fact that Springbok colours were not going to be awarded to the South African players (on account of the fixture not being an officially recognised international match),⁴² reports indicated that green-and-gold jerseys were originally ordered for the fixture. These would at least have mimicked the recognised national colours for South African sports teams, but Sy Lerman reported that the organisers came under pressure from politicians to alter this scheme, forcing them to consider green-and-white or even red jerseys

Mirror’s description of the Argentinians as “ageing soldiers of yesteryear”. See Amos Mngoma, “Unbelievable,” *African Soccer Mirror*, April, 1976, 6.

⁴⁰ “Argentine Stars tour hit by flak,” *Natal Mercury*, March 10, 1976, in Report of the FIFA Delegation.

⁴¹ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, March 4, 1976, 5, FASA papers.

⁴² Sy Lerman, “Eight Blacks in merit SA squad,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 12, 1976, file S241.7.3, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Press Cuttings 1928–1998 (Part A), Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as SAIRR press cuttings). The non-awarding of Springbok colours sidestepped another potentially controversial issue since the idea of black Springboks would undoubtedly have been unpalatable to *verkrampptes* within the National Party.

as alternatives.⁴³ The team ultimately played in predominantly green (and white) colours in the first “international” fixture.⁴⁴

The second (and more worrying) controversy for the organisers was the initial refusal of black clubs in the NPSL to release their players for the series against the Argentine Stars. This sprouted from an internal dispute between SANFA and the NPSL relating to payment issues, the suspension of an official and the demand by the NPSL for more autonomy.⁴⁵ Given that eight black players had been selected for the fifteen-man South African squad, this development threatened to scuttle FASA and the Top Level Committee’s efforts to have an integrated national team play in front of the three-man FIFA delegation.⁴⁶ A truce between the two warring factions was finally called four days before the encounter and the black players were released to join the South African squad.⁴⁷

The match itself was played in front of 30,000 spectators at the Rand Stadium with the FIFA delegation also in attendance. The latter comprised Harry Cavan (a FIFA vice-president) of Northern Ireland, Dr. Juan Goni of Chile and Hiram Sosa of Guatemala.⁴⁸ The initial outcome of the encounter could not have been better for the organisers. After a scoreless opening 35 minutes, Ephraim “Jomo” Sono broke the deadlock and proceeded to add three more goals to his tally in a 5–0 South African victory. Patrick “Ace” Nstoelengoe of Kaizer Chiefs was the other scorer on the night. The result was hailed throughout the press with the *Rand Daily Mail* reacting as follows:

[The match] seemed to pave the way for a new era in soccer. In fact, it is doubtful whether apartheid-inflicted and multinational-plagued South African sport can ever be the same again after this stunning success. It was like the glittering light at the end of a long, dark tunnel as the Black and White South Africans combined uncannily for players who had hardly practiced together. The final score tells nothing of this storybook success, with the Argentinian goal undergoing a continual siege and the South Africans unlucky not to score a dozen goals.⁴⁹

⁴³ Sy Lerman, “No green and gold for mixed side,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 13, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁴⁴ Green and gold colours were used in the second encounter, played in Cape Town two weeks later. See Sy Lerman, “McHaughton KO’d in angry scenes,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 1, 1976, 24.

⁴⁵ “Stars pull out of SA mixed XI,” *Argus*, March 5, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁴⁶ Sy Lerman, “Eight Blacks in merit SA squad,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 12, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. The South African squad contained no coloured or Indian players since it was felt that the best players from these racial groups played in the non-racial Federation Professional League and consequently fell outside the reach of the Top Level Committee.

⁴⁷ Sy Lerman, “A cease-fire,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 13, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁴⁸ Report of the FIFA Delegation, 6.

⁴⁹ Sy Lerman, “1...2...3...4...Sono,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 17, 1976, 30.

DRUM expanded on this by stating that “for the first time in the history of our sports Black and White South Africans cheered for the home team. Some Whites even joined in the shrill whistling and ululating that is part of the scene at Black stadiums”. It further argued that the memorable night “proved to the three-man FIFA delegation at the stadium that we can have mixed football, and that every football lover wants mixed football”.⁵⁰ The subsequent outcome of the FIFA report will be explored later, but at this stage it is necessary to reflect on the significance of this encounter in the context of the broader football landscape at the time.



Figure 4.1 – The first integrated South African “national” football team in their green-and-white playing kit.⁵¹

Despite the tour having taken place within the existing multinational framework, with five subsequent matches played against racially defined South African teams,⁵² the opening match did represent a tentative step closer towards potential integration. As was the case with the South African Games football tournament in 1973, this new development provided a glimpse of an alternative reality to that which had been the norm at the time. An anecdote

⁵⁰ “All races cheer the same soccer side,” *DRUM*, April 15, 1976, 7. Unlike the multinational matches of the preceding years black and white spectators were not segregated for this fixture – a factor which added to the significance of the occasion.

⁵¹ Photo from *DRUM*, April 15, 1976, 7.

⁵² The final tour match was a second “international” encounter played at Hartleyvale in Cape Town on 31 March 1976 in front of 13,000 spectators. It did not live up to the billing of the first encounter and was a highly tempestuous affair that ended in a 1–1 draw. During the course of the match the referee, Basil McNaughton, was also attacked and knocked out by an Argentine player after disallowing a goal! The Argentine Stars produced a string of poor results leading up to this fixture, losing to a White XI (that included three black players), as well as the Black XI (twice), while managing a win against the Coloured XI – the team’s solitary victory on tour. See Sy Lerman, “McHaughton KO’d in angry scenes,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 1, 1976, 24.

recounted by Jomo Sono in 2014 is useful in terms of illustrating the previously unheard of practice of something as simple as blacks and whites sharing the same dressing room:

...the dressing room was a bit tense...you know...between black and white players, and because I had a sense of humour I was the first one to undress and walk around. I said 'hey you guys are scared to see a white man undressed and a black man undressed'. So I just took off my clothes and I just walk across and they started laughing and I broke the ice...at the training ground. And from there onwards it was a united South Africa. We didn't see the colour, all we wanted to do was to prove to the South African government that black and white can play together with no problem.⁵³

Sono went on to describe the match as “the game that changed a lot of things”⁵⁴ – a view shared by teammate Patson Banda who, in 2006, pinpointed the encounter as “the beginning of good things for South African football”. “Believe me or not, the spirit in our camp at that time, it's like we've been together for 4–5 years before that camp. We were one you know. We had only one objective, that [was] to beat Argentina as South Africans,” he recalled.⁵⁵ Some of their white counterparts also have fond memories of the occasion. Highlands Park midfielder, Martin Cohen, recalls:

...I've never experienced this in my life because...colour wasn't even in the change room. Whether it was spiritual-looking – whatever it was – because football won on the night...And we could have beaten anyone that night because we were innocent of the apartheid and black-and-white, and there was no colour in that change room. At the Rand Stadium they have a massive bath and we all got into [it] after the game – we still got some pictures of that. And soccer won on the night, and that was one of my highlights of my soccer career.⁵⁶

⁵³ Jomo Sono interviewed in Supersport, *In Conversation With Jomo Sono*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDwLoe1_Hlc&feature=share (published August 13, 2014).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Patson Banda interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, 2006.

⁵⁶ Martin Cohen, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, February 2, 2015. There is no denying the fact that the unique occasion – i.e. black and white footballers playing together in a “national team” for the first time – would have had a galvanising effect on the South African players. In terms of the one-sided result it is worth juxtaposing this element with the physical condition and age of the Argentine players as well as the potential impact of playing at altitude in Johannesburg.



Figure 4.2 – Black and white players celebrating in the Rand Stadium bath after the match – an unheard of practice under apartheid.⁵⁷

Stuart Lilley, a Highlands Park defender at the time, also regarded the occasion as significant:

They say it's one language – football is one language. And that's what it was, because believe me when we scored, you hug a player, you're not hugging any race, you are hugging a person...We were pioneers. Jomo, Ace, myself, Rodney Bush – we were all pioneers of the start of getting rid of the problems that the country had, and football was the first, before cricket, before rugby.⁵⁸

Opposed to these glowing reflections by some of the players that participated in the match is the alternative view from those within the non-racial movement that saw the encounter as another form of window dressing implemented by the government and white football administrators. Representatives of the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) described it as exactly that during a meeting with the FIFA delegation on the morning of the match.⁵⁹ The SASF had also addressed a letter to the delegation two days earlier urging them not to attend the encounter, citing FASA as “openly flouting the provisions and the spirit of FIFA Statutes” by “conniving with a FIFA affiliate [Argentina] and without the approval of FIFA”.⁶⁰ However, the tour was not arranged through the Argentine federation, but rather through Zagnoev's contact in Argentina in an unofficial capacity. Dave Marais

⁵⁷ Contained in Julian Turner, *The History of South African Football 1955–1985: Segregation to Integration, Part 1*, DVD-ROM Disc 4, 2012.

⁵⁸ Stuart Lilley interviewed in *Pitch Revolution*, 2006.

⁵⁹ Report of the FIFA Delegation, 4.

⁶⁰ SASF Letter to FIFA delegation, as Appendix D, Report of the FIFA Delegation.

noted in the press that the team consisted of “ex-internationals, players whose contracts have expired and others who have left the mainstream of their country’s soccer for financial and other considerations”.⁶¹ Furthermore, the three-man FIFA delegation subsequently reported that

...although the match was arranged to impress them, never-the-less the South African team was multi-racial and therefore could be regarded as being progressive. In these circumstances, no useful purpose could be served by refusing the invitation to attend.⁶²

It is also worth reflecting on the composition of the South African XI on the night. In a memorandum handed to the FIFA delegation the SASF further criticised the venture as constituting an attempt to trick FIFA into believing that mixed play was occurring in South Africa:

An innovation has recently crept into South Africa sport whereby the all-White controlling bodies which do not have mixed play at club level invite a few Blacks to play in international matches...The SASF again condemns this artificial system of Invitation XIs because it is a means of “window-dressing” used by FASA to bluff FIFA and the world that there is mixed play in South Africa.⁶³

Whereas this view could be applied to an event such as the 1973 South African Games – where the government sanctioned the participation of a black, coloured and Indian minority as a means for deflecting international pressure – it is difficult to reconcile this argument with what transpired against the Argentine Stars. As pointed out earlier, eight members of the fifteen-man South African squad were black, including six of the eleven starters in the actual match – a majority in both cases. Consequently this represented more than just “a few blacks” as token representatives. It would be correct to contend that the team was not selected on a truly merit basis since it did not include top players affiliated with the SASF. However, given the rift which existed between the latter and the Top Level Committee at the time, the selection did represent an attempt to construct a team based on the best available players – irrespective of race – within the jurisdiction of the Top Level Committee.

It is argued here that this development was also in line with the overall power shift towards black professional football which had been gaining momentum over the preceding year, as highlighted earlier. Whereas the Top Level Committee was still under the white chairmanship

⁶¹ “S.A. mixed soccer first for team tourists,” *Natal Mercury*, March 3, 1976, in Report of the FIFA Delegation. By referring to players that had “left the mainstream of their country’s soccer” he avoided having to point out that some of this was as a result of purported bribery!

⁶² Report of the FIFA Delegation, 5.

⁶³ SASF Memorandum to FIFA Delegation, 6, as Appendix E, Report of the FIFA Delegation.

of Dave Marais, it is important to bear in mind that the Argentine Stars episode occurred at a time when it was no longer possible for FASA to simply disregard the views of the George Thabe-run SANFA. After all, the cooperation of the latter was a basic prerequisite in FASA's attempts to stave off its expulsion from FIFA. Ultimately the 1976 incoming tour by the Argentine Stars represents an important lens through which to consider the changing football landscape at the time. Despite SASF-led protests to the contrary, it did represent a crossing into previously uncharted territory, namely partially integrated football – albeit at “national” level only. The tour gains further significance when considered on the backdrop of what occurred in its aftermath.

FASA, the SASF and an Ideological Fault Line

During their short visit to South Africa the three-man FIFA delegation conducted separate meetings with representatives from the various controlling bodies, namely FASA, SANFA, SASA, SAFA, the Top Level Committee, SASF as well as Koornhof himself.⁶⁴ From the delegation's point of view

...[there] appeared to be a genuine will and desire for South Africa to be able to resume its place in World football and to this end [the controlling bodies] had all expressed a willingness to co-operate in an effort to establish one South African National Football Association, within the spirit and intention of the Statutes of the FIFA.⁶⁵

The proposed formation of a single controlling body for football in South Africa was a key facet in the attempts to prevent expulsion from world football's governing body. This point was emphasised by FIFA's general secretary, Dr. Helmut Käser, in a confidential letter to Dudley Zagnoev prior to the Montreal congress in July. According to Käser it was “of paramount importance” that

...South Africa will embrace all football organisations as suggested by the [FIFA] delegation when in South Africa including the South African Soccer Federation. Whether this body would appear under your present name, Football Association of South Africa, or under another name would not matter. There would not be any new procedure for membership as the restructure would be a purely internal matter of your organisation.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Report of the FIFA Delegation, 1–6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁶ Helmut Käser, Confidential letter to Dudley Zagnoev, April 15, 1976, FASA papers. Emphasis as contained in original letter.

However, whereas there was general agreement from all quarters – including the SASF – regarding the need to establish a single controlling body for football in South Africa, such a body had not yet been established as a result of an important ideological fault line, namely the matter of non-racialism *versus* multiracialism.⁶⁷ The two opposing camps consisted of those entities operating within government structures (the Top Level Committee and its four constituent bodies) and those from within the non-racial movement which regarded the actions of government and any government-aligned entities with increasing suspicion during the 1970s. The SASF and its parent organisation, the South African Council on Sport (SACOS), fell into the latter category and their suspicion was often with merit, although concomitantly their unwillingness to compromise at key junctures is also worth reflecting upon later.

A notable stumbling block towards the formation of a single controlling body was the differing viewpoints regarding the potential implementation of integrated football. The Top Level Committee constituents – and FASA in particular – argued that gradual steps should be taken in this regard, and at this point (March 1976) hoped that multinationalism was essentially a transitional phase towards such an outcome. To them integration had to be rolled out from the top downwards, starting at “international level” with an integrated South African team, and then progressing towards club level eventually. The arrangement of the integrated matches against the Argentine Stars demonstrated this approach. Furthermore, all the components of this gradual process had to fall in line with government policy and the laws of South Africa, with the intention of gaining concessions over time.

Opposed to this was the view of the SASF (and SACOS) which demanded immediate integration at all levels on a non-racial basis. They regarded multinationalism not only as window dressing, but also as an affirmation of the government’s racist policies. SACOS, for example, described the policy “as a negation of the principles of non discrimination in sport and designed to maintain the racial discrimination” prevalent at the time.⁶⁸ In addition a notable accusation directed at FASA was that the latter was in fact “hiding behind a fallacy that it does not wish to violate the Law”.⁶⁹ In this regard the SASF argued that there was no law prohibiting mixed football at the time, and from its point of view there was a clear difference between law and policy. In its presentation to the FIFA delegation it cited

⁶⁷ Both concepts represented integration per definition, but the difference lay in their respective underpinnings. “Non-racialism” entailed completely rejecting both the notion of race as well as the government’s racial classification of citizens. “Multiracialism” accepted such racial classifications as the prevailing reality within South African society and proposed integration within this framework.

⁶⁸ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 17, 1973, 4, Francois Cleophas private collection (hereafter cited as Cleophas collection).

⁶⁹ Report of the FIFA Delegation, 4.

previously obtained legal opinion that supported this notion,⁷⁰ although the feasibility of such a confrontational approach to government policy has to be viewed with some skepticism. For example, the government already warned in February 1963 that any non-compliance with its policy against mixed sport would potentially lead to the introduction of further legislation that would bring about the desired effect.⁷¹

It was within this atmosphere of distrust that the discussions with the FIFA delegation took place in March 1976. The latter's report, compiled in the aftermath of the South African visit, provides useful insight into the animosity that existed between the two factions, as well as attempts by both sides to portray themselves in a more favourable light. FASA, on the one hand, claimed a membership of some 300,000 players⁷² – a number far greater than the actual reality. FASA's 1976 Annual Report shows that the figure was closer to 38,000, even if junior players were included.⁷³ This was most probably an attempt to portray itself as a much larger body in order to avoid potential questioning over its dominant role within South African football administration – this despite controlling a much smaller number of players than George Thabe's SANFA, which reported a membership of 350,000 players.⁷⁴

On the other hand, during its discussions with the FIFA delegation the SASF claimed that it had "more white players than [FASA]"⁷⁵ – also a blatant misrepresentation of the actual truth. In light of this continuing power struggle it is not surprising that a compromise was not reached prior to the FIFA congress held in Montreal a few months later. This being said it is important to guard against an oversimplified compartmentalisation of the issues at hand. In this regard it is worth reflecting on developments in the preceding years which ultimately shaped this fluid process leading up to FASA's eventual expulsion from FIFA.

The year 1973 serves as a useful reference point since this marked the arrival of the South African Games as a multinational project of national importance, as well as the formation of

⁷⁰ SASF Memorandum to FIFA Delegation, 7. The legal opinion related to the case of the Aurora Cricket Club, a racially mixed cricket team consisting of white, Indian and coloured players, which in 1973 applied to join the second division of the (white) Maritzburg Cricket Union. The legal opinion obtained concluded that "the legality of a multiracial club was assured as long as certain proprieties were met". See Christopher Merrett, "Aurora: The Challenge of Non-Racial Cricket to the Apartheid State of the mid-1970s," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, 4 (2001): 99. Part of the legal argument related to the government's potential definition of the phrase "substantial period of time" as it pertained to an individual from one race group occupying an area reserved for those from a different race group. Consequently a bizarre situation could arise whereby a batsman would be in contravention of the law for scoring a century (which would take hours for example), but would not be in the wrong for scoring a duck (which would take mere minutes)! See Annexure J, SASF Memorandum to FIFA Delegation.

⁷¹ Mary Draper, *Sport and Race in South Africa* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1963), 10.

⁷² Report of the FIFA Delegation, 1.

⁷³ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

⁷⁴ Report of the FIFA Delegation, 2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

SACOS as a response to multinationalism itself. But before proceeding with an analysis of the ensuing period, it is important to note the long-standing history of animosity between the two factions. By 1973 the relationship (or rather the lack of one) between FASA and the SASF had already been characterised by approximately 20 years of bitterness and acrimony. Having been formed in September 1951 the SASF soon communicated with the white-controlled South African Football Association (SAFA, later to become known as FASA) regarding the potential formation of a link between the two organisations.⁷⁶ SAFA was not obliging in this regard and had its application for FIFA membership (lodged in June 1951 prior to the formation of the SASF) ratified at the 1952 Helsinki congress. In its 1976 memorandum to the visiting FIFA delegation the SASF characterised SAFA's affiliation to FIFA (in 1952) as "a real stab in the back" at the outset of interactions between the two entities.⁷⁷ Bolsmann also refers to SAFA's paternalistic approach towards the Federation's initial inquiries regarding the forging of a possible link – an attitude which contributed to the SASF's repeated attempts over the remainder of the decade to supplant SAFA as South Africa's affiliate at FIFA.⁷⁸

The arrival in 1959 of professional football in the form of the NFL brought a new dimension to this conflict, particularly once its non-racial equivalent, the South African Soccer League (SASL) was established in 1961. Alegi points out that "the white political and sporting establishment perceived nonracial sport as threatening and sought to eradicate it from the social geography of apartheid". A "war of attrition" ensued in which white football administrators (such as Vivian Granger, the NFL's general manager) and municipal officials worked to deny SASL clubs access to municipal grounds.⁷⁹ A notable example of this was the Non-European Affairs Department's closure of the Natalspruit Indian Sports Ground in Johannesburg on 6 April 1963. The venue was due to host SASL matches that day but upon arrival spectators found that municipal authorities had literally (re)moved the goalposts, in addition to locking the gates.⁸⁰ The struggle for access to playing fields continued over the coming years and ultimately the SASL was unable to overcome these difficulties, folding before its 1966 season.⁸¹ The concept of a professional league played on a non-racial basis was only resurrected in 1969 with the formation of the Federation Professional League (FPL), affiliated to the SASF.

⁷⁶ Chris Bolsmann, "White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892–1977," *Soccer & Society* 11, 1–2 (2010): 36.

⁷⁷ SASF Memorandum to FIFA Delegation, 2.

⁷⁸ For a detailed account of this chain of events see Bolsmann, "White football in South Africa," 36–8.

⁷⁹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 132.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 132–5.

However, the issue of playing fields continued to linger and this brings the analysis back to 1973. On 14 April that year a meeting took place between FASA, the other Top Level Committee representatives as well as Norman Middleton's SASF. This was a rare occasion where all the football controlling bodies were present at one meeting and the minutes provides revealing insight into the power balance within football at the time. FASA's Dave Marais had convened the meeting at the request of the Johannesburg City Council Management Committee – an entity with which a previous joint meeting had been held regarding the issue of ground allocation. The stated purpose of the follow-up meeting, according to Marais, was to discuss “the possibility of the Federation becoming affiliated to the Football Association of South Africa”.⁸²

However, the SASF representatives saw it differently with George Singh (a veteran administrator and prominent role player within the SASF since the early 1950s) indicating that they were under the impression that the issue of ground allocation was going to be discussed.⁸³ In this regard a number of opposing views concerning various issues surfaced during the subsequent discussions. In a typical cloak-and-dagger atmosphere it also emerged during the course of the meeting that one of the SASF representatives, D. Ramlall, was using a tape recorder, which was turned off at Marais's request.⁸⁴

Points of contention included the issue of integrated football at all levels. Middleton referred to a statement by Marais after the recently completed South African Games football tournament as an indication that FASA and the Federation's aims were essentially the same in terms of achieving mixed play. However, Marais was quick to point out that Middleton had read too much into his statement and clarified that FASA “wanted national teams to be selected on merit” and “did not seek a confrontation with the Government”. He referred to a survey conducted amongst FASA's divisional associations the previous year in which the idea of multiracial football was tested. The responses indicated that only national teams should be mixed.⁸⁵

Alegi and Bolsmann have already pointed to the results of this 1972 survey as an indication of FASA's intention to project “substantive change abroad (especially to FIFA), while maintaining control and privilege at home”.⁸⁶ Marais's exchange with Middleton supports this notion in that FASA was happy with multinational developments at that time and certainly did

⁸² Minutes, Meeting Between the Football Association of South Africa, the Top Level Committee and the South African Soccer Federation, April 14, 1973, 1, PV476/1/34/21/1, Koornhof papers.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1–2.

⁸⁶ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 4.

not seek to immediately throw open the gates towards integration at all levels. Middleton then referred to the legal opinion (previously cited above) indicating that there was no law prohibiting mixed play. Marais rebuffed this argument by challenging the SASF to test this statement by selecting two mixed teams and seeing “what the government’s reaction to this would be”.⁸⁷ Marais also made the point – certainly with some merit – that to “say there was no law against multi racial teams was all very well. The government could stop this in various ways”.⁸⁸

Discussions did also turn to the issue of ground allocation. George Singh referred to the previous war of attrition whereby FASA – under the presidency of Fred Fell at the time – made representations “to various City Councils to bar the use of grounds to non-affiliates of [FASA]”.⁸⁹ Marais denied any knowledge of this – which was a lie for a couple of reasons. Firstly, he had already been the chairman of the NFL since 1959 as well as a FASA vice-president since March 1962.⁹⁰ This placed him in the upper echelons of white football administration during the period when the likes of Vivian Granger was engaging in “a war to the death” with the non-racial SASL.⁹¹

Secondly, in a memorandum to Piet Koornhof, sent in December 1972, Marais stated that “after FASA’s suspension [at FIFA’s 1964 congress in Tokyo] members of the association returned to South Africa and immediately started a campaign to convince city councils to prohibit the Federation from using their fields”.⁹² He was therefore clearly aware of these previous developments during the deliberations with the SASF officials in April 1973. Even more striking is the following extract from the memorandum to Koornhof:

FASA is of the opinion that if the city councils of Durban, Cape Town and Pietermaritzburg adopted the attitude of the Johannesburg city council (associations wanting to use their fields must be affiliated to FASA) then FASA, which is recognised by the State, will be able to achieve much to limit the growing influence of the Federation. FASA requests that the Department of Sport and Recreation investigate the activities of the Federation and possibly limit the use of soccer fields to bodies that are affiliated to FASA.⁹³

⁸⁷ Minutes, Meeting Between the Football Association of South Africa, the Top Level Committee and the South African Soccer Federation, April 14, 1973, 2 and 6.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁰ See Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, March 8, 1962, 1, FASA papers.

⁹¹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 134.

⁹² Dave Marais, Memorandum to Piet Koornhof, December 19, 1972, 2, PV476/1/34/34/1, Koornhof papers. Translated from Afrikaans.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

So not only was Marais aware of the previous campaign against the SASF during the 1960s, but he was in fact also engaging in a new campaign behind the scenes in the months leading up to the discussions with the SASF.

Singh, however, indicated that the SASF was not there “to make a political issue”, and requested FASA to write to the various city councils regarding the matter of ground access. The SASF wanted FASA to indicate that they had no objection to grounds being made available by these councils to an entity (the SASF) that was not affiliated to the white controlling body. In response Marais threw the proverbial book at the SASF, stating that “[it] was not for F.A.S.A. to make suggestions to the [councils]” and that “F.A.S.A. could not act or speak for non affiliates”.⁹⁴ This was undoubtedly a tactical move to try and force the SASF to affiliate to FASA – a situation that would certainly have assisted the latter’s quest for readmission into FIFA since FASA would then essentially have been able to portray itself as a single, multiracial entity (of sorts) controlling all footballers in South Africa.

Affiliating to FASA was obviously not an acceptable option to the SASF, particularly bearing in mind the lack of rapport up to that point and the fact that such a potential relationship was regarded as one in which the SASF would be subservient to FASA. As a counter offer its representatives suggested that all existing bodies, including FASA and the SASF, should disband and form a single controlling body. Middleton even indicated that he would accept Marais as the chairman of such a body.⁹⁵ In response Marais, again arguing from a position of strength, stated that FASA was already officially recognised by the government and FIFA and that consequently “there was no good reason to form a new body”. He also indicated that, should the SASF be successful in its attempts to supplant FASA as the officially recognised controlling body affiliated to FIFA, then “[Marais] would be the first to apply for affiliation to a national body [namely the SASF] which was recognised internationally”.⁹⁶

It is important to bear in mind that Marais was able to make such a theoretical argument from a position of relative comfort considering the healthy relationship that he and FASA enjoyed with Sir Stanley Rous, President of FIFA at the time.⁹⁷ While Rous was at the helm of FIFA it was improbable that the world governing body would suddenly recognise an alternative South African association in its place. In fact Marais confirmed as much to the

⁹⁴ Minutes, Meeting Between the Football Association of South Africa, the Top Level Committee and the South African Soccer Federation, April 14, 1973, 3.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6–7.

⁹⁷ Over the course of his FIFA presidency, which commenced in 1961, Rous sided with FASA in its extended administrative battle against the SASF. This ultimately contributed to him being ousted as FIFA president in 1974. See Paul Darby, “Stanley Rous’s ‘Own Goal’: Football Politics, South Africa and the Contest for the FIFA Presidency in 1974,” *Soccer & Society* 9, 2 (2008): 259–72.

FASA officers in a meeting the day before, stating that “at the last F.I.F.A. Congress [in Paris in 1972], the Executive of F.I.F.A. took a resolution that they were not prepared to correspond with the Federation or to recognise them”.⁹⁸ As a result Marais’s assertion that he would affiliate to the SASF was unlikely to ever be tested. At the meeting’s conclusion he urged the Federation to “see if they could in the interests of football make some decision [regarding affiliation to FASA]”.⁹⁹ This in essence represented an ultimatum in which the SASF would continue to be denied access to municipal grounds unless it affiliated to FASA.

Towards Forming a Single Controlling Body: FASA Changes Strategy

The aforementioned episode represents an important marker regarding the power balance and prevailing attitudes within South African football administration at the time. FASA, in spite of its nine year-long international suspension, still occupied a dominant position locally. In this regard it was uncompromising in its attitude towards the SASF’s proposals and also regarded 1973’s multinational developments as a sufficient breakthrough to improve its international standing with FIFA. However, the outcome of the latter’s 1974 congress in Frankfurt a year later proved to be a major turning point. Whereas this led to a significant event on the field of play, namely the first integrated South African “national” team playing against the Argentine Stars in 1976, there was also a shift in FASA strategy relating to the boardroom. This is to be explored henceforth.

At a meeting of FASA’s executive following the 1974 FIFA congress Marais stated that expulsion from the world governing body would “cause havoc in football in South Africa. Players from overseas would run back overseas and overseas clubs would be able to take [South African] players without paying for them”.¹⁰⁰ As indicated earlier, Marais and Vivian Granger subsequently met with Koornhof, who was also dismayed at the outcome of the Frankfurt congress.¹⁰¹ The minister had suggested that another meeting with the SASF would “be advantageous”, whereupon Marais explained the SASF’s previous and repeated insistence that FASA disband in favour of the formation of a new solitary controlling body. He admitted that “there was [previously] no real danger of [FASA] being expelled from F.I.F.A.”, but that “the position now was altered”.¹⁰² This prompted a change in strategy and it was decided to convene a round-table meeting of all the controlling bodies, including the SASF,

⁹⁸ Minutes, FASA Meeting of Officers, April 13, 1973, 2, FASA papers.

⁹⁹ Minutes, Meeting Between the Football Association of South Africa, the Top Level Committee and the South African Soccer Federation, April 14, 1973, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, August 10, 1974, 7, FASA papers.

¹⁰¹ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 6, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2–3.

in order to investigate the possibility of forming a “Supreme Council” for football in South Africa.¹⁰³

This meeting was set to take place on 15 September 1974, but a revealing development prior to this saw Granger meeting with Norman Middleton (on Marais’s suggestion) in order to test the concept of a “Supreme Council” with him. Notably Granger reported that Middleton was “enthusiastic” about the idea.¹⁰⁴ However, a day before the meeting was due to take place FASA received a telegram stating that the Federation was “not prepared to meet”.¹⁰⁵ This scuttled plans for the formation of a single controlling body for football in the foreseeable future, and it is worth reflecting on the possible reasoning behind the SASF’s late about-turn. It was stated earlier that a danger of “over-compartmentalisation” exists when considering the various fault lines which prevailed within football administration during this period, and this incident serves as an example in this regard. In order to better contextualise these developments it is necessary to consider Middleton’s position within SACOS, which had been formed the year before.

Middleton was a key driving force in the formation of SACOS, having originally brought together various non-racial sports organisations at a conference in September 1970.¹⁰⁶ This ad hoc committee, as it became known, eventually gave rise to a permanent national organisation in the form of SACOS in 1973, with Middleton elected as its first president.¹⁰⁷ The SASF was also the organisation’s largest affiliate.¹⁰⁸ Prior to the formation of SACOS the ad hoc committee encouraged its members to enter into dialogue with white associations regarding the potential consolidation of the various non-racial and racially based controlling authorities into integrated bodies responsible for administering the different sports codes in South Africa.¹⁰⁹ However, by the time SACOS was formed this approach had produced no meaningful results, giving rise to much frustration on the part of the non-racial bodies and leading to a more aggressive stance under the SACOS umbrella.

At the latter’s founding meeting a resolution was adopted requesting that non-racial organisations “seek membership of the relevant International organisations” as a result of

¹⁰³ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 6, 1974, 3, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 27, 1974, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁶ Minutes, SACOS First Conference of National Non-Racial Sports Organisations, September 6, 1970, 5, Cleophas collection.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 17, 1973, 7, Cleophas collection.

¹⁰⁸ Douglas Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six? The Politics of the South African Sports Boycott,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 38, 3 (2003): 485.

¹⁰⁹ Minutes, SACOS First Conference of National Non-Racial Sports Organisations, September 6, 1970, 8, Cleophas collection.

the “lack of co-operation from racial organisations”.¹¹⁰ This forceful approach would in later years crystallise into a fully-fledged principle of non-collaboration which Douglas Booth aptly describes as a “lodestar” for SACOS during the 1980s.¹¹¹ A foundational element to this was the adoption, in 1977, of the so-called “double-standards resolution” which barred any individual or entity within the non-racial movement from having any association with a government-affiliated body or structure.¹¹² This was a culmination of the deep suspicion felt towards white controlling authorities, the government and its purported reforms such as multinationalism.

It is important to note that even before the adoption of the double-standards resolution there were already some misgivings regarding non-racial representatives’ operational links to government structures. Middleton himself proved to be a notable example in this regard. During the period 1970–1982 he was an executive member of the (coloured) Labour Party, formed in 1966.¹¹³ The Labour Party, in turn, functioned within the Coloured Persons’ Representative Council (CPRC), a body formed by the Nationalist government in 1969 (and later dissolved in 1980) which served as an alternative to direct coloured representation within parliament.¹¹⁴

This arrangement was regarded as problematic by some SACOS members and the *Sunday Times* reported as much in August 1975. According to the article Middleton had been “attacked” verbally by two delegates at a meeting of the SA Amateur Weightlifting and Body Building Federation – a SACOS affiliate – “for holding positions on both SACOS and [the CPRC]”.¹¹⁵ This tension ultimately led to Middleton resigning as president of SACOS in January 1977, as his concisely worded letter to SACOS confirmed:

It has been brought to my notice, that certain National Non Racial Organisations are reluctant to join this organisation because of my affiliation to the Coloured People’s Representative Council. Further that some of those allready [sic] affiliated are threatening to resign because of similar reasons. In view of this I here-by [sic] tender my resignation as president of your Council.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁰ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 17, 1973, 6, Cleophas collection.

¹¹¹ Booth, “Hitting Apartheid for Six?” 485. Booth’s article makes the convincing argument that this dogmatic approach in terms of non-collaboration ultimately led to SACOS being superseded by the National Sports Congress (NSC), formed in 1989. The latter was at the forefront of initiating sporting negotiations with the establishment, culminating in the formation of democratic national sport structures during the early 1990s.

¹¹² Douglas Booth, *The Race Game: Sport and Politics in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 150.

¹¹³ David Saks, “The failure of the Coloured Persons’ Representative Council and its constitutional repercussions, 1956–1985,” (Master’s Diss., Rhodes University, 1991), 142 (Appendix 6).

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, ii–iii.

¹¹⁵ Minutes, SACOS Executive Meeting, August 11, 1975, 1–2, Cleophas collection.

¹¹⁶ Norman Middleton, Letter to M.N. Pather (SACOS secretary), January 18, 1977, Cleophas collection.

Whereas the above developments came after the SASF's late withdrawal from the scheduled meeting with FASA (and the other racially based controlling bodies) in September 1974, it does serve to illustrate some of the background forces prevalent within SACOS during this period. These forces are an important consideration when reflecting on the actions of individuals such as Middleton (and organisations such as the SASF), since they were undoubtedly subject to various pressures being exerted within the non-racial movement at the time.

Middleton's initial enthusiasm at the prospect of forming a "Supreme Council" for football, as reported by Granger, should also be considered in light of what followed once the nuts and bolts of FASA's actual proposal towards this end became evident. As stated earlier FASA's position was considerably weakened by the outcome of the 1974 FIFA congress in Frankfurt which prompted a change in strategy. Whereas FASA was previously able to simply brush off the SASF – as evidenced by the April 1973 meeting regarding ground allocation recounted earlier – circumstances now forced the white authorities to consider making some concessions on the road towards compromise. As a result FASA's proposal for a "Supreme Council" included some equitable elements such as rotational presidency (between the three major bodies, namely FASA, SANFA and the SASF),¹¹⁷ equal representation on the council (a maximum of five representatives were to be permitted from each entity), as well as a stated objective to "prevail upon the Government to allow non-racial soccer at all levels as soon as possible".¹¹⁸

However, it stopped short of being a complete departure from FASA's previously evident objective of maintaining its dominant position within South African football administration. In this regard certain safeguards were built in to protect FASA's position and to ensure that it retained some degree of control over the process ahead. For example, the council's proposed rotational presidency would in fact commence with the FASA president at the helm for the first five years of its existence up to the end of 1979, after which the SANFA and SASF presidents would each have a one year turn. Thereafter the three presidents would "decide between them who shall fill the chair each year".¹¹⁹ The proposal also made provision for the key operational position of council secretary, with nominations during the first five years to be made by FASA only. Finally, the council constitution (which was to be

¹¹⁷ SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 12, 1975, 45–6, Cleophas collection. According to the proposal attempts would be made to persuade SAFA and SASA (with their respective coloured and Indian constituencies) to merge with the SASF – further indication that these entities were regarded as "minor" role players within football administration. Dudley Zagnoev also described them as "inconsequential" compared to FASA, SANFA and the NFL for example. From Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹¹⁸ SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 12, 1975, 46, Cleophas collection.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

drawn up by FASA) would include a clause stating that, in the event of two organisations withdrawing from the council before the end of 1979, FASA would “resume its control of F.I.F.A.”.¹²⁰

This proposed council ultimately represented an entity that was to be constructed on a multinational basis since each member organisation would retain “absolute autonomy” over its own affairs, i.e. FASA over whites, SANFA over blacks and the SASF over coloureds and Indians.¹²¹ Given the aforementioned suspicion within SACOS (and its affiliates) regarding the motives of white authorities it is safe to argue that some, if not the majority, of the aforementioned elements within FASA’s proposal proved unpalatable to the SASF once they became known. The latter’s report tabled at SACOS’s biennial conference in October 1975 states merely that the “Federation declined the invitation [to attend the meeting scheduled for 15 September 1974] as it was not in the interest of soccer generally”.¹²²

In this regard it is likely that Middleton only received the FASA proposal shortly before the scheduled meeting and that he and the SASF then balked at its content, precipitating a late withdrawal. Minutes of a subsequent Top Level Committee meeting indicate that the proposal was only drafted by FASA after Granger had met with Middleton in order to confirm whether the latter would be willing to attend the proposed round-table meeting between the various organisations.¹²³ Dudley Zagnoev then tabled the draft proposal at a FASA executive meeting on 6 September, with the executive only suggesting a minor amendment. Dave Marais also mentioned that he was scheduled to have a further meeting with Koornhof on 11 September – four days before the round-table meeting.¹²⁴ It is conceivable that the meeting with Koornhof was set up in order to allow the latter to provide his own input regarding the proposal, and that consequently Middleton and the SASF only received the final version thereof somewhere during the period 12–14 September shortly before the larger meeting was due to take place. Given the proposal’s content, and also the existing pressures within SACOS regarding collaboration with government-affiliated entities, it is unsurprising that Middleton in the end withdrew from these proposed discussions.

There is no doubting the fact that this development was a point of great frustration for FASA. Zagnoev recounted during an interview in 2015: “The Football Association under Dave

¹²⁰ SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 12, 1975, 46, Cleophas collection.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 46.

¹²³ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, October 26, 1974, 1, FASA papers.

¹²⁴ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 6, 1974, 3, FASA papers.

Marais looked upon Middleton as being a cog in the wheel, as creating all the problems.”¹²⁵ The ideological chasm between FASA and the SASF has been detailed at length, and it is not surprising that FASA regarded Middleton – the face of the SASF (and SACOS) – as the primary stumbling block that prevented many of its tactics from coming to fruition. However, the complexity of the forces below the surface is again evident when considering an interesting exchange between Helmut Käser and Vivian Granger some months after the Harry Cavan-led FIFA delegation’s visit in 1976. In replying to a letter from Granger detailing imminent changes to South Africa’s sports policy, Käser stated that

[the] news that it is expected that your government will abolish all barriers at club level is very interesting. But as you mentioned, the Soccer Federation...headed by Mr. Middleton, seems to be a very difficult organisation. I had the opportunity to discuss the football situation in your country with Mr. Cavan and he is of the opinion that the people behind Mr. Middleton are in fact the ones being difficult, especially Mr. [George] Singh.¹²⁶

Whereas Cavan was an external observer who only spent a few days in South Africa, he did interact with all prominent stakeholders within football administration during that time – something which, ironically, none of the stakeholders themselves could have claimed to have been doing given the rift that existed between FASA, its Top Level allies and the SASF. As a result his interpretation carries value and provides noteworthy insight on the dynamics prevalent at the time. Cavan’s reference to George Singh’s influence is worth noting given that the latter occupied a prominent position not only within the SASF, but also within SACOS (where he was held in high esteem as patron of the organisation).¹²⁷ This supports the notion that Middleton was operating within numerous constraints when making decisions regarding potential interaction with the likes of FASA.

It is perhaps also worth briefly reflecting on the SASF’s aggressive stance towards FASA’s 1974 proposal. Whereas the suspicion directed towards the white controlling authority was certainly not without merit, as analysed earlier, it could be argued that this particular set of circumstances possibly represented a missed opportunity for the SASF in terms of squeezing additional concessions from FASA. The latter’s position had drastically weakened from an international perspective, and signs were there that Dave Marais and the FASA leadership were willing to consider alternative avenues. An example of the latter was the stated desire to move towards eventual integration as a means for improving FASA’s standing with FIFA. Despite FASA’s undoubted desire to maintain control over such a course

¹²⁵ Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹²⁶ Helmut Käser, Letter to Vivian Granger, September 22, 1976, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

¹²⁷ SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 12, 1975, 1, Cleophas collection.

of events, Middleton did occupy an important position within this process. In this regard he could well have applied further pressure on FASA – or at least tested the white body's willingness to compromise further – had he attended the September 1974 meeting. However, the SASF's uncompromising stance reflected the dogmatic approach of the non-racial movement in terms of non-collaboration with official structures. Ultimately forces on both sides of the ideological divide eventually proved to be an insurmountable barrier towards the formation of a single controlling body for football in South Africa during this critical phase.

After the aborted meeting in September 1974 the situation did not improve. In fact there was a fair amount of consternation at the Top Level Committee meeting held the following month. FASA was accused of meeting with Middleton without the committee's permission, and the (coloured) SAFA also took exception to the fact that they "were left to join the Federation".¹²⁸ Within this milieu SANFA, in November 1974, also tabled its own proposal for the formation of a supreme council for football. This was rejected by FASA – another indication of the latter's "recalcitrance to relinquish power and control over the domestic game".¹²⁹ A likely point of contention from FASA's perspective would probably have been SANFA's suggestion that "representation of the constituent associations [on the supreme council] be proportional to the numerical strength of the respective associations".¹³⁰ It has been stated earlier that SANFA enjoyed a large numerical superiority over FASA in terms of registered players – something which would have placed Thabe's organisation in a dominant position within the proposed framework. The issue of the formation of a single controlling body for football was left unresolved over the ensuing sixteen months, and by the time the FIFA delegation left South African shores in March 1976 FASA's hopes of avoiding FIFA expulsion were decidedly grim. There was no prospect of a compromise with the SASF in sight and in light of this FASA had to launch a desperate marketing campaign in a last-ditch effort to stave off expulsion.

FASA's Red Card: Expulsion from FIFA

Having been unable to establish one controlling body for football in the country, as required by FIFA, FASA attempted to obtain support from individual FIFA member countries in the period leading up to the Montreal congress in July 1976. This public relations campaign already commenced in 1975 and entailed, among other things, sending letters to

¹²⁸ Minutes, FASA Top Level Committee Meeting, October 26, 1974, 1, FASA papers.

¹²⁹ Alegi and Bolsmann, "From Apartheid to Unity," 6.

¹³⁰ South African National Football Association Proposals to the Top Level Committee, 1, as Appendix C, Report of the FIFA Delegation.

approximately 70 associations in French, German and Spanish, pleading for support.¹³¹ Brochures and posters were compiled depicting black and white players playing together (particularly from the match against the Argentine Stars in March 1976) as part of an argument that South African footballers were doing all they can to pursue integration within the prevailing circumstances in their country. The support of Sir Stanley Matthews was also enlisted, as a message from the footballing great was included in the material imploring FIFA to give South African footballers a chance to play integrated matches at international level.¹³² In addition the intrusion of politics into sport was decried, and an appeal was made to FIFA members to “rise up...and crush politics in sport”.¹³³ The basic premise was that FASA could not defy the laws of South Africa, and that it was unreasonable for FIFA members to expect exactly that.¹³⁴

It can be argued that FASA had indeed taken significant steps – as part of a survival mechanism – towards football integration within the framework of multinationalism. In this regard it was trying to find a solution to a sporting problem – namely bringing about integration in football – which mirrored the broader political problem of bringing about integration in South African society. However by this time the sporting problem had essentially become a political one and in this regard FASA’s pleas to FIFA to remove politics from sport appeared rather naive – particularly when considering that the political dispensation in South Africa had had such a significant influence on the way sport was played in the country historically. South Africa’s broader position internationally was also extremely weak at this time, resulting in FASA officials having to face a politically stacked deck at the FIFA congress in Montreal.

In this regard Alegi and Bolsmann point out that FASA’s strategy was “unlikely” to succeed, particularly given the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising that occurred on 16 June 1976.¹³⁵ The historian, David Welsh, contextualises the significance of the latter by describing the uprising as “a seminal event in the decline of apartheid” and pointing out that “[i]t occurred at a time when international isolation and pressure for economic sanctions were increasing”.¹³⁶ It is therefore unsurprising that the effects of this watershed event spilled over into the

¹³¹ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 9, FASA papers.

¹³² FASA, “Great World Star Appeals To FIFA: Test South Africa’s Sincerity,” 1, FASA papers.

¹³³ FASA, “Israel? Australia?...Who’s Next To Fall To Politics In Sport?” (draft document), 2, FASA papers.

¹³⁴ FASA, “Can Any Country in FIFA Defy It’s Government?” (draft document), 2, FASA papers.

¹³⁵ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 6–7.

¹³⁶ David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009), 101.

sporting domain as FIFA members voted 78–9 in favour of South Africa’s expulsion at the Montreal congress.¹³⁷ FASA’s 1976 annual report ruefully recounts:

Various Black States and Russia, spoke in support of the expulsion. Jamaica asked the Congress not to take note of the photographs in our brochure as they were posed and were therefore not authentic. Jamaica said when voting only four issues should be remembered and they were: Sharpeville, Soweto, Johannesburg and its atrocious massacres, and Human Dignity.¹³⁸

Years later Zagnoev also recalled the political undertone surrounding this issue when he stated that his and FASA’s efforts “had no bearing” and “didn’t make a difference”, particularly in light of the increasing influence of African countries within FIFA. “The problem was the apartheid policy in South Africa more than the fact that blacks weren’t playing with whites in soccer,” he opined.¹³⁹ FASA’s expulsion had a ripple effect on white football administration in South Africa, beginning with the resignation of Dave Marais from both his positions as FASA president and NFL chairman. He cited “personal and business reasons” as motivating factors.¹⁴⁰ This was an important development since it meant that for the first time in ten years the two organisations would have two different leaders. The fact that Marais had – since 1966 – been at the helm of both entities meant that a productive and relatively harmonious working relationship existed between the amateur and professional ranks.¹⁴¹ This was to change from this point onwards.

In the immediate aftermath of the Montreal congress there was some criticism directed towards Marais and his delegation by Ian Taylor, a FASA executive member, who questioned, among other things, the length of their stay in Montreal. Taylor’s quotes in the media were in turn criticised by Andy Rautenbach, an honorary vice-president of FASA, who sprang to Marais’s defense.¹⁴² FASA clearly found itself in a crisis, as can be gleaned from a meeting between Zagnoev and Piet Koornhof on 10 August 1976 – shortly after the FIFA expulsion. Zagnoev indicated to Koornhof that there was fighting between amateur and professional officials at this time¹⁴³ – an important background development when considering the respective paths of FASA and the NFL in the following months.

¹³⁷ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 10, FASA papers. Interestingly the nine countries that sided with FASA were England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Switzerland, Spain, Belgium, Israel and the United States. See Vivian Granger, “How we were kicked out of world soccer,” *Rand Daily Mail*, no date, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³⁸ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 9, FASA papers.

¹³⁹ Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹⁴⁰ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, August 7, 1976, 1, and FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 11, FASA papers.

¹⁴¹ Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹⁴² Andy Rautenbach, Signed statement, no date, FASA papers.

¹⁴³ Piet Koornhof, “Sportbesprekings [sport discussions],” (handwritten notes), August 10, 1976, PV476/1/34/41/5, Koornhof papers. Translated from Afrikaans. Interestingly one of the ideas discussed during

Further insight into this growing fissure between the amateur and professional ranks in the wake of Marais's resignation can be found in the minutes of a special general meeting convened by FASA in October 1976. During this meeting Dave Snaier, president of the (amateur) Southern Transvaal Football Association, directed much criticism towards the way FASA had handled the FIFA issue. He argued that a single controlling body for football "should have been formed a long time ago" given that expulsion had already been a likely eventuality for some time.¹⁴⁴ Zagnoev in turn argued – in all likelihood correctly – that the formation of such a body would not have made any difference since the overriding issue related to South Africa's racial discrimination as a whole, rather than within football itself.¹⁴⁵ Snaier was a staunch proponent of amateurism,¹⁴⁶ and it is interesting to note his criticism directed towards FASA's strategy which was largely shaped by individuals that had strong links to professional football. These had included Marais (as NFL chairman), Zagnoev (who also played a prominent administrative role at the Wits University professional club)¹⁴⁷ and Vivian Granger (who, as NFL general manager, was a central figure throughout).

Within this increasingly unstable administrative environment a new set of personalities took centre stage. Ian Taylor became president of FASA in March 1977, taking over from Danny Stalson, another FASA official, who had occupied the post since Marais's resignation.¹⁴⁸ The NFL also saw a change in leadership, with Johannesburg-based property mogul, Michael Rapp, taking over as chairman.¹⁴⁹ The most important concomitant development at this time was the formation of the Football Council of South Africa, with George Thabe as its president, in November 1976.¹⁵⁰ It is important to consider this event's influence on the

this meeting was to form a committee to "work towards the [breakup] of FIFA" no less. Reference was made to Iran, Israel and Australia possibly being next on the list "to go", and that many of the Western nations "were frightened" at this time.

¹⁴⁴ Minutes, FASA Special General Meeting, October 10, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Dudley Zagnoev, telephonic interview with the author, May 7, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 12, 1977, 3, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁹ FASA, Annual Report, 1976, 15, FASA papers. Among other things Rapp was responsible for developing the now iconic Sandton City shopping centre in Johannesburg during the early 1970s – a huge risk at the time since the area comprised farm land and was a farcry from the bustling business district it was to become in later years. See Denise Mhlanga, "Sandton City – a property's history," January 25, 2012, <http://www.property24.com/articles/sandton-city-a-property-history/14670> (accessed April 12, 2015).

¹⁵⁰ The council was initially formed on an interim basis but became a permanent body on 21 November 1976 when its inaugural meeting took place. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Inaugural Meeting, November 21, 1976, 1, FASA papers. The prevailing power dynamics of the time are again evident when considering that despite Marais (and the previous Top Level Committee) now having essentially been replaced by Thabe (and the Football Council), the South African Soccer Federation's stance remained uncompromising in terms of working towards the formation of a single controlling body for football. The SASF had again been invited to form part of the council, but was "against certain resolutions that had been passed" in the lead-up to its formation, and requested the inaugural meeting to be postponed. The constituent members decided not to postpone, but left the door open for the Federation to join the council in future. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Inaugural Meeting, November 21, 1976, 1, FASA papers, and SASF Letter to Interim Football

football landscape during the period 1976–7 – something to be explored in the following chapter.

Whereas Dave Marais had previously been able to represent both amateur and professional interests through his chairmanship of the Football Council's forerunner, the Top Level Committee, this was no longer the case once he had vacated his leadership positions within FASA and the NFL. This gave rise to a situation whereby the latter two entities found themselves in a confrontational situation with each side competing for influence on the Thabe-run Football Council. This resulted in the NFL gradually supplanting FASA as the most noteworthy white interest on that body. The minutes of a FASA officers' meeting in April 1977 are insightful in this regard. Michael Rapp was invited to this meeting in order to clarify various aspects which had become of concern to FASA, most notably of which was his role as vice-president of the Football Council. Taylor felt that this was a contentious way for FASA to be represented on the council since Rapp was not originally slated to be a FASA representative on that body.¹⁵¹ Rapp explained that in a private meeting with Taylor he had previously offered to resign as vice-president, and that he was "very concerned about the relations between F.A.S.A. and the N.F.L." A key aspect however, was that the NFL clubs wanted "direct representation" on the Football Council.¹⁵² This was to be expected since the majority of the council's business involved professional football. This included its most notable project, namely the 1977 Mainstay League Cup – a competition for professional clubs from the constituent bodies making up the council.

A further sign of FASA's waning influence was the fact that it no longer had control over developments such as Rapp's appointment of an additional official, Monty Shapiro, to the Football Council early in 1977. FASA objected to this development internally.¹⁵³ The writing was on the wall however as the amateur body became less influential within football's power struggle from this point onwards. FASA's protestations that the council was "acting unconstitutionally" and that it (FASA) "could not accept something which was imposed from above" – referring to the rules of the Mainstay competition¹⁵⁴ – had little effect. Rapp simply stated that there had been "ample time" previously to comment on the council's constitution

Council Working Committee, October 13, 1976, 1, FASA papers. Initially the member bodies comprised SANFA, FASA and SASA, with SAFA (coloureds) opting out. The latter did join in February 1977, however. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 8, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁵¹ Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, April 16, 1977, 1, FASA papers. Other FASA representatives on the council up to this point were Lucke Mathus (treasurer of both organisations) and Dudley Zagnoev (who had been a member of the council's executive committee). This meant that the most influential white official on the council, namely Rapp as vice-president, was in fact an NFL official.

¹⁵² Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, April 16, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁵³ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, March 12, 1977, 3, FASA papers.

¹⁵⁴ Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, April 16, 1977, 1–2, FASA papers.

and that the NFL had “accepted the rules” of the Mainstay competition which went ahead during the 1977 season.¹⁵⁵ In this regard the FIFA expulsion caused a notable rift within white football administration and it was the professional faction which emerged as the more significant section at this point. The latter mobilised towards protecting its own interests, mainly through the efforts of Rapp on the Football Council and Vivian Granger operating in the background. This dimension will be considered in the next chapter.

Conclusion

By the end of 1976 white football administration was in a state of turmoil – largely as a result of FASA’s expulsion from FIFA in July that year. Prior to this there had been various efforts on the part of FASA to avoid this outcome. These included a notable on-field development – namely the integrated fixtures against the Argentine Stars in March 1976 – as well as off-the-field efforts to establish a single controlling body for football in South Africa (albeit on FASA’s terms). It has been argued that these efforts were sparked by developments at FIFA’s 1974 Frankfurt congress – a point in time at which the prospect of expulsion became highly likely. This prompted FASA to reach out to the non-racial SASF – an entity which had previously been brushed aside in discussions relating to ground allocation and possible football integration. These shifting power dynamics were analysed at length, and it has been demonstrated that FASA’s deteriorating international position had a significant impact on its strategy locally.

However, the historically acrimonious relationship with the SASF, coupled with the rising influence of SACOS, meant that FASA was unsuccessful in its attempts to gain control over a unified football structure. In addition a significant power shift towards black professional football was also taking place, not only financially, but also administratively. This culminated in the formation of the George Thabe-led Football Council of South Africa in the wake of FASA’s expulsion from FIFA. Within this rapidly shifting milieu FASA’s position deteriorated at a local level as well, with new personalities such as Michael Rapp entering the fray on the side of the professional NFL. The latter was experiencing its own set of struggles by this point, and it is important to note that NFL clubs were ultimately part of this shifting football landscape – something which increasingly resembled a battle for survival. This aspect is to be explored henceforth.

¹⁵⁵ Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, April 16, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

Chapter 5 – Enforced Substitution: The Transition to Integration, 1976–8

Boardroom developments during the mid-1970s were the primary focus of the preceding chapter. In this regard the effect of developments at FIFA's 1974 Frankfurt congress on FASA's international position was considered and it was argued that this was a crucial juncture that ushered in a change in thinking from FASA as far as racial segregation within local football was concerned. From that point on the multinational experiment was seen as insufficient to ensure survival at FIFA, and consequently FASA set its sights on the possibility of multiracial football in the future while simultaneously trying to establish (on its own terms) a single controlling body for the sport in South Africa. These ripples were not only felt at boardroom level, however, as they also reverberated onto the playing field where the NFL began to make overtures towards playing multiracial football.

This is an important dimension that needs to be considered in the context of the drastic changes that were taking place within South African football after FASA's expulsion from FIFA in 1976. In addition the further relaxation of the government's sports policy – and the role of Piet Koornhof as an agent in this process – needs to be explored. The integrated matches against the Argentine Stars in 1976 represented a significant moment in terms of gaining further concessions from the government towards the future possibility of playing integrated football at professional level. In this regard 1977 saw the brief return of Springbok football – an episode rich in symbolism and one that served as a further marker of change.

The final portion of this chapter entails an in-depth analysis of the 1977 Mainstay League Cup tournament – a controversial competition that not only represented the final tentative steps towards integration, but also serves as an illuminating portal through which to consider the desperate battle for survival by NFL clubs towards the end of that year. The post-Dave Marais split between the amateur and professional factions within white football has been highlighted previously, leading to NFL clubs mobilising towards protecting their own interests as the (amateur) FASA became increasingly insignificant within football's administrative power struggle. By the end of 1977 the weakened NFL was on its deathbed, leaving its member clubs at a crossroads prior to the 1978 season.

NFL Flirtations with Multiracial Football

In October 1974 Vivian Granger, the NFL's general manager, revealed to the *Rand Daily Mail* that the NFL had directed a request to the government to allow two black players in

each NFL team “as a stepping stone to completely nonracial soccer”.¹ This revelation purportedly came in the wake of criticism directed towards Dave Marais by the SASF in terms of FASA’s support of the multinational concept.² Given the prevailing multinational framework at the time there was little chance of Piet Koornhof acceding to such a request at that point – which he clearly did not since the NFL remained a whites-only league, in theory at least.³ However, this does serve as a revealing marker of NFL strategy nonetheless. Apart from being part of a broader effort to improve South Africa’s international standing there is an additional factor to consider, namely the NFL’s own difficulties during this period. The league exhibited a decline in its on-field entertainment value while simultaneously feeling the heat from South Africa’s deteriorating economic position at the time. In this regard the potential reinvigoration (and drawing power) that top players from the other race groups could have brought to the league would certainly not have escaped the business-savvy club owners and league officials. Noises to this effect had already been made in conjunction with the multinational tournaments that unfolded during the 1973–5 period.

The NFL’s overtures towards players other than white increased during 1976 – largely in light of the fact that FASA regarded this period as critical in terms of retaining its precarious foothold within FIFA. Shortly before the Harry Cavan-led delegation’s visit to South Africa, there was much debate regarding the issue of multiracial football during FASA’s annual general meeting held on 6 March. Dave Marais clarified that there was no clause within the FASA constitution “to stop any club from inviting any player of another race to play football”.⁴ Granger in turn suggested “that if any club believes that it is acting within the Law, it should go ahead and play non-whites”. He also admitted that the NFL had not taken any action yet in this regard, but argued that “one must start showing a great deal of courage in South Africa”.⁵ Marais implored clubs, both amateur and professional, to “handle the matter with their eyes open” since he did not want a backlash directed at FASA if the clubs “did something wrong”.⁶

Some NFL clubs appeared to take up this challenge – at least initially – as media reports quoted club officials eagerly expressing their anticipation for obtaining the services of top players from the other race groups. According to Rex Evans, chairman of top club Highlands Park, the team had “always believed multiracialism [was] the salvation and panacea of South

¹ Sy Lerman, “NFL asks Govt for mixed soccer,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 17, 1974, Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892–1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers).

² *Ibid.*

³ Some isolated cases of players from the other race groups playing in the NFL will be explored later.

⁴ Minutes, FASA Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1976, 5, FASA papers.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

African soccer. Mr Granger's plea for White clubs to introduce Black players in their ranks has given us the incentive to start moving".⁷ Apart from any political symbolism the potential on-field value of players from the other race groups was clear to team managers and coaching staff, as Highlands Park's manager, Joe Frickleton, indicated: "I'm desperately in need of a striker and I'm prepared to pay big money for a [Jomo] Sono, [Ace] Ntsoelengoe or someone like them".⁸

While many NFL club officials were reported to be in favour of bringing black, coloured and Indian players into the league, their actions – or rather the lack thereof – were driven by overriding caution in terms of avoiding confrontation with the government. Ray Blackbeard, the chairman of Germiston Callies, thought that his club "would like to do it", but was also quick to point out that they were "in a situation where [they] would have to consider Government opinion". Similarly Monty Shapiro, a director of the Rangers club, admitted that the club had not yet discussed the possibility formally, but that they would "watch developments with the greatest interest".⁹

One owner who rarely shied away from taking action, however, was Durban City's Norman Elliott. His penchant for risk-taking and pushing boundaries has been alluded to previously, and soon after Granger's plea he proceeded with intent. In the same month Durban City reportedly agreed terms with Henry Khumalo, a black player from the Natal-based AmaZulu club, to play one match for Elliott's team on a loan basis.¹⁰ However, this never came to pass:

...he never turned up. I can't understand it. This breakthrough to multiracial soccer at club level is so vitally important to Blacks and Whites alike. I thought we were going to set the ball rolling. But we'll have to try some other way.¹¹

Media speculation indicated that George Thabe's SANFA had a role to play in this episode since black players were threatened by possible suspension (from SANFA and the NPSL, its professional league) should they play for NFL clubs. Both Thabe and Norman Middleton

⁷ Sy Lerman, "Highlands on the scent of multiracial side," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 19, 1976, file S241.7.3, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Press Cuttings 1928–1998 (Part A), Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as SAIRR press cuttings).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Sy Lerman, "Black verkramptes thwart Eliot's bid," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 23, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹ Ibid.

(who spoke on behalf of the Federation Professional League affiliated to the SASF) issued public warnings to NFL clubs to “lay off” their players. Thabe was categorical in this regard:

The White clubs must be prepared for war if they sign our players. They are only interested in our boys because they fear the disintegration of the NFL. If they are interested in multiracial football in South Africa, then they must agitate for the establishment of one national body. They must realise that by signing one or two of our players to play in their league does not mean that it will be multiracial football. We have always been suspicious of their motives and will not tolerate their actions one bit.¹²

Middleton, when referring to Hellenic’s overtures to Neville Londt, a Cape Town Spurs player in the FPL, also described NFL clubs as acting “selfishly and in their own interests”.¹³ He echoed some of Thabe’s views by stating that the

White clubs realise that they are playing a dying game and in order to revive interest, they want Black players. All along the White clubs and officials had stated they would not like to have a confrontation with the government’s policy when we pointed out to them that there was no law against mixed play. But all of a sudden they now want to challenge the government. What is their motive?¹⁴

Thabe and Middleton’s assertions that NFL clubs were eager to sign players from the other race groups as a form of self-preservation certainly carry some merit, especially given the struggles of the NFL during this period. There is, however, another important dimension to this tussle, especially in the case of Thabe and SANFA. Notes from a meeting that took place between Thabe and Piet Koornhof on 9 September 1975 provide an illuminating insight into some of the powerful undercurrents prevalent within football administration during that time.

The effect of the multinational tournaments on the football landscape has been considered at length, with the controversial 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions competition leading to administrators like Vivian Granger calling for integrated football as opposed to a continuation of the volatile multinational experiment. In this regard Thabe – in his conversation with Koornhof – was clearly unhappy with Granger’s calls for integration. “[Granger] says Black clubs must enlist white players [and] vice versa to enable Black players to join white clubs in [the] NFL. This ‘undermines’ Thabe’s authority over clubs”.¹⁵ Even more importantly: “If

¹² “Lay off blacks – Thabe,” *Argus*, March 23, 1976, file S241.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Piet Koornhof, “Soccer – Thabe,” (handwritten notes), September 9, 1975, 2, PV476/1/34/21/1, Piet Koornhof Private Documents, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, South Africa (hereafter cited as Koornhof papers).

integrated football [took place] at club level – Thabe [said] he can just as well close shop – his top players will leave [and] whites joining in [Soweto] will take over top black clubs.”¹⁶ This fear of white administrators taking advantage of black players was clearly an important element in Thabe's decision making, particularly with regards to his support of the multinational concept as opposed to steamrolling towards full integration. It also speaks to the mistrust that existed behind the scenes – an element that will be explored further in light of the NFL's eventual breakup.

A combination of hesitancy by some NFL clubs to challenge government policy and the determination by George Thabe to (ironically) maintain such policy (in terms of multinationalism) meant that the NFL was initially unable to obtain the services of top black, coloured and Indian players as proposed in some quarters. This remained the case until February 1977 when Pretoria-based club, Arcadia Shepherds, dropped a bombshell on the footballing fraternity by fielding Vincent Julius – previously a member of the SA Coloured XI at the 1973 South African Games football tournament¹⁷ – in a League Cup match against Guild-Apollo.¹⁸ Julius became the first player other than white to officially play in the NFL,¹⁹ and made even more headlines a few weeks later by scoring the winning goal as a substitute against Highlands Park in a televised league match.²⁰ Despite incurring the wrath of George Thabe, who described Arcadia's actions as “a gross infringement of the standing

¹⁶ Piet Koornhof, “Soccer – Thabe,” (handwritten notes), September 9, 1975, 3, PV476/1/34/21/1, Koornhof papers.

¹⁷ See *RSA 1973 Open International Games – Football*, (booklet), FASA papers.

¹⁸ Simon Kuper, *Football Against the Enemy* (London: Orion, 1994), 142–3 and “The National Football League went multi-racial at Caledonian Stadium last night,” no publication, no date, no page, in Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Scrapbook, 1977 season, FASA papers.

¹⁹ The bizarre nature of South Africa's racially defined society was evident during a curious episode of hidden identity during the 1972 NFL season. Berea Park fielded a light-skinned player named Arthur Williams in a match against Rangers in April of that year. This led to controversy when it was subsequently revealed that he was in fact a coloured player from another club in the area. The player's real name was Essop “Smiley” Moosa and his opponents, Rangers, were only informed of this fact a day after the match when Rangers chairman, Syd Chaitowitz, received an anonymous telephone call informing him that “Williams” was in fact coloured. When the news was made public Berea buckled under the pressure and informed Moosa that he could not play in the NFL – this after a prominent NFL official (possibly Vivian Granger) originally advised the club “to play him”. See *Pitch Revolution*, dir. Catherine Muller (South Africa: Little Bird Company Limited, 2006), and Sy Lerman, “Coloured told: you can't play,” *Star*, April 24, 1972, file S241.7.2, SAIRR press cuttings. According to the article Moosa was not the first coloured player to play in the NFL since this was something which had occurred on previous occasions without arousing the suspicion of authorities.

²⁰ See Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Scrapbook, 1977 season, FASA papers and Sy Lerman, “Arcs defied officialdom,” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 7, 1977, 22. In an interview for the 2006 documentary film, *Pitch Revolution*, Julius provides some colourful anecdotes surrounding this match. Another interesting aspect regarding his play is the fact that he successfully converted from playing as a goalkeeper – his position at the 1973 SA Games tournament – to playing as a forward. In 1976 he finished as the non-racial FPL's top scorer while playing for Pretoria-based Sundowns, before signing for Arcadia Shepherds the following year. He was the latter's leading scorer for three consecutive seasons. See Kuper, *Football Against the Enemy*, 142–3 and “From goalkeeper to goal-grabber,” no publication, no date, no page, in Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Scrapbook, 1977 season, FASA papers.

football rules”, the government did not intervene and some other clubs followed suit by making similar signings.²¹

The abovementioned episode took place shortly before the commencement of the 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition – a Football Council-run tournament which would bring professional football closer to (partial) integration. Prior to that the NFL’s situation had not improved and the split between amateur and professional interests within white football administration had also occurred after the outcome of the 1976 FIFA congress in Montreal. In this regard the NFL’s battle for survival became increasingly desperate and during September 1976 Vivian Granger wrote to Norman Middleton’s SASF requesting a meeting to discuss the possibility of a merger. He was also quoted as saying that the 17-year long war between FASA and the SASF had been won by the latter “with flying colours”. Consequently this move was labelled in some quarters of the press as “soccer surrender”.²²

Granger’s call on the NFL to join the SASF is revealing in the context of the power dynamics within football at the time. This warrants further analysis. The following quote in *Post* serves as a useful analytical entry point: “I believe the only relevant soccer organisation in South Africa at this point in time is [the SASF]. Therefore, I hope our call for a get-together will produce a firm friendship and an everlasting one.”²³ That can certainly be viewed as wishful thinking on the part of Granger given the protracted history of animosity between white administrators and the SASF. It is also rather baffling as to why Granger would consider the SASF as the “only relevant” organisation by late 1976, particularly given the momentum which had been building up with SANFA in the preceding years. The NPSL – its professional arm – was a larger professional league than the SASF-affiliated Federation Professional League and consequently it was also in a better position to attract sponsorships.²⁴ Like the NFL many of its strongest teams were based in the Johannesburg area (such as Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows Limited), which casts doubt as to why Granger would encourage NFL teams to migrate to a league that was largely based in the

²¹ “The incredible saga of Vincent Julius,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, April, 1977, 6–7. These other signings did not involve high profile players from the NPSL since the latter fell directly under the jurisdiction of George Thabe who had the leverage to oppose such moves, as shown earlier.

²² Zaf Mayet, “Soccer surrender,” *Post*, October 8–9, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ In 1977 the NPSL enjoyed a R50,000 sponsorship from South African Breweries – incidentally the same amount that the NFL received from motor manufacturer Datsun that year. At the same time the FPL initially enjoyed a R33,000 league sponsorship from Mainstay that year, although this was subsequently withdrawn as Mainstay opted to pool all its resources behind the newly instituted Mainstay League Cup competition (R70,000). NPSL clubs also had the opportunity of competing for additional prizes in cup competitions where United Tobacco and British Petroleum each contributed a further R20,000 for the 1977 season. See “Who supports what,” *Financial Mail*, August 26, 1977, in SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 8, 1977, 100, Francois Cleophas private collection (hereafter cited as Cleophas collection) and SACOS, Statement, July 18, 1977, 2, Cleophas collection.

coastal areas around Durban and Cape Town. In this regard the challenge of rising travel bills in the NFL during the 1970s is also worth keeping in mind. A proposed move away from SANFA – which already enjoyed a working relationship with FASA through the previous Top Level Committee – also seems curious considering the SASF’s recalcitrant stance in terms of collaborating with white officials.

In light of the above it is argued here that a notable personal dimension existed within this milieu which drove Granger’s decision making with regard to reaching out to the SASF as opposed to the SANFA-affiliated NPSL. Mention has already been made in Chapter 3 of an acrimonious Top Level Committee meeting on 8 September 1975 which reportedly saw Granger (who attended as an observer) direct an outburst at SANFA officials over the proposed Embassy multinational tournament that year. Thabe made reference to this episode in his meeting with Koornhof which incidentally took place the following day. He referred to Granger’s characterisation of the FASA-SANFA relationship as a “master-servant” one, and described Granger as “very insulting”. “[SANFA] are very much against Viv Granger – he is out to kill us – for many years he’s been doing it.”²⁵ This animosity undoubtedly dated back to previous years. For example the veteran journalist, Joe Latakomo, also recalled a meeting that he covered for *World* in which a delegate from the South African Bantu Football Association (SANFA’s forerunner) described Granger as “a snake in the grass” for negotiating with individual black clubs over the possible formation of a professional black league at the time.²⁶

As a result any potential involvement by Granger in SANFA or NPSL affairs would undoubtedly not have been welcomed by Thabe and other black officials,²⁷ thereby leaving the NFL’s founder with little other option but to reach out to the non-racial SASF. Unsurprisingly the latter refused to meet the proposed six-man NFL delegation, again calling on all racial organisations to disband and join the SASF.²⁸ Consequently the NFL proceeded

²⁵ Piet Koornhof, “Soccer – Thabe,” (handwritten notes), September 9, 1975, 2–3, PV476/1/34/21/1, Koornhof papers.

²⁶ Joe Latakomo, *Mzansi Magic: Struggle, Betrayal & Glory, The Story of South African Soccer* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2010), 115–6.

²⁷ The fact that Granger was never a member of the Top Level Committee is also instructive. As a result the relationship between FASA and SANFA was managed by Dave Marais at boardroom level through his chairmanship of the Top Level Committee. Thabe and Marais appear to have enjoyed a much better rapport in this regard. In his meeting with Koornhof Thabe suggested that a “multinational committee” should be formed with Dave Marais as chairman – a clear sign of respect for Marais’s leadership at that time. See Piet Koornhof, “Soccer – Thabe,” (handwritten notes), September 9, 1975, 1, PV476/1/34/21/1, Koornhof papers. In subsequent years Marais returned to football administration when he was again elected as FASA president in 1979. This term of office lasted one year only as he did not make himself available for re-election in March 1980. Despite this he continued to serve on Thabe’s Football Council after this date – a contentious point for some within FASA since Marais was no longer a FASA official at that time. His experience and input was, however, clearly still valued by Thabe. See “Marais centre of new soccer row,” *Sunday Times*, no date, no page, FASA papers.

²⁸ “Racial’ NFL is snubbed,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 11, 1976, 1.

with its 1977 season which proved to be a desperate fight for survival. The situation continued to deteriorate and Granger would again reach out to the SASF for a lifeline before the 1977 season was over. This would prove to be part of a critical chain of events – a development to be explored later.

Springbok Football Returns

As part of FASA's attempts in 1976 to stave off expulsion from FIFA an attempt was made to arrange two international fixtures against Rhodesia on a home and away basis – the latter having also been suspended from FIFA since 1970.²⁹ John Madzima, president of the National Football Association of Rhodesia, was open to the idea since the matches were to be played on a representative (integrated) basis. He even suggested that South Africa's home fixture be played in June 1976 before FIFA's Montreal congress as this "might help [South Africa's] case with FIFA".³⁰ FASA duly liaised with George Thabe's SANFA since – as was the case during the Argentine Stars visit – SANFA controlled the black players that would potentially have been part of the South African team. Ultimately the venture was postponed to 1977, however, as SANFA informed FASA that "on account of [its] National Professional Soccer League fixtures backlog created by the tour of the Argentinian team and the recent crisis within the League, [they were] devoid of the capacity to accommodate new commitments".³¹

The intervening period saw a number of changes take place within South African football. By the time 1977 arrived Thabe was the most influential football official through his leadership of both SANFA and more importantly, the Football Council of South Africa, which set about trying to become the sole controlling body for the game at all levels in the country. One of the council's first projects was the staging of the previously postponed international matches against Rhodesia, the first of which took place at the Rand Stadium on 9 April 1977. The South African team ran out comfortable 7–0 winners in a one-sided encounter described as a "deceiving spectacle" in the football press. Journalist Derrick Thema lamented the fact that "the Rhodesian side was unfortunately an all-Black team that deceived the football potential emitting from Ian Smith's regime. I cannot believe that throughout Rhodesia, there are no

²⁹ Charles Little, "The sports boycott against Rhodesia reconsidered," in *The Politics of Sport: Community, Mobility, Identity*, eds. Paul Gilchrist and Russell Holden (London: Routledge, 2012), 48.

³⁰ John Madzima, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, April 22, 1976, FASA papers.

³¹ Cyril Kobus, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, April 29, 1976, FASA papers.

Bobby Viljoens, Stewart Lilleys [sic], Rodney Kitchins or Rodney Bushes [referring to top white players in South Africa].”³²

What was significant about the encounter however was the fact that – unlike the first match against the Argentine Stars the previous year – the fixture against Rhodesia saw the South African team play in the traditional (for white national teams previously) green and gold strip, as well as being awarded full Springbok colours.³³ This was particularly noteworthy since the fourteen-man Springbok squad included seven black players who had now become Springboks – a previously unheard of situation in South Africa.³⁴ This came on the back of a change in National Party thinking which saw the announcement of a modified sports policy in September 1976 – a development that will be analysed below. This announcement was closely followed by an indication that mixed representative teams would be permitted to wear the Springbok emblem.³⁵ According to Douglas Booth these events “marked an ideological turning point”³⁶ – and in this regard the football match against Rhodesia should be seen as further evidence of developments within the political sphere having a trickle-down effect to football. The previous year saw the first integrated national football team take the field against the Argentine Stars XI – a significant development that had now been followed in 1977 by the first black Springbok footballers as part of another integrated national team.³⁷

³² Derrick Thema, “...And here is how man-on-the spot Derrick Thema saw the match,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1977, 38. The return leg was played in Salisbury on 3 July 1977 and finished in a 1–1 draw. According to South African team manager Roy Bailey’s match report the Rhodesian team featured nine changes from the first match and proved “a different proposition” to the team that took the field in the Johannesburg encounter. See Roy Bailey, Report on Match against Rhodesia on 3 July 1977, FASA papers.

³³ Richard Lyon, “Zimbabwe ruins,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1977, 37 and Roy Bailey, Report on Match against Rhodesia on 9 April 1977, FASA papers.

³⁴ According to Booth “the first black [sportsman] to receive a green and gold Springbok blazer was a long-distance runner, Mathews Batswadi, in 1978”. However, according to Roy Bailey’s match report following the first football encounter against Rhodesia in April 1977, George Thabe “presented the South African team with Springbok blazers at a function after the match”. Based on this description it would appear as if the seven black footballers that day were in fact also the first black Springboks to receive such blazers. See Douglas Booth, “Mandela and Amabokoboko: the Political and Linguistic Nationalisation of South Africa?” *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 34, 3 (1996): 465, and Roy Bailey, Report on Match against Rhodesia on 9 April 1977, FASA papers.

³⁵ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 104.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ While an analysis of the meaning of the Springbok emblem to black, coloured and Indian sportsmen lies beyond the scope of this study, it is nonetheless worth briefly reflecting on the significance of the Rhodesian encounters in this regard. Since the unification of South African sport during the early 1990s the Springbok emblem has been a contentious issue with the dominant narrative in political and academic circles describing it as a traditional symbol of white oppression in South Africa. See for example Booth’s prediction in 1998 that the “Springbok emblem will remain a symbol of racial division until there is ample evidence of black ownership by, for example, an equal racial mix of players.” From Booth, *The Race Game*, 221, as cited in Wallace Chuma, “Framing the Cape Town World Cup stadium in the media: The politics of identity and sports in South Africa,” *Journal of African Media Studies* 4, 3 (2012): 320. South Africa’s national rugby union team is the only representative entity that has – amid repeated controversy – retained the use of the symbol. However there is certainly further room for assessing the emblem’s historical multiplicity of meaning. For example, Booth himself concedes that “those [blacks] who wore the Springbok greatly valued it” in terms of the emblem being “purely a symbol of sporting excellence”. From Booth, “Mandela and Amabokoboko,” 465. In this regard it is also worth noting the comments by star black footballer, Jomo Sono, at an awards ceremony early in 1981: “I want to play for South Africa – I want to wear Springbok colours...It is the ambition of every footballer in this country, Black or

This was indicative of the changing football landscape during this period which saw multiracial integration steadily becoming an increasingly realistic possibility. The 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition – to be analysed from this point onwards – provides further support to this notion.

The 1977 Mainstay League Cup – A Move to Limited Integration

In terms of moving towards its stated objective of “normalising” football in South Africa, a key project undertaken by the Football Council was the introduction of a competition that included clubs from its constituent (racially-based) organisations for 1977.³⁸ This took the form of the Mainstay League Cup and the significance of this move lay in the fact that a limited number of individual players from different racial groups were permitted to move between competing clubs on a “loan” basis for the purposes of this competition. As such black players could (and did) for example turn out for white NFL clubs in some of these fixtures (and *vice versa*). The competition provided a glimpse of club-level integration – something which eventually arrived in 1978 – but also served to illustrate some of the potential challenges that lay ahead. Alegi and Bolsmann allude to some of these aspects that emerged during the Mainstay tournament – the likes of which included high travel costs, spectator violence and constrained movement of fans as a result of segregation laws.³⁹ These and other elements will be expanded upon below. The latter stages of the competition also serve as a useful lens through which to analyse some of the struggles experienced by NFL clubs at that point in time – shortly before the NFL was disbanded.

A close examination of the Mainstay competition’s outcome reveals the multilayered context in which it was played. The implementation of the player loan system had to be done within the framework of the National Party’s modified sports policy as announced on 23 September 1976 – a significant development coming in the wake of the Soweto riots and “a renewed international campaign [against South African sport] led by African states”.⁴⁰ The new policy, consisting of eight points, essentially entailed the extension of the multinational concept down to club level. The most noteworthy points for the purposes of this analysis are listed as follows:

White, to wear the green and gold and play for his country.” See “Jomo’s plea for Bok colours,” *Goal*, February, 1981, 8.

³⁸ Football Council of South Africa, Press Statement, November 22, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

³⁹ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 8–9.

⁴⁰ Booth, *The Race Game*, 104.

1. That the sportsmen and sportswomen of the Whites, Coloureds, Indians and Black peoples *belong to their own clubs and control, arrange and manage their own sports matters.*
4. That in the case of team sports, the boards or committees of every population group arrange their own leagues or rosters *within their own national context.*
5. That where it has been mutually agreed upon, boards or committees, in consultation with the Minister of Sport and Recreation, *may also arrange leagues or matches in which teams of different population groups play against each other.*⁴¹

Points 1 and 4 above illustrate the fact that the policy was still built on the concept of multinationalism with each racial group responsible for its own sporting affairs. However, it did contain a new dimension in point 5 regarding competition at club level. The latter was now more readily permissible in consultation with the minister. In the case of football this meant that the Football Council could move forward with a single competition containing clubs from different racial groups. Such a competition could also take place over an extended period of time. This was different to the situation in 1975 when FASA had to obtain special permission for the Chevrolet Champion of Champions club tournament to take place. The latter was played over a short period of time and could be justified in terms of the previous policy since it included only the “best” teams from each racial group. However, whereas the modified September 1976 policy paved the way for more regular contact between clubs from different race groups, it did not entail movement of individual players from different race groups between these clubs. In other words it did not yet represent full integration.

In this regard the Football Council had to negotiate carefully with Koornhof to allow limited movement of players on a loan basis during the Mainstay competition. However, prior to that discussion the council’s own position appears to have been uneven on this issue. George Thabe’s fears regarding the purchase of black players by NFL clubs have been highlighted previously. These resurfaced in a confidential memorandum sent to Koornhof in January 1977. The memorandum informed the latter of the recent formation of the Football Council, and proceeded to analyse proposals received from SANFA and FASA regarding the proposed “normalisation” of football in South Africa.⁴² Thabe then essentially promoted the

⁴¹ “Sport Policy as Announced on 23 September 1976,” in SACOS Minute Book, Cleophas collection. Italics added by author for emphasis.

⁴² George Thabe, Memorandum to Piet Koornhof, January 7, 1977, 1–5, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

SANFA proposal and directed a request to Koornhof for the suggestions to “be considered as confidential”.⁴³

Thabe’s analysis provides telling insight into the background power dynamics prevalent at the time. He stated that the Football Council was forced to accept FASA’s proposal for normalisation since, had that not been the case, “the Whites on the committee would have attacked us [the black officials] in the Press and we would have been accused of being ‘verkramp’ [ultra-conservative]”.⁴⁴ FASA’s proposal entailed the formation of a competition in 1977 containing clubs from all council-affiliated bodies as well as the SASF. It further stated that “the Government should be approached to authorise the selection of mixed teams. It is suggested that two or three players could be interchangeable in each team, irrespective of colour”.⁴⁵ According to Thabe the council accepted the proposal with the provision that “only a limited number of champion clubs of the various leagues would participate”, but that this had since become unacceptable to the NFL which wanted all its clubs to participate.⁴⁶

He further argued against the FASA proposal by stating that – should such a competition be successfully completed – “some members would bring pressure to bear for the establishment of a multiracial club league immediately”. According to Thabe the NPSL (under the auspices of SANFA) was also of the opinion that

such a league would lead to the disappearance of the NPSL which was built into the most popular sports organisation in South Africa and the pride of every Black. The NPSL clubs had misgivings about the establishment of a multiracial club league at this stage since it seems to threaten their identities...It is felt that friction may arise if white teams, playing in a mixed league, should buy Black players from Black clubs. It is appreciated that wealthy white clubs would be able to pay exorbitant [*sic*] fees to the top Black players to the chagrin of the Black clubs who will be reduced to acting as training ground for Black players. This could lead to animosity with dire results.⁴⁷

This exchange serves as further confirmation that Thabe was greatly concerned about the potential dominance of white clubs (in terms of buying power) within a multiracial context. Consequently a situation arose whereby the most powerful football official at the time, who happened to be black, was supporting the government’s idea of multinationalism in order to protect the identity of the league and professional clubs under his auspices. In this regard

⁴³ George Thabe, Memorandum to Piet Koornhof, January 7, 1977, 3, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2. The notion of blacks being classified as *verkramp* is rather ironic given that the classification was applied to a faction within the ruling National Party.

⁴⁵ George Thabe, Memorandum to Piet Koornhof, January 7, 1977, 2, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 3.

the white football officials – particularly from within the professional ranks – were the ones who opposed pure multinationalism and pushed the boundaries towards establishing integration at club level as a form of self-preservation. This stands out as a notable irony within the broader context of South African football's power struggle during the 1970s. It is also difficult to dismiss Thabe's stance on multinationalism as merely another instance where blacks were being co-opted into the system at the hands of dominant white officials who provided proverbial crumbs off the master's table (in the form of access to facilities for example). The desire by black clubs to protect their identities is a thought-provoking phenomenon within the milieu of apartheid-era sport which was of course constructed on the idea of separate identities.

Thabe's views also appear to have been mirrored among some sections of black football supporters. During this volatile period the football publication, *Sharpshoot Soccer*, canvassed the views of black soccer followers regarding the potential for multiracial football:

We feel that our readers represent a sizeable section of informed Black opinion, and therefore we asked in our December [1976] issue for YOU, the reader, to write in, and tell us whether YOU were in favour of mixed football or not. The response has shaken us. We have not had ONE SINGLE positive reply. Every fan who has written to us has been dead against the idea...But we should like more letters from our readers...So whether...you feel that mixed football would be the death of Black soccer, or whether you feel that this might be the salvation of the game in South Africa, write in and give us your views.⁴⁸

This is by no means a reliable barometer of black opinion but still serves to indicate that Thabe was not alone in fearing the arrival of multiracial football. As a result he suggested to Koornhof that SANFA's proposal for a mixed league would be a better fit within the framework of multinationalism. This represented a far more cautious approach to mixed play than what was being proposed by FASA and the NFL. SANFA conceded that previous multinational tournaments (where large amounts of prize money were involved) led to dangerous and volatile situations, and consequently suggested that future multinational encounters between clubs should be done purely on a friendly basis with no prize money at stake. These matches would then be used as trials for the selection of mixed provincial sides on merit, with the latter then competing in a mixed provincial league where "club pride and

⁴⁸ Richard Lyon, "We want your views," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, February, 1977, 5. Emphasis as contained in original article. The same publication then contains further letters decrying multiracial football. Readers opined that black players would not be able to express themselves at white clubs (in terms of playing style) and that black clubs would become inferior (and even bankrupt) if white clubs were permitted to buy star players. See "Shoot us a line," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, February, 1977, 30.

what it generates...will be absent".⁴⁹ From SANFA's point of view this would have represented a method for implementing mixed play at a higher level while simultaneously protecting the identity of black clubs at the lower level. Thabe concluded by stating that:

...we are under considerable pressure from various sides to reject Government policy and to play multiracial soccer immediately. Whites have played an important and often determining role in this...We shall be glad if our proposals are considered without delay in order that all concerned could be informed of the decision.⁵⁰

The memorandum essentially constituted a tactic on the part of Thabe to circumvent the constraints that he was operating within on the Football Council – i.e. having to incorporate the demands of white officials for faster integration. By arguing that SANFA's proposal would be a more optimal course of action within the framework of multinationalism he attempted to obtain direct support from Koornhof for SANFA's desired route forward. In this regard the secretary of the Department of Sport and Recreation, Beyers Hoek, concurred with Thabe's analysis and recommended to Koornhof that permission be given to the Football Council for a provincial merit league to be instituted with teams selected on merit.⁵¹ Such a multiracial provincial competition was eventually announced in April 1978,⁵² but during the intervening period the idea of a professional multiracial club league was still on the table.

At a Football Council meeting on 16 January 1977 it was decided to pursue a recommended league plan that closely resembled FASA's proposed structure – namely a mixed club league with "free interchange" of players. The NFL also obtained its wish of having all thirteen of its first division clubs present in the competition.⁵³ Michael Rapp's influence is clear in this regard since he was the convener of the ad hoc committee tasked by the council to "work out the details of the league".⁵⁴ The council adopted this proposed structure despite Thabe again stating that SANFA's view on the matter was that only the top clubs from each association should participate in the competition.⁵⁵

From that point negotiations with Koornhof were entered into in terms of bringing the competition to fruition. Thabe and Rapp subsequently met with the minister and emphasised that the Football Council had decided to conduct a competition containing approximately 30

⁴⁹ George Thabe, Memorandum to Piet Koornhof, January 7, 1977, 3–4, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ Beyers Hoek, Memo aan Minister: Meriete Sokkerliga [Memo to Minister: Merit Soccer League], January 17, 1977, 3, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers. Translated from Afrikaans.

⁵² The United Tobacco Company (UTC) provided a R25,000 sponsorship for this tournament. See "R25 000 Multi-racial league," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, April, 1978, 12–3.

⁵³ Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, January 16, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

⁵⁴ Football Council of South Africa, Press Statement, November 22, 1976, 1, FASA papers.

⁵⁵ Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, January 16, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

teams from the different football associations in 1977, and that this would be run on an experimental basis.⁵⁶ Individual leagues of the different associations would continue as per normal. The main point of contention was the suggestion by the council representatives that “movement of players from one club to the other would be on an unrestricted basis”.⁵⁷ Koornhof apparently balked at this suggestion, indicating that “such a league would not be in conformity with the government’s sports policy...[since the policy stated that] merit or integrated sport would be allowed at the levels of provincial and international selected teams. This is excluded at the levels of clubs”.⁵⁸ This argument was in line with the policy allowing the mixture of clubs from different (racial) associations into single competitions, but not yet the mixture of individual players (from different race groups) into single teams at that level. The latter was still only permissible at provincial or national level, as was the case with the test match fixtures against Rhodesia.

According to Thabe and Rapp they underlined the importance of allowing some movement of individual players and argued that if this was not permitted they would not be able to control club officials who would likely take matters into their own hands and implement integration anyway. Ironically they cited the case of the SASF which had for years played mixed (non-racial) football, and according to Thabe and Rapp they “were not aware that the government was acting” against this and as a result they failed “to understand why the Council should be treated differently”. As a compromise they suggested to Koornhof that “movement of [at least] three players from one race group to join another should be permitted”.⁵⁹ They also emphasised that the Football Council “would not play multinational football under any circumstances”. In reply Koornhof indicated that he would give the government’s response to this suggested framework within due course.⁶⁰ These delicate negotiations continued and a further meeting was held with Koornhof on 10 February 1977. At this point Thabe and Rapp again suggested that players be allowed to move purely on a “loan basis” between clubs during the competition.⁶¹ The loan scheme was ultimately

⁵⁶ This meeting likely took place on 26 January 1977. See Piet Koornhof, “Soccer,” (handwritten notes), January 26, 1977, 1, PV476/1/34/21/2, and Piet Koornhof, “Sokker – Thabe & Rapp,” (handwritten notes), February 10, 1977, 3, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

⁵⁷ Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 8, 1977, 3, FASA papers.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., and Piet Koornhof, “Soccer,” (handwritten notes), January 26, 1977, 1, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers. Koornhof’s notes from the meeting on 26 January indicate that Thabe and Rapp suggested that this player movement be done on a “guest” basis with such players “remaining members of their respective [parent] clubs”. This was likely part of the compromise.

⁶⁰ Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 8, 1977, 3, FASA papers.

⁶¹ They justified this proposal by arguing that very few players would be affected by this (“not more than ten”) since the competition consisted of a large number of teams (32) which included all first division NFL and NPSL clubs. Had this not been the case – and only a few clubs from each league competed – this would possibly have created an incentive for these competing clubs to obtain players from clubs on the outside. The fact that none of the top level clubs were excluded meant that they had the opposite incentive of retaining their players to improve their chances in the competition. Thabe and Rapp also emphasised that players would only be playing a

accepted and as a result the 1977 Mainstay League Cup represented a significant development within South African football since this was the first competition played within the framework of government policy where (limited) racial integration took place at club level.⁶²

Alegi contends that the government limited these moves to a loan basis “so as to prevent black clubs from buying white players – a notion offensive to apartheid ideology”.⁶³ This is probably oversimplified. It is certainly plausible that some elements within the National Party could have felt that way, and Koornhof continually found himself in a difficult situation of trying to push through reforms relating to sport while simultaneously having to satisfy the ultra-conservative sections within the ruling party.⁶⁴ However, in this case Koornhof’s central argument was based on the first point of the modified sports policy of September 1976 which stated that South Africa’s different racial groups should “*belong to their own clubs and control, arrange and manage their own sports matters*”. In other words separate development was still the overriding principle. His personal notes indicate that he emphasised exactly this to Thabe and Rapp on multiple occasions: “I told [them] on two occasions [10 February 1977 and 26 January 1977] that I cannot in terms of [point 1] of the announced policy of 23rd Sept 1976 give permission that a player could transfer permanently from one club of an existing league to that of another league.”⁶⁵ To speculatively extrapolate the government’s general motivation ignores the multiple layers present within this episode – not only in terms of National Party thinking, but also within

maximum of seven matches for their temporary clubs during the year, and promised to end the competition immediately if at any time it became evident that the scheme was not working. See Piet Koornhof, “Sokker – Thabe & Rapp,” (handwritten notes), February 10, 1977, 1–2, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

⁶² It is not clear on which exact date Koornhof provided the green light for the loan scheme, but his personal notes indicate that it was a point of discussion during a meeting with the National Party’s “sport group” on 21 March 1977. During that meeting Koornhof indicated that a maximum of three players would move between clubs, but not on a permanent basis. See Piet Koornhof, “N.P. Sportgroep – Sokker,” (handwritten notes), March 21, 1977, 1, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers. Translated from Afrikaans.

⁶³ Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 142.

⁶⁴ Notable role players outside National Party circles conceded that Koornhof was often faced with considerable opposition within his own constituency in terms of obtaining approval for his reforms. Dave Dalling, an opposition MP representing the Progressive Federal Party (PFP) indicated as much in a friendly personal letter to Koornhof in March 1978. “I greatly appreciate what you personally are trying to do, often in the face of opposition, to eliminate discrimination where it still exists. I know you will understand that it is my duty to continue to push for a faster transition,” he said. See Dave Dalling, Personal letter to Piet Koornhof, March 16, 1978, 1–2, PV476/1/34/34/1, Koornhof papers. The prominent newspaper editor (and friend of Steve Biko), Donald Woods, also engaged in an interesting chain of correspondence with Koornhof during the course of 1977. “I realise that at the moment you have serious political difficulties of your own...and I sincerely hope for the sake of the country that you do not lose out in the current clash. I said once that you have many enemies. I should also have said you have many, many supporters – more than even you may realise,” wrote Woods. In his correspondence he made particular reference to the role of Andries Treurnicht, a notable *verkrampte* NP deputy minister who would later become leader of the breakaway Conservative Party in 1982. See Donald Woods, Letter to Piet Koornhof (report on discussions with SACOS by Woods), no date, 3, PV476/1/34/42/1, Koornhof papers.

⁶⁵ Piet Koornhof, “Sokker – Thabe & Rapp,” (handwritten notes), February 10, 1977, 3, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers.

football administration where Thabe's own reservations regarding multiracial football have been demonstrated.

Controversies On and Off the Field

The Mainstay League Cup began on a firm financial footing, with the Football Council having acquired the largest football-related sponsorship (R70,000) for a single competition in South Africa up to that point.⁶⁶ Alegi and Bolsmann have pointed to the important role played by large corporate sponsors such as South African Breweries (SAB), the United Tobacco Company (UTC, today British American Tobacco) and Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery (SFW, owners of the Mainstay cane spirit brand) in shaping professional football during this period.⁶⁷ In this regard the Mainstay competition was a further manifestation of this trend, particularly since SFW withdrew its previous nine-year long Mainstay sponsorship of the non-racial FPL in 1977.⁶⁸ The company's official statement was that it was pooling all its resources behind the Football Council – a move which the FPL saw as a form of blackmail to ensure that it also joined the council.⁶⁹

The sponsorship agreement was set for an initial two-year period, with the amount rising to R100,000 in 1978. The SFW did however have an opt-out clause in the event that the competition lacked support, failed to achieve its stated objectives, or if it “engendered opposition amongst responsible members of the public”. In addition the agreement contained three optional years whereby SFW would have the opportunity to continue its sponsorship for each of the years 1979 (R110,000), 1980 (R120,000) and 1981 (R130,000).⁷⁰ Most notably the agreement contained the illuminating statement that the SFW “will exercise its

⁶⁶ This was, for example, R20,000 more than each of the NFL and NPSL league sponsorships in 1977. See “Who supports what,” *Financial Mail*, August 26, 1977, in SACOS, Biennial Conference, October 8, 1977, 100, Cleophas collection.

⁶⁷ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 10–2.

⁶⁸ In their meeting with Koornhof on 10 February 1977 Thabe and Rapp already noted to the minister that Mainstay was withdrawing its sponsorship from the FPL (which was to have been R33,000). Piet Koornhof, “Sokker – Thabe & Rapp,” (handwritten notes), February 10, 1977, 2, PV476/1/34/21/2, Koornhof papers and SACOS, Statement, July 18, 1977, 2, Cleophas collection. The Football Council initially reported internally that Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery was offering a R100,000 sponsorship for the mixed league. This was ultimately set at R70,000 and the resulting R30,000 decrease can possibly be attributed to the situation regarding the FPL. According to SACOS documentation the FPL in fact demanded the R100,000 sponsorship promised to the Football Council, with SFW then requesting time until 30 June 1977 to consider such a request. After an extension of this deadline the SFW announced on 14 July 1977 that it was cancelling the FPL sponsorship. It is possible that by setting the Mainstay League Cup sponsorship at R70,000 (as per the signed sponsorship agreement on 4 March 1977) the SFW was keeping R30,000 in reserve to see how the situation with the mixed league played out and whether it got off the ground successfully. In case of a total failure the option would then have been open to re-activate the FPL sponsorship. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, January 16, 1977, 3, FASA papers; SACOS, Statement, July 18, 1977, 2, Cleophas collection; Football Council of South Africa, Memorandum of Agreement with Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Ltd, March 4, 1977, 7, FASA papers.

⁶⁹ SACOS, Statement, July 18, 1977, 2, Cleophas collection.

⁷⁰ Football Council of South Africa, Memorandum of Agreement with Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Ltd, 6–8.

best endeavours to ensure that SASF and/or clubs affiliated to or playing under the aegis of SASF participate in the league for the year 1978".⁷¹ This is a clear indication that the Football Council and the SFW were indeed using sponsorship leverage in an attempt to bring the SASF into the fold. Both parties would certainly have benefited from such a move – the Football Council would have been the sole controlling entity for football in South Africa, while SFW would have been the title sponsor of this unified controlling body's premier club competition with an increased brand impact and target market.

From the Football Council's perspective the 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition represented an important experiment in terms of potentially replacing the individual professional leagues and becoming a so-called "Super League" from 1978 onwards. This would subsequently prove to be a contentious point – an aspect to be explored later – but for the 1977 edition the format saw the 32 competing teams divided into four sections containing eight teams each.⁷² The NPSL and NFL leagues proceeded as per normal during the year, while Mainstay fixtures represented a new addition to the calendar, taking place along a sectional basis on weekdays with each team playing the seven other members within its section once. At the conclusion of the league phase the leading team in each section advanced to the semi-finals, played over one leg, followed by the final played on the same basis.

However, as indicated earlier, the Mainstay competition was plagued by controversy virtually from the outset. The first issue related to venue allocation and in this regard *World* lamented the fact that the initial fixture list did not include any matches between (white) NFL and (black) NPSL teams at black grounds (such as Orlando Stadium). All such encounters were in fact allocated to NFL grounds and the reason purported by Michael Rapp in the media related to the Department of Bantu Administration and Development's refusal to grant the necessary permits required by whites to enter black areas.⁷³ The initial indication from Thabe and other officials was that matches would be played "irrespective of the condition of

⁷¹ Football Council of South Africa, Memorandum of Agreement with Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery Ltd, 7.

⁷² In the end the competition comprised teams from the NFL, NPSL and SAFA only – the (Indian) SASA was "not able to submit [teams] for participation in the tournament" in 1977. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 25, 1977, 1, FASA papers. It also does not appear as if the teams were allocated into sections on a geographic basis – something which could have reduced travel costs. Section A, for example, included teams from Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban and East London – four far-flung cities in the context of South Africa's geography. Similarly Section D included teams from Cape Town, Pretoria and Pietermaritzburg. See Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Logs as at 31 October 1977," FASA papers.

⁷³ "Taking the first step backwards," *World*, April 6, 1977, 1, PV476/1/34/42/1, Koornhof papers. Group Areas legislation dictated that whites required permits to enter black areas. In 1977 the white Watson brothers ("Cheeky", Gavin, Valance and Ron) played rugby for the non-racial KwaZakhele rugby union in Port Elizabeth and were subsequently arrested for entering a black township without the aforementioned permits. This represents one of the more notable cases of Group Areas legislation affecting sport in South Africa. See Marc Keech, "Contest, conflict and resistance in South Africa's sport policies," in *Power Games: A Critical Sociology of Sport*, eds., John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson (London: Routledge, 2002), 161.

the ground". However, once it became clear that black teams would essentially need to play away from home against NFL teams, *World* accused sport officials of "mixing sport with politics", pointing out that these same officials had often decried such interference on previous occasions.⁷⁴

The possible reasoning behind this fixture layout led to further speculation amongst supporters. This revolved around the potential challenge in accommodating the large crowds that would flock to some of these fixtures – as evidenced by the 1975 Champion of Champions tournament – at grounds in black areas that lacked the required capacity. Potential crowd trouble was also feared in terms of any controversial refereeing decisions.⁷⁵ The latter proved to be a valid point, although this much only became evident later during the competition since the early portion of the fixture list contained none of the flagship fixtures between NFL sides and the premier NPSL teams such as Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows Limited. The issue of obtaining suitable venues was further compounded by the fact that some grounds that had traditionally been used for NFL matches – such as New Kingsmead in Durban – were at times "declared unsuitable for multiracial matches" during the course of the year.⁷⁶

Competition organisers certainly came under pressure to address the unbalanced nature of the aforementioned venue allocation. This is evident from correspondence between Dudley Zagnoev – who was appointed as the administrative officer for the competition⁷⁷ – and the township manager for KwaMashu, situated approximately 30 kilometres north of Durban. Zagnoev requested the use of the football venue in the township for Mainstay fixtures to be played over the remainder of the 1977 season, starting in late August with a fixture between Lamontville Golden Arrows and Highlands Park:

The Black teams that are participating in our competition this year, have indicated time and time again that they would like to play in their own areas and on their own home grounds...It is anticipated that the spectators would only be black. We do not think that whites would go into the townships to watch football. The number of spectators depends on the attractiveness of

⁷⁴ "Taking the first step backwards," *World*, April 6, 1977, 1, PV476/1/34/42/1, Koornhof papers.

⁷⁵ "Fans divided over venues row," *World*, April 6, 1977, 28, PV476/1/34/42/1, Koornhof papers.

⁷⁶ Sy Lerman, "Mainstay game abandoned in chaos," *Rand Daily Mail*, October 29, 1977, 16. The attitudes of local city and town councils in terms of denying access to certain venues has to be seen not only in the context of the security-related difficulties experienced later in 1977, but also the volatile nature of previous multinational football events such as the controversial 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions event.

⁷⁷ Zagnoev was appointed by the Football Council on a contract basis for a monthly fee of R700. As a prerequisite for this arrangement he resigned from his position on the executive committee of the council. See Minutes, Football Council of South Africa Executive Committee Meeting, February 25, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

the game. The reason why we chose this particular fixture, was because we did not think that Lamontville Golden Arrows had a following.⁷⁸

The fact that Lamontville Golden Arrows was not based in KwaMashu – but rather in Lamontville township in Durban south – is indicative of the challenges faced by organisers in terms of venue allocation. Further evidence of this administrative quagmire can be gleaned from the township manager’s response to Zagnoev’s initial inquiry:

...before any fixtures can be arranged the matter has to be submitted to the KwaMashu Township Council for consideration. In order to enable me to submit the matter, I shall be pleased to learn whether the proposed fixture is one which could not be staged at the New Kingsmead grounds in Durban; whether it is anticipated that the spectators will be multi-racial and the number of spectators it is anticipated would attend the fixture. I shall also be pleased to learn what the proposals are with regard to gate takings and the apportionment thereof.⁷⁹

These and other questions regarding policing arrangements and contact with local football authorities serve to highlight the difficulties experienced by the Football Council in terms of administering the Mainstay League Cup at operational level. In fact the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that the first instance of a white team playing in a black area only occurred early in October that year when NPSL side, Vaal Professionals, hosted the NFL’s East London United at the George Thabe Stadium in Sharpeville (a township located approximately 70 kilometres south of Johannesburg).⁸⁰

Despite these off-the-field complications the initial reception to the matches themselves was positive. In this regard *Sharpshoot Soccer* reported that the competition was “running smoothly” during its first month and opined that “everyone connected with [the] Mainstay League deserves some early and hopeful congratulations for an excellent start to a difficult programme”. However, simultaneously it did warn that “the steeper slopes [were] still to come”.⁸¹ This remark proved to be prophetic as crowd trouble erupted at an afternoon match between the NFL’s Highlands Park and the NPSL’s Moroka Swallows Limited at the Rand Stadium on Saturday 5 June 1977 (see Figure 5.1). *Sharpshoot Soccer* pointed out that each team had “its own brand of vociferous and dedicated supporters”, and that this was the first high profile fixture between black and white sides based in Johannesburg. Given these factors it regarded a riot as inevitable:

⁷⁸ Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to township manager of KwaMashu, August 18, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

⁷⁹ Manager of KwaMashu Township, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, August 9, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

⁸⁰ “Pros roll up the red carpet,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 3, 1977, 22.

⁸¹ Richard Lyon, “Mainstay league is running smoothly,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1977, 5.

The game itself...was a good and exciting match, and if the spectators overstepped the mark, then this was only to be expected. We have warned in these very columns of the dangers of playing White against Black, but if it is a necessary step on the road to fully integrated soccer, then let us all hold our breaths and keep swimming.⁸²

As had previously been the case during multinational matches it was the off-side law that sparked the trouble. In a high-scoring encounter Swallows came from 2–0 behind to draw level at 2–2, thereby creating much excitement among the team’s supporters since a win over one of the NFL’s top teams was seemingly within their grasp. But Highlands regained the lead with a third goal which “looked suspiciously off-side”, leading to a Swallows player being booked for arguing with the referee. The same player was then later sent off for a second bookable offense, at which point the Swallows supporters “really boiled over”.⁸³ Some invaded the pitch which led to the match being abandoned – although it was restarted (and completed) as a friendly encounter some 20 minutes later, with the scoreboard reset to 2–2 no less.⁸⁴



Figure 5.1 – Crowd trouble at the Mainstay League Cup match between Highlands Park and Moroka Swallows Limited.⁸⁵

⁸² Richard Lyon, “Cancellations, not the major problems,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, July, 1977, 5.

⁸³ “Great clash at Rand,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, July, 1977, 12–3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁵ Contained in Julian Turner, *The History of South African Football 1955–1985: Segregation to Integration, Part 1*, DVD-ROM Disc 4, 2012.

The crowd trouble experienced during the above encounter did not represent an isolated incident during the competition, but rather one of many instances of uncontrollable crowds at various Mainstay matches. This much was reported in the media,⁸⁶ and led to administrative headaches for the Football Council. For example, the latter was held responsible for damages caused to security fencing at the Jan Smuts Stadium in Pietermaritzburg on 28 October 1977. This occurred when “violence erupted and spectators rushed onto the field” during a match between the NFL’s Durban City and the NPSL’s Leeds United.⁸⁷ The cause of this particular incident again related to the interpretation of the off-side law. The *Rand Daily Mail* described the chain of events as follows:

Last night’s trouble flared when [Durban] City’s Brian Balfour netted the third goal and Leeds goalkeeper, Bernard Mbhele, refused to part with the ball. He claimed that Balfour was off-side and several of his teammates lent support. This was the signal for dozens of black fans to invade the pitch throwing bottles, cans and stones at the referee, linesmen and policemen who tried to restore order.⁸⁸

Crowd violence was also reported at three separate Mainstay matches played over the same weekend, including a referee being stabbed in the head.⁸⁹ These problematic incidents did not constitute the only point of criticism directed towards the competition. It was also condemned in some quarters as far as achieving its stated objective was concerned. In this regard – despite the introduction of the loan system during the competition – it still bore a close resemblance to previous multinational tournaments. Football writer Derrick Thema consequently criticised the competition’s credibility and blamed George Thabe as well as some reluctant teams for turning the Mainstay League Cup into “another multinational league”.⁹⁰

Thabe was purported to have played a significant role behind the scenes in terms of the breakdown of various negotiations between clubs regarding the potential loaning of players. A frustrated Norman Elliott bemoaned the situation, stating that “it appears that permission will not be granted by the top Black officials to allow their players to play with NFL clubs”.⁹¹ The confusion regarding player moves was also captured in comments by Orlando Pirates coach, Alex Forbes. The latter was set to sell Johannes Kholoane to Roodepoort Guild of the NFL, only to find out that permanent moves were not permitted. Upon hearing this he stated:

⁸⁶ “Mainstay’s League Cup broke new ground,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, November, 1977, 12.

⁸⁷ Pietermaritzburg City Treasurer’s Office, Letter to Football Council of South Africa, November 17, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

⁸⁸ Sy Lerman, “Mainstay game abandoned in chaos,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 29, 1977, 16.

⁸⁹ Brian O’Flaherty, “Soccer officials injured by fans,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 31, 1977, 1.

⁹⁰ Derrick Thema, “More clubs must follow Arcadia,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1977, 16.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

“We are not the Salvation Army. We want cash for Kholoane, because we are in soccer for business.”⁹² Thabe’s reported influence is in line with his stance on player movement, as highlighted previously. Within this milieu there were few notable player moves between clubs, thereby eroding the tournament’s believability as an integrated multiracial competition.

Whereas the aforementioned troubles were certainly significant, they were dwarfed by events that followed in August 1977. Early that month the Mainstay League Cup was plunged into a full scale crisis when fixtures were halted as a result of seven “rebel” NPSL clubs refusing to complete the schedule. The clubs in question also refused to take part in the following season’s proposed Mainstay “Super League” and much of the controversy centred around prevailing issues within SANFA and the NPSL. The professional clubs again demanded a greater degree of autonomy in their dealings with Thabe’s SANFA, and this mirrored the previous year’s crisis prior to the fixture between the integrated South African team and the Argentine Stars XI in Johannesburg.⁹³ SANFA eventually caved in to these demands and fixtures recommenced on 16 September 1977 with a match between Cape Town City and Moroka Swallows Limited.⁹⁴ This left the Mainstay competition with a fixture backlog that had to be cleared in a short space of time before the end of the 1977 season, which resulted in a flurry of fixtures during the month of October.⁹⁵

Stumbling to the Finish Line

The temporary suspension of Mainstay fixtures is perhaps the reason why Alegi and Bolsmann incorrectly assert that the competition was never completed.⁹⁶ The semi-finals and final were in fact contested early in November 1977 between four NFL sides – each of which finished at the top of their respective sections.⁹⁷ With NPSL teams having been eliminated by that point it cleared the way for top black players to play as loaned “guests” for the semi-finalists. Lucas “Masterpieces” Moripe (of the NPSL’s Pretoria Callies) turned out for Arcadia Shepherds (alongside Vincent Julius, who was of course a permanent fixture for

⁹² Derrick Thema, “More clubs must follow Arcadia,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, May, 1977, 16.

⁹³ The seven clubs comprised Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates, Amazulu, Pretoria Callies, Real Hearts, Moroka Swallows Limited and Lamontville Golden Arrows. The clubs also demanded the resignation of Cyril Kobus from his portfolios at both SANFA and the NPSL, the appointment of a new league chairman, as well as the retention of Kgomo Modise as NPSL general manager. See “Mainstay bid fails,” *World*, August 24, 1977, FASA papers.

⁹⁴ Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup – 1977 Attendances: September,” FASA papers.

⁹⁵ A total of 36 matches were played during that month. As a comparison the opening months of April, May and June saw a total of 16, 17 and 20 matches being scheduled respectively. See Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup – 1977 Attendances: October,” FASA papers, and “Fixture list for April, May and June 1977,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, April, 1977, 11.

⁹⁶ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 8.

⁹⁷ Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup Paid Attendances – Semi Finals and Final,” FASA papers, and Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup Logs as at 31 October 1977,” FASA papers.

Shepherds that season) in their semi-final against Wits University, with the latter fielding Patrick “Ace” Ntsoelengoe of Kaizer Chiefs.⁹⁸

However, even this much-needed additional dimension would not have materialised had the competing teams not agreed (and obtained permission from administrators) to waive the tournament rule regarding cup-tied players. This rule – which is a standard feature of major football competitions to this day – dictates that once a player has appeared a certain number of times (sometimes this need only be one occasion) for a team in a specific competition, then he is not permitted to appear for a different club in the same competition during that season. In this regard Wits – who wanted to acquire Ntsoelengoe on loan – floated the idea to Arcadia and proposed that the Pretoria club obtain Moripe on a similar basis as compensation.⁹⁹ This was cleared by the relevant authorities, and the prolific Julius scored the only goal of the encounter, sending Arcadia Shepherds into the final. There they faced Cape Town City – who had defeated Durban City in the other semi-final.

The final was played at Arcadia’s home ground, the Caledonian Stadium, in Pretoria on 12 November 1977. It was notable for the fact that Julius and Moripe were joined by another star guest player, Ephraim “Jomo” Sono, who turned out for Cape Town City. In a clear indication that they were eager to retain Moripe’s star power in their lineup, Arcadia opted to play him despite the fact that he was involved in a cup match for his parent club, Pretoria Callies, earlier that same day.¹⁰⁰ The decision proved to be the right one as Arcadia prevailed in a one-sided encounter, winning by a 5–1 margin in front of a reported paid attendance of just over 9,000 spectators.¹⁰¹ Having finally drawn to a close the competition was described as a success in some quarters of the media, particularly in light of the fact that it did represent a tentative (if largely clumsy) move towards partial integration.¹⁰² However, as a whole the venture experienced numerous challenges both on and off the field, and *Sharpshoot Soccer* summarised this dimension appropriately in the competition’s aftermath:

Halfway through, the competition was halted by internal wrangles between the [black] NPSL and SANFA. Later the games restarted but many staggered to chaos and ended up in riots when white referees came under fire from the black sector of the spectators. Quite a few games were

⁹⁸ “Arcadia broke the red tape,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, November, 1977, 10.

⁹⁹ Sy Lerman, “Wits, Arcs agree to bend Cup rules,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 2, 1977, 30.

¹⁰⁰ Sy Lerman, “Day-night Master,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 10, 1977, 26.

¹⁰¹ See Sy Lerman, “Mainstay League was a success,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 14, 1977, 21 and Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup Paid Attendances – Semi Finals and Final,” FASA papers.

¹⁰² Sy Lerman, “Mainstay League was a success,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 14, 1977, 21 and “Mainstay’s League Cup broke new ground,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, November, 1977, 12.

abandoned because of misunderstandings of the rules of the game. Many rules and decisions (which are never applied by Black referees in black associations, through inexperience or negligence) sounded foreign to black fans when correctly put into practice by white referees.¹⁰³

The controversy over refereeing decisions clearly mirrored developments during the multinational experiments from preceding years. This again underlined the complexity and volatility present within the process of moving towards football integration. Another challenge faced by organisers related to the financial aspect of the competition. In this regard the vast travel distances logged by clubs resulted in high travel costs which led to notable losses against the competition's travel fund.¹⁰⁴ According to documents pertaining to the competition's finances (compiled by Dudley Zagnoev) the total income from paid attendances amounted to R282,224. Applying the 15% travel fund allocation to this figure produces a total budgeted fund value of approximately R42,334. In this regard the actual travel expenses incurred during the competition was reported as R71,504 – representing a loss of nearly R30,000 on travel.¹⁰⁵

Whereas the total income of R282,224 for the competition represents a significant figure at first glance, it should be noted that this was basically accumulated as a result of the large number of fixtures played. In this regard attendances were generally low throughout the competition. The total paid attendance figure for the entire venture is listed as 293,060 spectators. Given that the competition consisted of 115 matches, this leads to an average attendance of approximately 2,548 spectators per match.¹⁰⁶ It is important to note, however, that these attendances accrued in a notably unbalanced manner, with only the popular NPSL clubs such as Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows Limited managing to draw larger crowds to their respective Mainstay fixtures. Even this superior drawing power

¹⁰³ "Mainstay's League Cup broke new ground," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, November, 1977, 12.

¹⁰⁴ The travel fund was accumulated by pooling 15% of the gate takings from each match in the competition. This meant that teams drawing large attendances would subsidise the travel of those with low attendances. See Dudley Zagnoev, Letter to township manager of KwaMashu, August 18, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁵ Figures contained in Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup – Paid Attendances 1977," FASA papers. Figures rounded to the nearest rand.

¹⁰⁶ Figures compiled from Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup – Paid Attendances 1977," FASA papers, and Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Logs as at 31 October 1977," FASA papers. A few notes regarding this calculation are necessary. Firstly, it is accepted that paid attendances are not necessarily 100% reflective of actual attendances since some spectators could potentially have circumvented payment (by gaining illegal access to grounds). However, from an organisational perspective paid attendances are what ultimately matter since those figures drive finances. Secondly, the Mainstay standings at the end of October indicate that three sectional matches still needed to be played. It is uncertain whether these fixtures were ever played since they involved teams that were no longer in a position to reach the semi-finals, and as a result there is a possibility that they were never completed. The average match attendance figure has been calculated under the assumption that these matches were in fact played. Had this not been the case (reducing the fixture total to 112) then the average attendance figure would be 2 616 spectators per match – a negligible difference for the purposes of the argument.

was not guaranteed in all cases, particularly when the opposition included the weaker SAFA-affiliated teams.

The period 1 July to 31 October 1977 represents an illuminating window for analysis since this phase of the competition contained the majority of the so-called flagship fixtures between the top NFL and NPSL teams.¹⁰⁷ During this period a total of 67 matches were played and the tables below capture the nature of the paid attendances.

1977 Mainstay League Cup: Ten Highest Match Attendances: July - October				
No	Date	Teams (NPSL listed first)	Type	Attendance
1	22 Oct	Kaizer Chiefs vs Rangers	NPSL vs NFL	13 531
2	15 Oct	Kaizer Chiefs vs Durban United	NPSL vs NFL	12 321
3	21 Oct	Moroka Swallows Ltd vs Highlands Park	NPSL vs NFL	8 901
4	19 July	Orlando Pirates vs Hellenic	NPSL vs NFL	7 790
5	2 July	Benoni United vs Highlands Park	NPSL vs NFL	7 470
6	29 Oct	Amazulu vs Lusitano	NPSL vs NFL	7 301
7	30 Oct	Benoni United vs Moroka Swallows Ltd	NPSL vs NPSL	6 491
8	10 Oct	Orlando Pirates vs Arcadia Shepherds	NPSL vs NFL	6 365
9	14 Oct	Orlando Pirates vs Maritzburg	NPSL vs NFL	6 068
10	12 Oct	Real Hearts vs Kaizer Chiefs	NPSL vs NPSL	3 279

Table 5.1 – Ten highest attended Mainstay matches: July–October 1977.¹⁰⁸

A notable pattern emerges when considering the ten highest attended matches during the period under consideration (Table 5.1). Whereas every match on the list contained at least one NPSL team, the majority of the fixtures were encounters between NPSL and NFL teams. This partly points to the prevailing novelty of such encounters, although attendances did not reach the levels of the 1975 Champion of Champions tournament, for example, when multinationalism at club level was introduced for the first time. It is also worth noting that eight of the ten encounters included one of the NPSL's three big Soweto-based teams, namely Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows Limited. Furthermore the unbalanced distribution of attendances is evident when considering that there were only eleven fixtures¹⁰⁹ (out of a total of 67 for the period) that produced more than 2,600 spectators per match – in other words an attendance exceeding the previously calculated match average for the entire competition. In this regard it is important to note that none of

¹⁰⁷ The analysis is constrained by the fact that individual match attendances for the preceding months of April, May and June were not available in the FASA document collection at the University of the Witwatersrand.

¹⁰⁸ Figures obtained in Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Attendances – July, August, September, October," FASA papers. Table compiled by author.

¹⁰⁹ This figure comprises the ten matches in Figure 6.1 as well as a fixture between Moroka Swallows Big XV (NPSL) and Cape Town City (NFL) played on 16 September 1977 which produced an attendance of 2,755 spectators. See Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Attendances – July, August, September, October," FASA papers.

these eleven matches were contested between two NFL teams – an aspect to be explored further below. A summary of the lowest attended matches is similarly revealing.

1977 Mainstay League Cup: Ten Lowest Match Attendances: July - October				
No	Date	Teams (NPSL / NFL listed first)	Type	Attendance
1	8 Oct	Leeds United vs Chesterfield United	NPSL vs SAFA	50
2	7 July	Roodepoort Guild vs Chesterfield United	NFL vs SAFA	53
3	10 Oct	Cape Town City vs Colchester United	NFL vs SAFA	86
4	1 Oct	Hellenic vs Chelsea United	NFL vs SAFA	120
5	16 Sept	Pretoria Callies vs Cape Town Strikers	NPSL vs NPSL	154
6	10 Aug	Vaal Professionals vs Colchester	NPSL vs SAFA	168
7	20 Sept	Rangers vs Bloemfontein Celtic	NFL vs NPSL	185
8	7 July	Leeds United vs Lamontville Golden Arrows	NPSL vs NPSL	187
9	14 Oct	Wits University vs African Wanderers	NFL vs NPSL	200
10	8 Oct	Bloemfontein Celtic vs Real Hearts	NPSL vs NPSL	208

Table 5.2 – Ten lowest attended Mainstay matches: July–October 1977.¹¹⁰

Table 6.2 clearly highlights the miniscule paid attendances experienced at a number of Mainstay matches. The fact that some fixtures produced turnouts in the double digits points to the challenges in attempting to construct a single competition that would not only comprise of teams from all racially-based associations, but that would also be financially sustainable. This was part of the broader challenge within professional football as far as establishing a so-called “Super League” was concerned. Economics dictated that only a limited number of teams could ever form part of such a competition, thereby creating a cut-throat game of musical chairs when clubs competed for openings in particularly the NPSL the following season.

At this point it is necessary to re-emphasise the relative insignificance of the SAFA teams during the 1977 Mainstay League Cup. These four teams (Chelsea United, Colchester United, Chesterfield United and Leicester City) were all part of the minor SAFA-run Transvaal Soccer League (TSL) and fared particularly poorly during the Mainstay competition, winning a total of three matches between them.¹¹¹ It is therefore not surprising to find that the four least attended fixtures each contained a SAFA-affiliated team. However, there was also a fair sprinkling of NFL- and smaller NPSL-based teams. In terms of the latter this serves to indicate that while the balance of power had by this point tilted towards black professional football, the NPSL itself was also an unbalanced league with a large gap

¹¹⁰ Figures obtained in Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup Attendances – July, August, September, October,” FASA papers. Table compiled by author.

¹¹¹ See Dudley Zagnoev, “Mainstay League Cup Logs as at 31 October 1977,” FASA papers.

between its most popular sides and the rest. As far as the Mainstay competition is concerned it should also be noted that a third of the matches (22 out of 67) during the July to October 1977 period produced attendances of less than 500 spectators.¹¹² *Sharpshoot Soccer* accounted for this as follows:

Where NFL clubs played amongst themselves and NPSL [clubs] also on the other hand the crowds became bored at repetition of seeing...Hellenic play Rangers in the Datsun League [NFL] and the Castle Cup as well as in the Mainstay League. So were the Africans: They could not bear the boredom of watching Moroka Swallows Ltd and Leeds United three times in six months.¹¹³

Even the knock-out stages – supposed to be the highlight of any competition – drew relatively poorly. The Arcadia-Wits semi-final produced a paid attendance of 9,781, while the Cape Town City-Durban City encounter drew a paltry 2,907. The final produced 9,015.¹¹⁴ These figures are a far cry from the heady days of the NFL when white football's premier cup competition, the Castle Cup, produced cup final attendances upwards of 35,000. The 1977 Castle Cup final itself – contested in the midst of the NFL's struggles – between Lusitano and Durban United at the Rand Stadium a month earlier, drew 22,000 spectators.¹¹⁵ Notably the Mainstay final was also originally scheduled to take place at the Rand Stadium – South Africa's premier football ground at the time. However, Cape Town City's management committee decided to offer the option to Arcadia Shepherds for the match be played at the latter's home venue, namely the Caledonian Stadium in Pretoria. This was done for "financial reasons" and came in for some heavy criticism in Cape Town.¹¹⁶ This is a clear indication that Cape Town City – who shared in the final's proceeds – felt that the Rand Stadium would have produced a smaller turnout than the Pretoria venue since neither side was based in Johannesburg. From a financial standpoint it therefore made sense to give home field advantage to the opposition in the hope of attracting a larger attendance which would have led to a greater profit share. The subsequent 5–1 defeat in front of 9,000 spectators did little to ease Cape Town City's dire financial situation – something to be explored below.

Given the fact that the Mainstay League Cup was marketed by administrators as a significant step towards "normalising" South African football, the aforementioned figures represented a poor return during its culminating phase. Even the match report of the final itself – despite being positive – was placed without a photo on the inside back page of the

¹¹² Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Attendances – July, August, September, October," FASA papers.

¹¹³ "Mainstay's League Cup broke new ground," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, November, 1977, 12.

¹¹⁴ Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Paid Attendances – Semi Finals and Final," FASA papers.

¹¹⁵ Sy Lerman, "The greatest since Vasco da Gama," *Rand Daily Mail*, October 3, 1977, 22.

¹¹⁶ Sy Lerman, "Chilton out as final goes to Pretoria," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 9, 1977, 36.

following Monday's *Rand Daily Mail*.¹¹⁷ This was largely symbolic of the way the tournament was received within football circles. The lack of interest in its concluding matches can also be attributed to the fact that the four semi-finalists were all from the NFL, which meant that there was very little novelty factor during the knock-out stage of the competition (other than the black guest players). However, it should be noted that despite being less than initially anticipated, the additional revenue that the competition generated for NFL teams was not unwelcome. After its conclusion Zagnoev opined that the competition had in fact "saved several clubs this year" as a result of the gate money that it generated. He made particular reference to the Kaizer Chiefs-Rangers match at the Rand Stadium.¹¹⁸ This fixture drew 13,500 spectators, as highlighted in Table 5.1.

In many ways the 1977 Mainstay League Cup constituted a microcosm of South African football at the time. It was dressed up as an integrated multiracial competition, but bore a much closer resemblance to previous multinational tournaments since the proposed movement of players between black and white clubs only materialised on a small scale. As had been the case during preceding years the non-racial SASF and FPL also rejected it as mere multinationalism and refused to participate in the venture, thereby maintaining the ideological rift within professional football. Furthermore the Mainstay competition was also affected by the boardroom politics raging within this milieu, as evidenced by its suspension in midseason as a result of the power struggle between SANFA and its professional league, the NPSL. South Africa's broader political structure also played a role, as evidenced by the permit problem relating to white supporters potentially wanting to gain access to matches in black areas. When viewed together all of the aforementioned factors, coupled with the on-field problems relating to violence and general administration, serve to underline the fact that professional football was faced with a cobbled road towards integration. This would eventually materialise in 1978 largely as a result of the desperate situation which had enveloped NFL clubs in the preceding years. This element is to be explored in the remainder of this chapter.

The NFL's Dying Breaths

The 1977 Mainstay League Cup not only served as a marker of the potential challenges faced by a professional football landscape that was attempting to move towards integration, but it also represents a useful lens through which to consider the state of NFL clubs by 1977.

¹¹⁷ Sy Lerman, "Mainstay League was a success," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 14, 1977, 21.

¹¹⁸ Jon Swift, "Zagnoev backs Mainstay League in 1978," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 17, 1977, 30.

Table 5.3 contains the paid attendance figures for Mainstay matches contested exclusively between NFL teams during the period July to October 1977.

1977 Mainstay League Cup: Attendances For NFL-Only Matches: July - October				
No	Date	Teams	Type	Attendance
1	16 July	Cape Town City vs Germiston Callies	NFL vs NFL	2 489
2	24 Sept	Lusitano vs Germiston Callies	NFL vs NFL	1 474
3	30 Sept	Cape Town City vs East London United	NFL vs NFL	1 512
4	7 Oct	Hellenic vs Maritzburg	NFL vs NFL	874
5	8 Oct	Lusitano vs Cape Town City	NFL vs NFL	1 701
6	8 Oct	Wits University vs Durban United	NFL vs NFL	318

Table 5.3 – Paid attendances for Mainstay matches between NFL teams: July–October 1977.¹¹⁹

In total the 1977 Mainstay competition contained fifteen NFL-only matches during its league phase,¹²⁰ with three additional such matches taking place during the semi-finals and final. The majority of the NFL-only matches (nine) took place during the early part of the competition (April to June), a period for which individual match attendances were not available. Consequently there exists a danger of overextrapolation with regard to the six matches listed in Table 5.3. It should also be noted that the Mainstay competition was obviously a separate competition to that of the NFL's annual league competition (sponsored by Datsun in 1977). As a result attendances in Mainstay matches cannot be considered as a definitive yardstick for attendances of matches between the same teams in another competition. However, with these caveats in mind, there are still important aspects worth noting.

The match between Wits University and Durban United on 8 October – which produced a paltry paid attendance of 318 spectators – is notable since both teams enjoyed relatively successful league campaigns in the NFL during 1977. Durban United finished third and Wits University fourth in the Datsun League and consequently their Mainstay encounter cannot be dismissed as a fixture between two struggling bottom dwellers that lost on a regular basis.¹²¹ On a similar basis Lusitano – Castle Cup winners and runners-up in the Datsun League that season¹²² – failed to draw 2,000 spectators in either of its two fixtures listed above.

¹¹⁹ Figures obtained in Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Attendances – July, August, September, October," FASA papers. Table compiled by author.

¹²⁰ The draw for the competition saw Section A contain four NFL teams (thus six NFL-only matches), while Sections B, C and D each contained three NFL teams (thus three NFL-only matches for each of these sections). See Dudley Zagnoev, "Mainstay League Cup Logs as at 31 October 1977," FASA papers.

¹²¹ Peter Raath, *Soccer Through the Years, 1862–2002* (Cape Town: Peter Raath, 2002), 164.

¹²² Lusitano obtained the same number of points as Highlands Park in the league that season, but Highlands won the title as a result of a superior goal difference.

It could be argued that the backlog created by the temporary halting of the Mainstay competition meant that fixtures ultimately had to be caught up during a time (September to October) when the NFL season was traditionally winding to a close. The fact that Mainstay fixtures dragged into November and produced low attendances during this period could be an indication of a lack of spectator interest during this latter portion of the season. In this regard it is worth noting that the Mainstay fixture between Cape Town City and Germiston Callies – two struggling teams that year¹²³ – drew the highest paid attendance listed in Table 5.3. This could be as a result of the fact that the match was played earlier in the season when interest might have been more pronounced. What can be intimated from these figures though is that NFL teams could certainly not match the drawing power of the top NPSL clubs. The latter played under the same conditions in the Mainstay competition and the likes of Moroka Swallows Limited and Orlando Pirates were still drawing in excess of 6,000 spectators into October (see Table 5.1).¹²⁴ Consequently Table 5.3 represents a partial window into the struggles experienced by NFL teams in terms of attendances.

A factor worth mentioning at this point is the arrival of television in South Africa in 1976. While it is difficult to gauge the exact impact of this development on white attendances in isolation, the framework in which television was introduced should be noted. In this regard the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) first started showing NFL football matches (but not Mainstay matches) in 1977,¹²⁵ but it is important to note that this coverage was limited as a result of there being only one television channel at the time. More importantly, SABC-TV sports programming were confined to a Saturday afternoon time slot,¹²⁶ and this meant that only one live match – whether it be football or another sport code such as rugby – could be shown in a given week. Consequently the best way for football supporters to follow their teams through the season was still through mostly attending the actual matches in person. However, the arrival of television as an alternative form of entertainment – not just in terms of screening a limited number of live football matches – could certainly not have helped white attendances at NFL matches, although the precise impact of this development in terms the struggles experienced by NFL clubs is impossible to quantify.

¹²³ In 1977 Cape Town City finished eleventh in the Datsun League and Germiston Callies thirteenth (bottom).

¹²⁴ Although it needs to be noted that even 6,000 spectators is a small figure compared to what these clubs were at times able to draw within the NPSL.

¹²⁵ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142. There is no evidence that Mainstay League Cup matches were also televised in 1977. Live sport coverage was confined to weekends, while Mainstay matches were almost exclusively played on weekdays in order to fit into the overall football calendar (since the NFL and NPSL leagues were running concurrently). See for example “Fixture list for April, May and June 1977,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, April, 1977, 11. Tournament documentation, such as the sponsorship agreement with SFW and the summaries compiled by Dudley Zagnoev, also make no mention of aspects relating to television – such as income from selling the rights or regulations pertaining to advertising.

¹²⁶ Ian Reid, “Will it become a spoil-sport?” *Rand Daily Mail*, March 26, 1976, 15.

These struggles can be further illustrated by taking the case study of Cape Town City under consideration. This club came to prominence during the early 1970s when – having joined the NFL in 1962 – it entered a period of sustained on-field success. An eight-year long trophy drought was finally ended in 1970 when the club claimed the Castle Cup, which it defended the following year. This newfound excitement regarding professional football in Cape Town – and around this club in particular¹²⁷ – spawned a book authored by Eric Litchfield in 1972 (*Cape Town City: The Story Of Our Famous Club*) celebrating the team's sudden rise. Litchfield had a long association with the professional game in South Africa. He was a former professional player in Britain who then became a prominent football journalist and author in South Africa.¹²⁸ He was also one of the key role players during the NFL's founding in 1959.¹²⁹ In 1970 he was appointed as administrative manager of the Western Province Football Association (WPFA) – the white amateur body which owned Cape Town City. This was done by the WPFA in order to streamline its operations, particularly as far as the professional club was concerned.¹³⁰ As a result Litchfield had intimate knowledge of the latter's workings and was well placed to author the aforementioned celebratory book.

This development is indicative of the great deal of optimism that surrounded Cape Town City by 1972. In his introduction Litchfield states that “the game at the homely Hartleyvale headquarters has been transformed into an exciting and much sought-after product”.¹³¹ Average match attendances during that period constitute an important reference point for the purposes of this chapter. During the 1970 season the approximate attendance for a Cape Town City home match was 15,400 spectators – a figure that grew to just over 18,000 per match in 1971.¹³² These numbers clearly dwarf the attendances that accrued during the 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition. In fact the success of the early 1970s even prompted club chairman, Ian Taylor, to speculate about the future possibility of building a

¹²⁷ Cape Town's other NFL first division club, Hellenic, was also successful during the early 1970s, winning the league in 1971 and finishing inside the top three places in each of the following two years. Some of the smaller cup competitions were also won. For a summary of NFL competition winners over the course of the league's history see Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 175.

¹²⁸ His career as a journalist included being the sports editor of *The Sunday Times* and the *Rand Daily Mail* previously.

¹²⁹ The Stellenbosch University library contains a copy of Vivian Granger's own book detailing the early years of the NFL, *The World Game Comes To South Africa* (1961). This particular copy was clearly handed to Litchfield as a gift. A handwritten inscription on the inside cover notes Granger's appreciation for Litchfield's assistance in bringing the league to fruition: “To my old pal, Eric – in appreciation of the wonderful and exciting times we had together in helping to build the National Football League. Without your great help we would have got nowhere. You had the guts at the right time to give it a ‘full go’.” See Vivian Granger, *The World Game Comes to South Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1961), inside cover, Stellenbosch University Library (Africana section).

¹³⁰ Eric Litchfield, *Cape Town City: The Story of Our Famous Club* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1972), 130.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, ix.

¹³² According to Litchfield the total attendance for 1970 was 401,375 spectators over the course of 26 home matches. An additional 15,000 spectators attended over the course of 23 home matches in 1971. See Litchfield, *Cape Town City*, x.

new stadium with covered seating for 50,000 to 60,000 spectators.¹³³ Even though the club was by no means in a position to attempt something so ambitious by itself,¹³⁴ the mere mention of such a scenario was indicative of the positive outlook with which Cape Town City's future was viewed. The following season, in 1973, the team won its first NFL league title, while also adding another trophy in the form of the UTC Bowl.¹³⁵

Yet by the end of 1977 all the optimism from earlier years regarding the club's future and possible expansion had disappeared, replaced instead by a desperate battle for financial survival. The WPFA annual report for 1977 clearly describes the precarious financial position in which the association found itself in at that point – largely as a result of the financial burden that the Cape Town City professional club had become:

Not only were the playing results below hopes and desires, but the by-product [*sic*] was the most serious financial depression in the history of the Association. Notwithstanding the boost given to the Association by the sponsorship agreement with Lewis Stores Ltd., the shattering drop in public support right from the start of the season, caused such a serious deterioration in financial resources that by the middle of the year the very future of the Association was placed in jeopardy...The simple explanation of how this arose was that income from gates dropped to such an alarming extent that the income was insufficient to meet contractual commitments.¹³⁶

In this regard the total attendance for Cape Town City's 29 home matches (in all competitions) during 1977 is listed as 143,278 – an average match figure of just over 4,900 spectators.¹³⁷ This was a far cry from the 18,000-plus attendances experienced during the 1971 season. Incidentally the fact that this figure was seen as disastrous also again illustrates how disappointing the 1977 Mainstay competition's attendances were, since the latter were even lower, as previously noted. In fact the WPFA annual report also makes mention of this fact, stating that

the advent of [Mainstay] matches...between white and non-white-controlled clubs [did not] meet with anything like the spectator success that was envisaged in the days when such proposed competitive play was but a dream. Several clubs connected with the National Professional Soccer League played at Hartleyvale, but attendances of fewer than 5 000

¹³³ Litchfield, *Cape Town City*, 132.

¹³⁴ Taylor indicated that 1971 was the first season in which the club was able to pay its way "from gate takings and prize monies alone", having previously had to rely on advertising and catering revenue to balance its books. So despite the positive developments during the early 1970s the club certainly was not in possession of a proverbial (or literal) pot of gold. See Litchfield, *Cape Town City*, 130.

¹³⁵ The importation of high profile "guest" players by NFL clubs, including Cape Town City, during this period has been discussed in Chapter 2.

¹³⁶ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 1, FASA papers.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

spectators were recorded, whereas formerly it had been fondly imagined that such games would have Hartleyvale bursting at the seams.¹³⁸

Ultimately 1977 was described as the “second worst financial year since Cape Town City’s formation”, with only the 1975 season producing a greater financial loss for the amateur association.¹³⁹ During that dismal season a total of 187,768 spectators watched Cape Town City at home, and even this tally was 44,520 more than the figure for the disastrous 1977 campaign.¹⁴⁰ In this regard it has been argued previously that declining attendances were largely the result of the eroding entertainment value of NFL matches and the worsening economic conditions in South Africa generally. The WPFA annual report points to another dimension that bears particular relevance in terms of the 1977 season, namely football’s ongoing power struggle at boardroom level:

The distressing lack of unanimity between officials of various national organisations, at times openly acrimonious,...adversely affected the image of the game. Regretably this happened in the first year of multi-racial football, which ought to have been one of the most important milestones in the history of the game in South Africa. The adverse effect that this had on the game is incalculable, but one only had to listen to the average man in the street to know that the previously held high image of the game had been severely dented.¹⁴¹

Spectator interest is obviously an important aspect that drives the success of professional clubs worldwide, and ultimately the resulting financial figures are most damning in the case of Cape Town City. In this regard the WPFA financial statements indicate a loss of R47,506 that had to be absorbed from the professional club’s income statement in 1977. The figure for the preceding year is listed as R41,091 – this despite excellent on-field results which saw Cape Town City win both the league title as well as the Castle Cup that season.¹⁴² This is a clear indication that the club found itself in an environment where not even on-field success could produce financial security. The aggregate home attendance for 1976 was 231,876 over the course of 20 home matches – an appreciably better match average of more than 11,500 spectators. However it is worth postulating that on-field success came at a much higher price, as Cape Town City’s 1976 wage bill (for players, the manager and trainer) is listed as R101,985. This figure was approximately R26,000 more than the following year’s

¹³⁸ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 2, FASA papers.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 2. The total number of home matches played in 1975 is not provided in the report and as a result an average match attendance cannot be calculated for that season.

¹⁴¹ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁴² WPFA, Income Statement for the Year Ended 31 December 1977, in WPFA Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, FASA papers. Figures rounded to the nearest rand. It is clear that the dire financial situation experienced by the amateur WPFA in 1977 was almost exclusively the result of the professional club’s failings. The association’s total loss for the year is listed as R44,002 – this after absorbing Cape Town City’s listed loss of R47 506.

reduced sum of R75,563 when the club was desperately trying to cut costs. In other words, despite relatively strong attendances and excellent playing results on the field in 1976, the club still suffered a financial loss of more than R40,000 that season.

These losses had notable repercussions in 1977 when the WPFA was forced to seek a six month moratorium from its creditors in September of that year.¹⁴³ The creditors were sympathetic to the association's plight at that point and acquiesced, but even this did not improve the situation significantly. A report in the *Rand Daily Mail* a few weeks later indicated that the Cape Town City players had not been paid their wages, leading to the threat of a revolt. This led to an appeal by new chairman, Ron Stephen (who had taken over from Ian Taylor as president of the WPFA in 1977), for the players to "appreciate the club's problems and turn out for the Mainstay League Cup game against Lusitano" that weekend.¹⁴⁴

In a rather cruel twist of fate Litchfield himself appears to have been a victim of the WPFA's "drastic pruning of expenses" as he resigned as administrative manager at the end of August.¹⁴⁵ In an illuminating personal letter, written to Dudley Zagnoev in November 1977, Litchfield claims that he was "forced into a resignation" by the WPFA, and that he was placed in an embarrassing financial situation as a result: "[When] you go for two months without an income, and then have to find another job with a reduced salary, then life isn't funny. I've never before had to suffer such an indignity."¹⁴⁶ His opinion regarding the situation surrounding the club is also worth noting:

The [Western Province] Council insisted on having all the authority and policy-making when there was hardly one of them with the business sense to see round the corner. They got away with it when things were going well. But once the public turned sour, they just didn't know what had hit them and when the bank put the screws on, they just didn't know which way to turn. In fact, I happen to know that if Ron Stephen hadn't stood good personally at the bank, there would have been no Cape Town City in the Mainstay final; it would have ceased to exist weeks ago, with the players becoming the property of the NFL.¹⁴⁷

As a result of his personal situation Litchfield was forced to turn to his journalistic roots by taking up a position as a sub-editor at the *Cape Times* after his resignation from his role at the WPFA. His closing note to Zagnoev provides a revealing contrast to the optimism with

¹⁴³ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 13, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁴ "No pay' side," *Rand Daily Mail*, October 6, 1977, 26.

¹⁴⁵ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁶ Eric Litchfield, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, November 14, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

which he had written five years previously: “The Cape Times is all right, but, quite frankly, I just go through the motions day by day, or rather night by night – I work from 5 p.m. until midnight – with no great enthusiasm.”¹⁴⁸ The fact that one of the league’s founders no longer had a future in professional football administration at this time, leading to a passionless pursuit of an alternative form of employment, was perhaps symbolic of the larger predicament facing the terminally-ill NFL by the end of 1977.

In a move to ensure its own survival the amateur WPFA sold Cape Town City early in 1978 for an amount of R25,000.¹⁴⁹ The club initially joined the non-racial Federation Professional League in 1978 but withdrew during the early months of that season, opting instead to play friendly matches against NPSL clubs with the intention of joining that league in 1979. This came to pass and Cape Town City finished a respectable seventh that year, but from a financial perspective the writing was on the wall and the club was liquidated at the end of 1979. In this regard the travails of former NFL clubs in the FPL and NPSL after 1977 are explored in the final two chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter shifted the overall analysis of the decline of white professional football back to club level by initially highlighting the NFL’s overtures towards playing multiracial football during its final years of existence. As a reaction to increased financial pressures clubs were beginning to consider alternative measures for securing their survival, including the potential purchasing of top black, coloured and Indian players. Government policy, however, remained a theoretical stumbling block – as did George Thabe’s reluctance to allow top black players to move to the NFL. Within this milieu the football landscape underwent further changes. Springbok football made a return against Rhodesia in April 1977 – a Football Council project forming part of its broader efforts to “normalise” the game. This was particularly significant in light of the fact that the seven black players forming part of the South African squad were awarded Springbok blazers, thereby becoming the first black sportsmen in any code to receive this distinction.

This was indicative of further thawing of the National Party’s sports policy which had been amended in September 1976. This revised policy made provision for competitions containing clubs from different racially-based associations to take place, although the separate

¹⁴⁸ Eric Litchfield, Letter to Dudley Zagnoev, November 14, 1977, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁴⁹ WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1977, 13, and WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement: Season 1979, 11, FASA papers.

administration of each racial group's clubs was still the overriding concern. Essentially this was the formal extension of multinationalism to club level, and it paved the way for the 1977 Mainstay League Cup to take place. The fact that the Football Council was able to obtain permission for limited movement (and mixing) of players from different race groups to occur during the competition represented another step closer to integrated football at club level. However, the numerous problems and controversies which surrounded the competition were also indicative of the difficult and uncertain path towards bringing about such integration. It also served as a lens through which to consider the difficulties faced by NFL clubs at that point, both in terms of finance and crowd support. Teams found themselves within a rapidly changing and fluid environment, and in this regard the uncertainty regarding the 1978 season prompted them to take drastic steps at the end of 1977 – an aspect to be explored from this point on.

Chapter 6 – A Change in Tactics: NFL Clubs in the FPL during the 1978 Season

The previous chapter considered developments up to the end of 1977 – a time by which NFL clubs were faced with a decidedly uncertain future. This gave rise to a split within NFL ranks with teams affiliating to either the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL) or the National Professional Soccer League (NPSL) under the auspices of George Thabe's SANFA. This chapter seeks to unpack the decision making process of NFL clubs within this uncertain milieu which led to the league disbanding after nineteen seasons in operation. Thereafter the analysis turns to the clubs that joined the FPL during the 1978 season.

This was a short-lived venture that lasted a solitary year. In this regard an important consideration will be the incompatibility between ideology and professional football. This not only applied to former NFL clubs within the non-racial setup, but also to long standing FPL members that were experiencing difficulties within this drastically altered league structure over the course of 1978. It will further be argued that the relationship between the South African Soccer Federation (SASF) – the FPL's parent body – and SACOS is a critical element that provided the context for many of the FPL clubs' actions. In this regard the league was hampered by a number of club defections to the NPSL – both during the course and at the end of the season. These moves added to the notable operational challenges experienced by the FPL in 1978 and further fuelled an atmosphere of discontent.

By the end of the season professional football was characterised by much of the same turmoil that had enveloped it a year before. Former NFL clubs – and FPL clubs – were faced with much uncertainty as teams competed for places in the top tier of the NPSL. The latter was to become the de facto "Super League" in South Africa and its limited membership left many clubs out in the cold. This even gave rise to a revival of the NFL – at least in name – as an alternative option to smaller clubs in 1979. This chapter will conclude with an analysis of the latter development.

Musical Chairs: The Final Split of the NFL

The aforementioned struggles experienced by Cape Town City – particularly during 1977 – were indicative of the broader problems that NFL teams were faced with during that period. The rapidly shifting and hugely uncertain football landscape gave rise to a split within white football's professional ranks – a development requiring in-depth reflection. It has been stated previously that Vivian Granger had since the latter part of 1976 advocated for the NFL to merge with the non-racial SASF – essentially admitting defeat in terms of the sustainability of

white football's professional league. These calls grew stronger in 1977 as the situation surrounding white clubs became increasingly desperate. The Football Council of South Africa's proposal for a single multiracial "Super League" to be played in 1978 was met with much resistance in some quarters – notably the powerful NPSL clubs that threatened to withdraw from this proposed competition before it had even begun.¹ The NPSL as an entity was reluctant to move its biggest clubs into a new league sponsored by Mainstay, especially in light of existing sponsorships for NPSL-linked competitions – a source of income which these teams certainly did not want to lose.²

With the 1977 season drawing to a close, coupled with the uncertainty surrounding the Football Council's proposed framework for 1978, NFL clubs were rapidly approaching a point of no return in terms of securing their respective futures for the following season. In this regard it is not surprising to find that Norman Elliott of Durban City was the first high profile club chairman to make a move. In August 1977 Elliott declared Durban City's intention to join the non-racial FPL for the 1978 season – a move which complicated the situation for NFL chairman, Michael Rapp, who of course also served on the Football Council led by George Thabe. Journalist Sy Lerman summarised the prevailing dynamics at the time:

Now Mr Rapp...must face dissenters in his own ranks who demand he negotiate with the SASF – an idea he has been obsessed with himself. But, what clearly is adding fuel to the big fire within the Football Council is the council's own black element, also a hotbed of dissension. The black chaos makes Rapp's task even more difficult in dealing with non-conformists like Ian Taylor, Norman Elliott and his own general manager, Viv Granger, who has repeatedly proclaimed support for the Federation...³

Roodepoort Guild – a new incarnation of the club previously known under the names Guild-Apollo and Jewish Guild – was technically the first club to declare its intention to defect to the FPL in 1978, although in isolation this was not regarded as a serious development since the team reportedly drew less than 500 spectators on average to its matches.⁴ Elliott's move, on the other hand, was seen as more significant since Durban City had traditionally been one of the biggest and most successful NFL clubs. Lerman speculated over the reasoning behind the decision: "City's waning Indian support is what the 'Silver Fox' wants back more than anything."⁵ Bolsmann has previously pointed to Durban City's notable Indian

¹ This threat was part of the August 1977 crisis that led to the temporary suspension of the 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition, as highlighted in the previous chapter.

² Derrick Thema, "Can one blame the Black clubs?" *Sharpshoot Soccer*, October, 1977, 14.

³ Sy Lerman, "Rapp heads for soccer showdown," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 15, 1977, 20.

⁴ Sy Lerman, "League Cup goes on, says Rapp," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 13, 1977, 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*

support, thereby providing some context for Lerman's theory.⁶ In this regard it is worth noting that the SASF's professional league, the FPL, contained teams with notable Indian support and Indian players⁷ (such as Dynamos, Swaraj and Bluebells in Lenasia, south of Johannesburg, and Verulam Suburbs north of Durban). It is therefore possible that Elliott could have viewed a move to the FPL as a way of boosting attendances from this demographic specifically. He did state publicly that he was hoping for improved attendances for his club in general.⁸

This was a sign that clubs were beginning to take matters into their own hands, thereby creating a difficult situation for the likes of Rapp and other members of his executive. A letter to Rapp from one such member, Monty Shapiro (who was a well-known businessman in Johannesburg), highlighted this aspect. In reference to an NFL meeting held a few days earlier on 9 September 1977, Shapiro made the following suggestions:

The majority of the [NFL] clubs clearly want us to open serious negotiations with the Federation, and I believe that a meeting with you and [Norman] Middleton, with or without Thabe, should take place as a matter of utmost urgency. I believe the longer we delay, the weaker our case becomes, particularly if certain of our clubs declare their intention of following [Elliott]. However, the most important consideration...is that no-one should do any more kite flying with Middleton or anyone connected with the Federation...⁹

This exchange highlights the challenge faced by senior NFL executives in maintaining control of the situation. All this was also happening in the wake of the general chaos which had enveloped the Mainstay League Cup during August and individual clubs were evidently nervous about what the immediate future held. Their actions from this point on were clearly dictated by considerations of survival – an aspect neatly summarised by the Hellenic chairman, Chris Christodolides:

The sudden rush to find favour with the Federation is purely economic. Clubs go running to the Federation because they want to get in first. They want to satisfy their pockets. It is a sad state of affairs as it undermines the efforts of the Football Council.¹⁰

⁶ Chris Bolsmann, "Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa: Leisure, Consumption and Identity in the National Football League, 1959–1977," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, 16 (2013), 1953.

⁷ The fact that the FPL operated on the non-racial principle means that the league itself would have balked at the idea of classifying its players into racial groups. The statement above is therefore framed from Durban City's point of view.

⁸ Bolsmann, "Professional Football in Apartheid South Africa," 1957.

⁹ Monty Shapiro, Letter to Michael Rapp, September 12, 1977, 1, Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892-1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers).

¹⁰ Andre van der Zwan, "Hellenic Chief backs council," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 23, 1977, 22.

NFL clubs were now engaged in a high stakes game of musical chairs as they competed for the limited spaces potentially available in the FPL. In a desperate attempt to reconcile the opposing notions of merging with the FPL, while simultaneously also partially saving the NFL, Vivian Granger proposed an alternative plan for the 1978 season. He called for a “charter of peace” to be accepted by all associations as well as for the adoption of the principle of non-racialism. Individual NFL, NPSL and FPL competitions would be retained “until at least 1982”, with a combined Mainstay League comprising clubs from the different associations to be played during the second half of each season. Furthermore he proposed that the SASF would have a dominant vote allocation of 44 out of 95 on a new controlling “Supreme Council”.¹¹ Unsurprisingly the *Rand Daily Mail* later reported that Norman Middleton of the SASF rejected Granger’s plan as “an extension of multinationalism”.¹² Michael Rapp’s reaction to the proposal was also lukewarm at best, particularly with regard to “fragmenting a national first division among three associations”:

It’s what we’ve always had. The true future of South African soccer must be for all races to play together in one league, with no restrictions whatsoever. You can’t share public support among three different leagues. All will suffer. It’s as simple as that.¹³

In this regard he welcomed negotiations with the SASF, but also warned that “no genuine solution is possible if the vast majority of Africans are not a party to it”.¹⁴ This view was shared by Rex Evans, chairman of Highlands Park. Whereas the majority of NFL clubs favoured a move to the FPL, Evans was initially – at least publicly – non-committal regarding a specific course of action: “We are sympathetic to what Mr Norman Middleton and his South African Soccer Federation are trying to achieve. But we have grave misgivings about any alignment that does not include the bulk of the Africans”.¹⁵

The potential choice between the FPL and NPSL is what gave rise to the final split within NFL ranks. Early in October Lerman reported that the NFL had “decided in principle, to merge within the framework of the South African Soccer Federation, instead of seeking non-racial soccer salvation with the black clubs of the NPSL”.¹⁶ However, a day later he noted that Rapp and Shapiro had subsequently met with key NPSL officials to discuss the possibility of some NFL clubs joining its ranks. These officials were Matt Mphahane (the

¹¹ Sy Lerman, “Granger plan to save SA soccer,” *Rand Daily Mail*, August 30, 1977, 26.

¹² Deven Moodley, “Federation rejects Granger plan,” *Rand Daily Mail*, September 19, 1977, 20.

¹³ Sy Lerman, “Viv’s plan booby prize says Rapp,” *Rand Daily Mail*, August 31, 1977, 22.

¹⁴ Ibid. This was a noteworthy parallel to the political situation in South Africa generally.

¹⁵ Sy Lerman, “Glamour clubs to join the NPSL?” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 4, 1977, 24.

¹⁶ Sy Lerman, “NFL opt for ‘booby prize’,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 3, 1977, 22. Note the use of the term “non-racial”. It was often used interchangeably with the term “multiracial” in the media or even by football officials outside the actual non-racial movement.

NPSL chairman), Kgomotso Modise (the general manager), Donald Dliwayo (chairman of Orlando Pirates) and Jack Sello (chairman of Moroka Swallows Ltd). The absence of George Thabe is notable for the fact that the NPSL had since been successful in obtaining a degree of autonomy from SANFA.¹⁷ The reported outcome of the meeting was that the NFL teams in question would be welcomed “with open arms” into the NPSL. According to Shapiro

[the] meeting was arranged on the instigation of Highlands Park, Arcadia [Shepherds] and Lusitano, who asked me to investigate the possibility of a link with the African organisation. Wits University have now expressed an interest in being present when further talks are held and other clubs might join in...[It] is clear that a considerable body of opinion within the NFL feels that it is more desirable to come to an agreement with the NPSL than with the SASF.¹⁸

It is also worth noting the absence of Vivian Granger from the two-man NFL delegation. This represents a split at management level within the NFL whereby Granger promoted a move to the Federation, while Rapp (his superior) had to balance his own role on the Football Council as well as the need to include the powerful NPSL in any potential agreement. In this regard Rapp and Shapiro’s meeting with NPSL officials incurred the wrath of the Federation-aligned NFL clubs, with an “outraged” Norman Elliott – acting on behalf of seven clubs – sending a telegram to NFL headquarters calling for Rapp to resign on the grounds that “he had no right to go to the NPSL after [they] agreed to pursue a course of joining the South African Soccer Federation”.¹⁹

This volatile situation remained extremely fluid over the coming months as the uncertainty surrounding the 1978 season lingered on. Some clubs, having made overtures to the NPSL as well, reverted back to the proposed SASF move – Arcadia Shepherds and Germiston Callies were two reported examples in this regard.²⁰ By the middle of November Lerman reported that every NFL team, except Highlands Park, had lodged a preliminary R100 deposit with the SASF – a clear sign that teams were hedging their bets.²¹ On the other hand Highlands Park’s decision to throw in its lot with the NPSL was prophetically justified by Evans: “You cannot argue against reality. And the reality of the situation is that the vast playing potential and spectator support in South African soccer is in the hands of the

¹⁷ Sy Lerman, “NFL heads for showdown,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 5, 1977, 26. The NPSL’s autonomy was obtained as part of the demands that were made in the wake of its so-called “rebel” clubs withdrawing from the Mainstay League Cup in August 1977.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sy Lerman, “Clubs’ quit call to Rapp splits NFL,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 6, 1977, 26. The seven clubs were Durban City, Durban United, Cape Town City, Hellenic, Maritzburg, East London United and Roodepoort Guild.

²⁰ Sy Lerman, “Arcadia switch to SASF,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 14, 1977, 22.

²¹ Sy Lerman, “NFL personality split,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 17, 1977, 30.

Africans...Without them there is no chance.”²² This statement is particularly relevant when considering developments in the FPL at the conclusion of the 1978 season – an aspect to be explored later.

Ultimately there were only a limited number of places available in the respective NPSL and FPL first divisions for the 1978 season. Table 6.1 below provides a summary of the final outcome of the migration of the thirteen NFL first division clubs after 1977. A total of five clubs (all situated in the Johannesburg-Pretoria area) joined the expanded NPSL, while eight clubs (six of which were based at or near the coast) moved to the FPL. Notably two of these moves – namely those of Durban United and Maritzburg – entailed former NFL clubs being absorbed by existing FPL clubs. This pointed to the fact that some clubs had become toxic assets and were consequently not financially sustainable as standalone entities. Given the potential travel costs involved, geographic location was also a central consideration for owners. The issue of travel would become a problematic dimension for many clubs during the course of the 1978 FPL season largely as a result of the expanded league.

Movement Of NFL Clubs After The 1977 Season			
Pos	Team	1978	Notes
1	Lusitano	NPSL	
2	Highlands Park	NPSL	
3	Durban United	FPL	Played as "Suburbs United" after being bought by FPL side Verulam Suburbs.
4	Wits University	NPSL	
5	Hellenic	FPL	
6	Arcadia Shepherds	NPSL	
7	Maritzburg	FPL	Sold to Durban-based Berea club in FPL first division.
8	Durban City	FPL	
9	East London United	FPL	
10	Rangers	FPL	Not initially in the FPL, but later purchased Roodepoort franchise.
11	Cape Town City	FPL	
12	Roodepoort Guild	FPL	Sold during the season and played as Roodepoort Rangers for a while.
13	Germiston Callies	NPSL	

Table 6.1 – Migration of NFL clubs to the NPSL / FPL for the 1978 season.²³

In February 1978 Lerman reported that membership of the NFL would “continue on a low key” and that clubs had “secretly agreed to retain an unofficial link ‘just in case’”.²⁴ He also fittingly summarised the notable irony that unfolded as part of the process that led to the final break-up of the league:

²² Sy Lerman, “Why we back NPSL – Highlands,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 19, 1977, 30.

²³ Table compiled from “Castle Cup Leagues,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 9–10; “Federation Club Swallows Durban United,” *South African Soccer*, February, 1978, 17; “’77 was a year of total confusion,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, March, 1978, 12. The NFL teams are listed in the order in which they finished during the league’s final season.

²⁴ Sy Lerman, “NFL boss Rapp joins the NPSL,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 20.

It was ironic that Viv Granger, the NFL general manager, who was principally responsible for [Michael] Rapp's appointment [as league chairman], ultimately expounded policies that were in direct conflict with those of his chairman. The rift between Rapp and Granger was a tragedy for the NFL.²⁵

Policy Matters

An analysis of former NFL clubs within an integrated context immediately prompts the question as to how these clubs were permitted to enter the NPSL and FPL by the government. This necessitates a brief note regarding policy developments. When reflecting on the uncertainty which prevailed in football circles during the period 1976–8 it is important to note the general state of confusion that also existed regarding the National Party's sports policy, particularly after it was amended in September 1976. Some of the practical difficulties pertaining to the rollout of the policy were detailed by the minister of sport and recreation, Piet Koornhof, in a 1979 memorandum to the cabinet. Therein he referred to the fact that some National Party politicians applied immense pressure on local authorities not to make existing facilities available to clubs wanting to partake in multinational sport.²⁶ This created a situation whereby multinational sport was acceptable in one constituency, but not so in another constituency a mere couple of kilometres down the road. Koornhof stated that this created confusion among sport administrators, made a mockery of the policy and also made it indefensible against criticism.²⁷

Throughout 1977 it remained a contentious issue within National Party circles as various motions and speeches were tabled at all four provincial congresses.²⁸ At the Cape congress, for example, Koornhof had to reassure delegates that "mixed sport remained contrary to party policy", and that "the policy would in no way threaten the identity of self-determination of the race groups".²⁹ The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that "delegates from five constituencies

²⁵ Sy Lerman, "NFL boss Rapp joins the NPSL," *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 20.

²⁶ The post-September 1976 sports policy was still a form of multinationalism. The pressures exerted at local level are in line with some of the difficulties experienced by the organisers of the 1977 Mainstay League Cup regarding facilities.

²⁷ "Verleentheidsituasies wat reeds ontstaan het met betrekking tot die sport politiese situasie in S.A. [Embarrassing situations that have already arisen with regards to the sport political situation in S.A.]," in *Departement van sport en ontspanning kabinetsmemorandum* [Department of Sport and Recreation Cabinet Memorandum], September 11, 1979, file PV476/1/34/39/2, Piet Koornhof Private Documents, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, South Africa (hereafter cited as Koornhof papers). Note that by the time this memorandum was compiled Koornhof no longer occupied the Sport and Recreation portfolio. He was succeeded by FW de Klerk at the end of 1978. The latter remained in the position for less than one year before being succeeded by Punt Janson. See Laurie Tempelhoff, "History of the Department Sport & Recreation," downloadable document (Department of Sport and Recreation, May 15, 2006), <http://www.srsa.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=158> (accessed July 19, 2015).

²⁸ Loraine Gordon et al., *A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1977* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1978), 558.

²⁹ "Club mixing is not policy – Koornhof," *Rand Daily Mail*, August 25, 1977, 5.

raised serious misgivings about increased racial mixing in sport” during the course of 1977, and that the inconsistent application of the policy was “said to be causing confusion among Nationalist voters, particularly in rural areas”.³⁰ An example of this inconsistent – or rather lack of – application of the policy was already evident in football early in 1977 when a number of white NFL players were signed by clubs from the non-racial FPL.³¹ These players tended to be from the NFL’s lower divisions or second stringers from top division clubs who were in search of first team football elsewhere. The FPL’s leading scorer in 1977, for example, was Jimmy Joubert – a player who had been plying his trade for Southern Suburbs in the NFL’s second division the year before. Originally he considered giving up football in favour of furthering his studies in 1977, but he was lured to the FPL by the Lenasia-based Swaraj club. Ultimately Joubert’s 23 goals helped the team win the league title that season.³²

This was indicative of a new climate in which individual players and club officials were willing to test the government’s resolve in terms of implementing the stated policy which was still opposed to racially mixed clubs. The South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), in its 1977 survey, states that “[by] the end of the year it was generally accepted that mixed sport at club level was not illegal except as it might be affected by the liquor laws, the Group Areas Act and the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, but that it still remained contrary to National Party Policy”.³³ Even more revealing are Highlands Park’s dealings with Koornhof prior to the 1978 season – the year in which the club intended to join the (black) National Professional Soccer League. Not wanting to openly flaunt government policy, club chairman Rex Evans, along with two other board members, met with Koornhof during the latter part of 1977 to discuss Highlands Park’s intended move. Koornhof’s response, as recounted by Evans, is illuminating:

...we went to see him, had a long chat, told him our motivation and how we were going, and he gave us a million reasons why it couldn’t happen and so on and so forth, and he said you can’t do it. I had two other Highlands Park members with me...and we were very despondent. He was very courteous...we got up to leave his office, and as we were leaving the door – I had somehow just got behind the other guys...and he pulled me aside and he says: “Do it. I won’t stop you.”³⁴

³⁰ “Club mixing is not policy – Koornhof,” *Rand Daily Mail*, August 25, 1977, 5.

³¹ Marlan Padayachee, “Transfer Market,” *Fed Fan*, March, 1977, 9.

³² “Stopper Cum Striker,” *South African Soccer*, February, 1978, 47.

³³ Gordon et al., *A Survey of Race Relations: 1977*, 559. During the period under investigation the SAIRR was a liberal think-tank that conducted research and produced publications on matters relating to race in South Africa. For the purposes of any historical study dealing with South African politics its material represents a healthy counterweight to official government publications. The SAIRR is still in existence today. See “History of the IRR,” South African Institute of Race Relations, accessed July 13, 2015, <http://irr.org.za/about-us/history>.

³⁴ Rex Evans, personal interview with the author, Johannesburg, February 11, 2015.

This episode represents a window through which to consider Koornhof's role in paving the way for integrated football to become a reality in 1978. However, despite his tacit approval, two additional stumbling blocks remained – both of which related to legislation. The first of these concerned the fact that NPSL matches were regularly played on Sundays. This was done on account of the fact that many blacks worked six days per week and were therefore not in a position to watch or participate in matches played on Saturdays. However, at the time Sunday sport was forbidden in white areas in the Transvaal, thereby creating a problematic situation regarding the 1978 NPSL fixture list. The home fixtures of former NFL teams in the league were consequently not scheduled on Sundays that season. In July Highlands Park sought permission from the government for a Sunday home fixture and were told that they could proceed as long as no admission was charged. The police also indicated that such matches were “not desirable” in white areas and as a result Highlands did not follow through with the idea.³⁵

The second – and most notable – obstacle concerning integrated football related to the Group Areas Act and the requirement for whites to obtain permits allowing entry into black areas (and *vice versa*). This had been a notable problem during the 1977 Mainstay League Cup, but shortly before the 1978 league season commenced a concession was obtained. In this regard the Department of Sport and Recreation granted a blanket permit to the Football Council of South Africa (headed by George Thabe) for NPSL matches to take place in white and black residential areas.³⁶ This cleared the way – at least theoretically – for smoother administration of the new multiracial league at an operational level. This did not play out smoothly in practice however. A central problem in this regard was the fact that, apart from needing government approval for mixed sport to take place, there was also a second layer of permits required at a local level. This pertained to the use of facilities which fell under the control of city councils, administration boards and other bodies.³⁷ During the first few years of integrated football this arrangement would prove to be deeply problematic in terms of conducting mixed competitions at an operational level, particularly as far as spectators were concerned.

It is important to note that there was a key difference in terms of the respective approaches of the NPSL and FPL to the issue of permits. Whereas the NPSL strived to obtain such permits within the framework of government stipulations, the non-racial FPL rejected permits

³⁵ Mark Gleeson, “History of the Castle League,” (unpublished manuscript, 2003), 43. The author is indebted to Mark Gleeson for providing this valuable timeline of the league's history.

³⁶ Jimmy Tloti, “Now it's official – NFL clubs can play in Soweto,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 16, 1978, 22.

³⁷ Loraine Gordon et al., *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1978* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1979), 488.

and prided itself on the fact that no such applications were made within its structures. This was in line with the broader SASF (and SACOS) stance which entailed complete non-collaboration with government structures. However, once NFL teams joined the FPL in 1978 this became a problematic issue. For example, in July the SASF was accused by SACOS of playing under permits at (white) grounds such as Hartleyvale and Green Point in Cape Town.³⁸ In reply the SASF intimated that permits were applied for “by other authorities without their knowledge”, but SACOS was firm in its stance. According to Hassan Howa, its president,

the policy of SACOS was to reject any form of permits whether applied for by the organisations themselves or by anyone on their behalf. The playing of sport under permit whether applied for by any organisation itself or by any other person or body on its behalf or under a blanket permit was merely a temporary change in the status quo and not any real or basic change in the laws affecting Sport and the Country.³⁹

This stance also explains the reason why SACOS and the SASF characterised the NPSL as “multinational” in character. In this regard it was argued that the NPSL gave credence to the government’s racial classifications by applying for permits allowing inter-race contact in sport. It was also argued that the NPSL fell under the auspices of an organisation – namely SANFA – that was constructed on the basis of race. These and other dimensions to this debate will be explored in greater depth at a later juncture.

A Flirtation with Non-Racialism: Former NFL Clubs Join the FPL

During the latter months of 1977 the uncertain situation concerning the future of NFL clubs gave rise to speculation regarding further movement of individual white players to the FPL. “It [the movement of white players] may be a trickle at the moment but it could turn into a flood next season,” opined Alex Forbes, then coach of the FPL team, Swaraj, in October.⁴⁰ Given the absence of a single controlling body for all professional clubs in the country at the time, a scenario was also mooted whereby players could potentially be “poached” between the different professional leagues without the payment of transfer fees.⁴¹ This proved to be the case and gave rise to a particularly controversial confrontation between the NFL’s Highlands Park and the FPL’s Dynamos United during the transition between the 1977 and 1978 seasons.

³⁸ Minutes, Meeting Between SASF and SACOS Ad-Hoc Committee, July 5, 1978, Francois Cleophas private collection (hereafter cited as Cleophas collection).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “An Exodus of NFL Players to the Federation,” *Fed Fan Soccer*, October, 1977, 16.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Towards the end of 1977 Dynamos announced that the club had signed on three Highlands Park players, namely Bobby Viljoen (a sought-after Springbok forward), Tony Stathakis (Highlands Park's top scorer in 1977) and Andrew Parkinson (a talented seventeen-year old prospect) to play in the FPL during 1978.⁴² However, Highlands Park claimed that Viljoen and Stathakis were still under contract with them and made an application to the court for the two forwards to be barred from turning out for Dynamos during the coming season.⁴³ In this regard Stathakis defended his decision in an affidavit submitted as evidence in the case: "My information during 1977 from various other players was that the NPSL is not a well-organised league and insufficient protection is afforded to officials and players. I was not and am not prepared to play in that league."⁴⁴ He also argued that his original contract with Highlands Park was signed while the team was still playing in the NFL, which was no longer the case.

The court ultimately ruled in the players' favour, dismissing Highlands Park's application (with costs).⁴⁵ This development was described in the *Rand Daily Mail* as the opening of "Pandora's box" within South African football, leading to question marks over the validity of existing player contracts during this uncertain period.⁴⁶ Ismail Pahad, chairman of Dynamos, announced triumphantly after the court ruling: "Now I can go ahead and sign the other players that I am interested in. And, anybody interested in Bobby Viljoen will have to negotiate with Dynamos for his release."⁴⁷ Highlands Park also proceeded with some reciprocal action as the team duly announced that it would field an FPL player in an upcoming friendly encounter against the NPSL's Pretoria Callies.⁴⁸ The aforementioned dispute serves as an important marker regarding the actions of professional clubs within this uncertain environment. A milieu was created in which team owners were quick to seize on any potential opportunity to gain a competitive advantage over rival clubs. This also provides context for the actions of some clubs during the course of what proved to be a highly controversial 1978 FPL season.

By the time the league programme was set to commence the FPL boasted five clubs – still in their original form – from the previous season's NFL first division. These were Durban City, Hellenic, Cape Town City, East London United and Roodepoort Guild – the latter being the

⁴² "Let's Shake," *Fed Fan Soccer*, November, 1977, 23.

⁴³ "Victory For Dynamos," *Fed Fan Soccer*, February, 1978, 30.

⁴⁴ Errol Symons, "Soccer ace's shock 'go easy' claim," *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 1.

⁴⁵ Sy Lerman, "The lid comes off SA soccer's Pandora's box," *Rand Daily Mail*, February 4, 1978, 12.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ "Victory for Dynamos," *South African Soccer*, February, 1978, 30.

⁴⁸ Sy Lerman, "The lid comes off SA soccer's Pandora's box," *Rand Daily Mail*, February 4, 1978, 12.

only Transvaal-based club in the group. Two other NFL clubs had since been taken over by existing FPL clubs – Durban United was merged with Verulam Suburbs under the chairmanship of the latter's Errol Vawda, while Maritzburg was acquired by Durban-based Berea.⁴⁹ The league also included one former NPSL club, namely Wanderers – a break-away group from African Wanderers (which continued in the NPSL). This resulted in the FPL fielding a seventeen-team first division in 1978 – an appreciable increase from the eleven teams the year before.⁵⁰

Such an arrangement was bound to present logistical and financial challenges – and this proved to be the case. Clubs were forced to undertake extended fixture programmes and increased travel distances compared to previous seasons – whether they were existing FPL members or former NFL clubs. The FPL treasurer, Bobby Naicker, released the respective travel budgets for the competing teams, with the four Cape Town-based sides (which included Cape Town City and Hellenic) incurring the greatest cost. The estimated total cost of long distance air travel (excluding accommodation) for these clubs during the league season amounted to R21,000 each – 40% more than the estimated amount of R15,000 for each of the six Natal-based clubs.⁵¹

As a reference point Cape Town City's actual expenditure on air travel during the 1976 and 1977 NFL seasons amounted to R15,480 and R24,600 respectively. However, these figures included accommodation as well as travel for away matches in cup competitions.⁵² The 1978 FPL estimates were for league matches only and excluded accommodation. The fact that these latter elements represented additional costs that still had to be factored in is an indication as to the potential financial predicament facing FPL clubs. This was especially true in the case of Cape Town City, particularly given the club's struggles over the preceding years. Teams from the Transvaal were better off, with projected spending of R16,750 on long distance travel, while costs for the East London and Port Elizabeth-based clubs were projected to be around R18,750 and R20,000 respectively.⁵³ However, compared to the rival NPSL, the FPL clubs faced a more challenging travel schedule irrespective of their geographic location. In this regard the 1978 NPSL first division did not contain any teams from Cape Town, Port Elizabeth or East London, meaning that competing teams faced fewer long distance trips. Transvaal-based teams in the NPSL, for example, faced a maximum of

⁴⁹ "Federation Club Swallows Durban United," *South African Soccer*, February, 1978, 17.

⁵⁰ Rajendra Chetty, "Building a New Future Together," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 6.

⁵¹ "Huge Travel Bill," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 11.

⁵² See Cape Town City Football Club, Income Statement for the Year Ended 31 October 1977, in WPFA, Annual Report and Financial Statement, Season 1977, FASA papers.

⁵³ "Huge Travel Bill," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 11.

five long distance trips during the 1978 league season, whereas their counterparts in the FPL faced twelve such journeys.⁵⁴

Professional Football and Ideology: Pressure from SACOS

In addition to the potential financial challenges faced by clubs it is also important to bear in mind the ideological context within which the FPL operated. The fact that the league represented the professional arm of the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) – which in turn was affiliated to SACOS – had notable ramifications. In April 1977 SACOS adopted the following stance known as the double-standards resolution:

Any person, whether he is a player, an administrator or a spectator, committed to the non-racial principle in sport, shall not participate in or be associated with any other codes of sport which practice, perpetuate or condone racialism or multi-nationalism. Players and/or administrators disregarding the essence of this principle shall be guilty of practicing [sic] double-standards, and cannot therefore, be members of any organisation affiliated to SACOS!⁵⁵

This far-reaching resolution encapsulated SACOS's strategy of complete non-collaboration with government-backed structures from that point onwards. It had a significant impact on some SACOS members, including the SASF and FPL. In this regard the FPL received a gently worded warning from SACOS secretary, M.N. Pather, early in 1978 in the form of a letter to be read at the FPL's annual general meeting. It stated in part:

We wish you well and sincerely hope that in the ensuing year you will not tolerate racialism of any kind nor will you entertain double standards. In this regard you accepted our directive [the double-standards resolution]...We believe you will implement this directive as it will not only enhance your status but will give it the Credibility we seek.⁵⁶

This exchange is recounted in the minutes of a SACOS general meeting held on 5 March 1978, and it is revealing that the minutes specifically also indicate that the aforementioned letter was not read at the earlier FPL general meeting as intended. Apparently Abdul Bhamjee, the public relations officer of the SASF at the time, "was quick to say that the letter would be read at the next Management Committee meeting of the [Federation] Pro

⁵⁴ "Huge Travel Bill," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 11.

⁵⁵ SACOS, Statement, April 6, 1977, Cleophas collection.

⁵⁶ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 7, Cleophas collection.

League”.⁵⁷ This is perhaps indicative of mounting tension between the SASF and SACOS at the time, particularly in light of developments over the preceding months.

This included Bhamjee and SASF president, Norman Middleton, meeting with FASA leadership on 30 September 1977 to discuss the latter’s proposed incorporation into the SASF.⁵⁸ Further talks ensued in the subsequent months,⁵⁹ while on the professional side former NFL clubs were joining the FPL of their own accord. It also has to be remembered that Middleton resigned as SACOS president early in 1977 due to pressure within his own ranks regarding his affiliation to the Coloured People’s Representative Council – a government structure. In light of the double-standards resolution the aforementioned developments were not viewed favourably by some SACOS members.

This gave rise to a heated exchange during the SACOS general meeting on 5 March 1978 which reveals the complex set of circumstances created by the double-standards resolution. The exchange began with Middleton objecting to a recent distribution of pamphlets by provincial Councils of Sport (SACOS’s provincial units) calling for a boycott on professional football. This related to unhappiness felt in some quarters regarding the FPL’s “linking up” with former NFL clubs during this period – apparently without the consultation of “local clubs”.⁶⁰ The preceding month also saw the staging of a pre-season tournament sponsored by Castle Lager contested between the four Cape Town-based FPL sides (Cape Town City, Hellenic, Cape Town Spurs and Glenville).⁶¹ In this regard one delegate opined that “token matches against white clubs are confusing to black players”.⁶²

According to the minutes Middleton’s response was that “we blacks don’t know what to do with our freedom”, and he reiterated that the SASF stood “firmly behind SACOS” and that it would “accept players of all shades whether they are black, white, pink or brown”.⁶³ Despite these exhortations he was accused by one delegate of “deliberately participating in the fraud of compromisation”. The same delegate also stated that the SASF was “guilty of double standards”, particularly with regards to permitting “Cape Town City to remain members of the white Western Province body, whilst it was an affiliate of the SASF”.⁶⁴ This related to the fact that Cape Town City utilised Hartleyvale – a stadium owned by the (white amateur) Western Province Football Association (WPFA) – as its home ground. Cape Town City’s junior teams

⁵⁷ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 7–8, Cleophas collection.

⁵⁸ Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, September 30, 1977, 1, FASA papers.

⁵⁹ Minutes, FASA Officers Meeting, April 1, 1978, 3–5, FASA papers.

⁶⁰ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 16, Cleophas collection.

⁶¹ Lennie Kleintjies, “Cape Soccer Line,” *South African Soccer*, February, 1978, 35.

⁶² Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 16, Cleophas collection.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

were also set to continue playing in WPFA leagues – a problematic arrangement in the eyes of SACOS which viewed anything other than immediate total integration at all levels as unacceptable.

Middleton in turn warned that “people in glass houses should not throw stones”, and stated that people were “out of date with the term ‘non-racialism’”. Bhamjee rose to his support: “We are mistrusting one another. Our aims are the same but some only take different roads...The Federation has done a good job so far in denting the massive white privileged body.”⁶⁵ However Frank van der Horst, vice president of SACOS, entered the fray and took a hard line:

[The] trouble began when the SASF began to have secret talks with the white officials. A former senior official of SACOS [Middleton] has fragrantly abused the principles of SACOS. Norman Middleton has sold out. The facts speak for themselves. Everyone can see the purpose of the merger and [the] Federation is rescuing the NFL. This whole development dovetails completely in with the present Multi-national policy. SACOS must not allow [the] Federation to continue with multi-nationalism.⁶⁶

In response Middleton demanded that SACOS “take a stand against the Federation”, and as a result the following motion was unanimously carried:

The General Council of SACOS views with alarm the fact that the SASF has [succumbed] to the multi-national policy of the Government and hereby calls on the SASF to show cause within six months why its membership and the membership of the Professional League with SACOS should not be terminated.⁶⁷

This exchange is a clear indication of the troubling position in which the SASF – and in particular its professional league, the FPL – found itself regarding the uncompromising SACOS framework. Upon reflection it is difficult to find any validity in SACOS’s accusation that the SASF – by allowing former NFL teams into the FPL – was partaking in multinationalism. After all, the league allowed the movement of players between the different clubs – something which was still against government policy at the time. It is argued here that this aggressive stance by SACOS was indicative of an atmosphere of suspicion which existed within the organisation during this period. In this regard Booth points out that while the double-standards resolution “was initially a strategy to build internal discipline,” it “progressively became a tactic of political purification,” and that “SACOS willingly sacrificed

⁶⁵ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 17, Cleophas collection.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

members and refused to consider alternative strategies".⁶⁸ The SASF's membership of SACOS was terminated six months later on 15 October 1978 during a two-day general meeting of SACOS in which no SASF delegates were present.⁶⁹

It is revealing to consider the position of Cape Town City subsequent to the initial SACOS general meeting held on 5 March 1978. The club came under renewed pressure from the SASF to disassociate itself from the WPFA by 31 March – a clear outflow from the SASF discussions with SACOS. After playing only a handful of matches in the 1978 FPL league season the club dropped a bombshell on the football fraternity by announcing its withdrawal from the FPL in favour of the rival NPSL. It issued a brief statement partially clarifying the decision:

The reason for this action is that we cannot accept the conditions of a directive issued to the club by the SASF as these would seriously prejudice the future of Cape Town City, our juniors, our supporters, and the association with the WP Football Association, and Hartleyvale.⁷⁰

The journalist Andre van der Zwan also speculated that meagre attendances at FPL league matches – even at that early stage of Cape Town City's league programme – prompted the club directors to make the switch: "The match against Maritzburg City [at Hartleyvale] drew only 1,100 spectators, but at the week end Mr Lewis [chairman], Mr Funston [director] and manager Frank Lord attended NPSL games in Soweto where crowds of 30,000 were recorded."⁷¹ The fact that the NPSL league programme for 1978 had already commenced by the time Cape Town City withdrew from the FPL meant that the club had to play a series of friendly encounters against NPSL clubs over the remainder of the season. The team was, however, promised a place in the NPSL first division for 1979 – the main drawcard – and was able to enter the 1978 Mainstay Cup competition.⁷² The latter constituted the premier knockout competition under the Football Council of South Africa's umbrella. It was open to

⁶⁸ Douglas Booth, *The Race Game* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 151–2.

⁶⁹ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, October 14, 1978, 33, Cleophas collection. The SACOS meeting took place in Johannesburg while the SASF was conducting its own meeting in East London over the same weekend (14–15 October 1978). Attempts to avoid this clash of dates were made by SACOS, which suggested that the SASF complete its own meeting on the Saturday, thereby allowing its delegates to fly to Johannesburg on the Sunday morning in order to discuss the football issue later that afternoon. No reply was received from the SASF regarding this suggestion and there appears to have been a clear breakdown in the relationship between Middleton and key SACOS officials by this point. The Federation Professional League (FPL) also had its associate membership of SACOS terminated, although it did have two delegates present during the SACOS meeting. See Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, October 14, 1978, 27–33, Cleophas collection.

⁷⁰ Andre van der Zwan, "City leave Federation; join NPSL," *Cape Times*, April 4, 1978, 16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² "Cape Town City Defects," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 27.

teams from any controlling body recognised by the Football Council or the South African National Football Association (SANFA).⁷³

Cape Town City's decision to cross over to the NPSL naturally drew criticism from the SASF. Middleton warned other clubs to get out immediately "if they [had] similar motives", and he "lashed City for being more concerned about making money than fostering non-racial soccer". He also pointed out that the SASF "would not allow them to have two masters".⁷⁴ There does appear to be notable inconsistency with regard to the application of this policy by the SASF – a scenario which brought further pressure from SACOS. Cape Town's other former NFL club, Hellenic, was able to continue in the FPL despite not severing all its ties with the white amateur body. According to chairman, Chris Christodolides, the Western Province Football Board (the SASF's non-racial affiliate in the province) "accepted that it would not be practical for our juniors and reserves to play in their leagues".⁷⁵ During another SACOS general meeting, held a few months later, one of the delegates pointed out to the SASF that "the Junior Hellenic team was playing in FASA [the white national amateur body] but under another name".⁷⁶ It is worth noting that Hellenic's professional team played its FPL home matches at the Green Point Stadium – a venue that was not owned by the (white) Western Province Football Association, as was the case with Cape Town City's home ground, Hartleyvale. This probably resulted in Hellenic's participation in the FPL being less contentious – from an SASF point of view – than that of Cape Town City.

Cape Town City's defection is an obvious indication that the original decision by former NFL clubs to join the FPL was certainly not driven by an overriding concern for playing principled, non-racial football. In this regard it is argued that there was a clear incompatibility between ideology and professionalism. During this period football was the only major sport code in South Africa also played in a professional form and this brought with it an additional layer of complications. It would have been, for example, far easier to take a principled stance on an issue such as sponsorship within an amateur environment where costs are greatly reduced due to the absence of player salaries. Professional football did not offer this luxury – both from a club and league perspective. The SASF and FPL offer clear examples of this.

Having lost its long standing Mainstay league sponsorship in 1977, the FPL subsequently obtained a Castle Lager sponsorship from South African Breweries (SAB) for the 1978 FPL season. SAB already had an existing sponsorship relationship with the NPSL and therefore

⁷³ "Mainstay Sponsors NPSL KO Series," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 7.

⁷⁴ "Cape Town City Defects," *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 27.

⁷⁵ Andre van der Zwan, "Hellenic retain ties with WPFA – and Federation," *Cape Times*, April 5, 1978, 20.

⁷⁶ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, July 22, 1978, 21, Cleophas collection.

was able to corner the sponsorship market for professional football in South Africa by also investing in the FPL. The brewing behemoth's total sponsorship for the two leagues during 1978 amounted to R130,000, of which R75,000 went to the NPSL and R55,000 to the FPL.⁷⁷ The decision by the SASF (and FPL) to move ahead with the SAB sponsorship came in for criticism from SACOS, as articulated by a Western Province delegate, Y. Ebrahim, in March 1978:

...the SASF should have consulted with all concerned before accepting sponsorship. This SASF promised to do before deciding. Whilst the SASF decried Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery's handout to the Football Council of SA [in 1977] and rejected its product, Mainstay, the SASF willingly accepted the sponsorship from the SA Breweries, after all Stellenbosch Farmers' Winery and SA Breweries are the one and the same people.⁷⁸

Setting the specific dispute regarding Mainstay aside, it is worth reflecting on the fact that during 1978 the FPL therefore shared the same title sponsor as the rival NPSL – the league which was still being characterised as “racial” and “multinational” in character by the non-racial movement. This betrays the fact that taking a principled stance – such as refusing the SAB sponsorship – would have been commendable in theory, but unrealistic in practice. The FPL, like the NPSL (and NFL previously), depended heavily on sponsorship for its survival, meaning that principled action could only be implemented up to a point.

This also applied to the league's clubs – including those that were long standing FPL members. In this regard Pretoria-based Sundowns followed in Cape Town City's footsteps by also quitting the FPL for the NPSL during the early stages of the 1978 season. According to club secretary, Yusuf Mohamed, the main reason for the decision again related to finance. The prospect of a R20,000 air travel bill, coupled with low attendances and problems with regard to obtaining a home ground meant that “the club would never survive in the Federation Professional League”.⁷⁹ Sundowns was undoubtedly not the only FPL club affected by the problematic situation that arose as a result of an enlarged league and increased air travel expenses. Later that year Swaraj – the defending FPL league champions from 1977 – signalled its intent to move to the NPSL in 1979. Shoukat Loonat, the club chairman, explained the reasoning in the press: “The soccer scene has become a battlefield

⁷⁷ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 10.

⁷⁸ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, March 5, 1978, 17, Cleophas collection. The reference to SFW and SAB being “one and the same” possibly related to a shareholder relationship at the time since these were two separate companies.

⁷⁹ “Why Sundowns Quit FPL?” *South African Soccer*, May, 1978, 14.

and the fittest will survive. The FPL was, at one stage, better equipped. Now the NPSL is in the driving seat. Our survival depends on our playing in the NPSL.”⁸⁰

To Talk or Not to Talk: A Split in the FPL

Throughout 1978 the issue of engaging in formal dialogue with the NPSL proved to be a controversial issue within SASF and FPL ranks. In fact by the middle of the season there was a clear split among FPL clubs, with the Transvaal-based teams and former NFL clubs in particular favouring the idea of engaging in dialogue with NPSL representatives. This was to form part of a broader (and previously unsuccessful) effort to establish a single “Super League” in South Africa. During an FPL management committee meeting held in Durban on 20 August the majority of first division clubs (eight out of fifteen)⁸¹ voted in favour of dialogue. These comprised the three Lenasia-based teams (Swaraj, Dynamos United and PG Bluebells United), the four remaining former NFL teams (Roodepoort Rangers, Durban City, East London United and Hellenic), as well as Maritzburg City from Natal.⁸² However, they were out-voted by the FPL executive and management committee members who were set against the idea of having talks with rival bodies.⁸³

According to FPL chairman, R.K. Naidoo, such dialogue would have constituted “a fraud”, and he indicated that there would be no dialogue “until normal soccer starts at grass roots level”.⁸⁴ This was in line with SACOS’s all-or-nothing approach and did not take into consideration the practical struggles experienced by clubs at ground level. Naidoo added that “he was not concerned even if [this approach] meant that the FPL will soon be without sponsorship”.⁸⁵ This view came in for heavy criticism in *South African Soccer* – a monthly football magazine which originally started as the FPL’s own publication but which by 1978

⁸⁰ “Swaraj want to join NPSL,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 19, 1978, file S341.7.3, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Press Cuttings 1928-1998 (Part A), Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as SAIRR press cuttings).

⁸¹ The league commenced with seventeen teams in 1978 but by May it was reduced to fifteen with the defections of Cape Town City and Sundowns.

⁸² Rajendra Chetty, “Walkout,” *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 13. The former NFL team, Roodepoort Guild, sold its professional franchise to an individual by the name of Rob Ferguson who proceeded to resurrect the former Rangers club in its place. This club was known as Roodepoort Rangers. Later in 1978 it merged with Swaraj to form Johannesburg Rangers. See Vernon Pillay, “Who Are Johannesburg Rangers?” *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 34.

⁸³ Rajendra Chetty, “Walkout,” *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 13. The reported vote count was 17–9. The nine votes in favour of dialogue comprised the eight clubs mentioned above as well as a vote by Abdul Bhamjee who was vice-president of the FPL at the time. This gave rise to frustration on the part of the professional clubs that were in favour of dialogue. From their point of view this was the majority opinion amongst the clubs, but could not be pursued since it was met by an intransigent block of votes from the executive opposing this course of action. This was seen as interference in the affairs of professional clubs by amateur officials.

⁸⁴ Rajendra Chetty, “Walkout,” *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 13.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

included coverage of the NPSL as well.⁸⁶ In a sarcastically worded article in October 1978 it attacked Naidoo on various issues, including sponsorship: “You are not interested in sponsorship – how do you expect to run your league. Presumably with the support of the people...Try it Mr Naidoo, with the assistance of your executive and management committee.”⁸⁷

This exchange is indicative of a rift between certain professional clubs on the one hand and some hard line SASF/FPL officials on the other. The aforementioned criticism in *South African Soccer* essentially came from within the SASF itself since the publication fell under the auspices of Abdul Bhamjee. Bhamjee himself was a key figure in this dispute and sided with the clubs favouring dialogue with the NPSL. It is therefore not surprising to find his magazine directing criticism at Naidoo on this issue. During the heated meeting on 20 August – during which clubs were out-voted by committee members on the issue of dialogue – Bhamjee was ordered out of the room by Naidoo, leading to a walk-out by delegates from the Transvaal-based FPL clubs in protest. These clubs subsequently demanded Naidoo’s resignation and threatened to discontinue their 1978 league fixtures. This was only averted once Norman Middleton intervened to negotiate a temporary halt in hostilities a few days later.⁸⁸

South African Soccer further bemoaned these developments: “The character assassination, cliqueism [sic] and personality clashes are diseases that will continue to cloud the real issues confronting professional clubs, today.”⁸⁹ Events at the 20 August meeting also had further ramifications as Hellenic decided to quit the FPL the following day. The *Cape Times* reported that the club’s management committee took this decision after chairman, Chris Christodolides, “had failed to get an assurance that the SASF would agree to dialogue with rival football organizations”.⁹⁰ The issue of dialogue was clearly a central consideration for many clubs, and it was even reported that “Hellenic demanded this assurance a few weeks [before the meeting] and suspended their fixtures trying to force a favourable answer”.⁹¹ The

⁸⁶ The magazine originally came into being as *Fed Fan* in August 1976 under the editorship of Tanga Padayachee, although the project itself fell under the auspices of Abdul Bhamjee, the SASF’s public relations officer. The magazine’s name was changed to *Fed Fan Soccer* in June 1977 before finally adopting the name *South African Soccer* from February 1978 onwards. During 1978 the content reflected the dual nature of professional football in South Africa with coverage afforded to both Castle leagues (FPL and NPSL). Throughout this period Padayachee remained the editor. From 1979 onwards coverage shifted heavily towards the NPSL. Symbolically this reflected the dominant position which the NPSL had obtained by that time, but practically it was in line with Bhamjee’s own estrangement from the SASF. He later joined the NPSL ranks as an influential official during the 1980s.

⁸⁷ “Think Mr Naidoo,” *South African Soccer*, October, 1978, 21.

⁸⁸ Rajendra Chetty, “Walkout,” *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 13.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁰ Andre van der Zwan, “Hellenic decides to quit SASF,” *Cape Times*, August 22, 1978, 18.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

club soon applied to the NPSL and was therefore placed on the same course as Cape Town City with the prospect of entering the league during the 1979 season.⁹²

Operational Challenges and Further Defections

As the 1978 season wore on an atmosphere of discontent enveloped the FPL. From an operational standpoint it was felt in some quarters that the FPL was characterised by a “coastal bias” when dealing with league affairs. In this regard Swaraj accused the league of granting fixture postponement requests from coastal teams such as East London United, but not doing the same for the Transvaal-based teams.⁹³ In addition Zazi Khuzwayo, chairman of the Natal-based Wanderers club, was involved in a heated row with FPL officials in November after he had been fined R1,000 for failing to field his team against Port Elizabeth United in a league fixture. This prompted him to walk out of a management committee meeting after being barred from voicing his opinions on the matter.⁹⁴ In January 1979 – a point by which the 1978 league programme should have been long completed – *South African Soccer* also reported that the results of various matches were still outstanding, since they had been referred to the league’s Protest Board.⁹⁵ This created a rather bizarre scenario in which a team like Dynamos – which had by this time defected to the NPSL for 1979 – was still awaiting the final outcome of one of its 1978 fixtures.⁹⁶

The 1978 season was also characterised by unstable ownership of some FPL clubs. Swaraj was a notable example: “This club changed hands, and names, so often that the ordinary soccer follower became confused. At various stages it was known as Swaraj, Johannesburg Rangers, Johannesburg City, BP Swaraj, and then Swaraj again and towards the end, again Johannesburg City”.⁹⁷ Roodepoort Guild – the first NFL club to signal its intention to defect to the FPL back in 1977 – was converted into Roodepoort Rangers through the sale of the club’s first division franchise during the course of 1978.⁹⁸ This incarnation of the club struggled for support, however, and subsequently merged with Swaraj to form Johannesburg

⁹² Andre van der Zwan, “Hellenic apply to NPSL,” *Cape Times*, August 23, 1978, 22.

⁹³ Jimmy Tloti, “Coastal teams favoured – Swaraj Pro,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 18, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁹⁴ Amos Mngoma, “Wanderers boss in walkout row with Feds,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 16, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁹⁵ “Castle Cup Leagues,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 10.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ To this day the system pertaining to club sales allows potential investors an easy route into the upper tiers of professional football in South Africa. This can be done through the acquisition of any (potentially struggling) club’s first division “status” in the form of the club’s franchise. Such a purchase often allows the new owner(s) to change the name and location of the club while remaining in the same league. This has been a common practice historically, and remains so currently.

Rangers, which later underwent further changes.⁹⁹ These developments have to be viewed in the context of an enlarged seventeen-team league (initially) and the accompanying challenges regarding the financial sustainability of such a structure.

As far as results were concerned Durban City emerged as the dominant team in the FPL during 1978. The team claimed the league title by a comfortable margin – losing only one of its 26 league fixtures.¹⁰⁰ This was followed by a triumph in the FPL's premier cup competition, the Coca Cola Knock-Out Shield, which saw the team complete the so-called "league and cup double" by defeating rivals Suburbs United 3-1 in the final played at Curries Fountain.¹⁰¹ Generally speaking teams with former NFL links performed well. Suburbs United – which was the product of a merger between Verulam Suburbs and Durban United (from the NFL) – finished second in the league, while East London United – never having been a major threat in the NFL – claimed fifth place.¹⁰² A similar pattern emerged in the NPSL during this period – an aspect to be explored in the final chapter.

However, by the end of 1978 the former NFL teams (and traditional FPL teams) found themselves in an unpredictable, uncertain situation that somewhat resembled the final season of the NFL the year before. Many teams were fighting for financial survival and took matters into their own hands, leaving the non-racial principle by the wayside. The issue of dialogue with the NPSL had been a contentious one throughout the year, causing a split within SASF ranks. Despite SACOS's warnings to the contrary – and an agreeable block of opinion within the SASF – Norman Middleton and Abdul Bhamjee reached out to NPSL officials behind the scenes. This incurred the wrath of SACOS:

Although the SASF, at its recent Biennial General Meeting held at Cape Town resolved unanimously [not to pursue dialogue], the SASF President and its Public Relations Officer, were opting for dialogue and [newspaper] reports in this regard not only caused confusion but left soccer in a state of flux...[The] failure of SASF to discredit these press reports confirmed the viewpoint that there is a division in the Federation.¹⁰³

This development, coupled with other contentious points in the SASF-SACOS relationship, led to the termination of both the SASF and FPL's memberships with SACOS in October 1978. Despite this, both Middleton and Bhamjee continued to engage in unity talks with other organisations. By the end of the month *Post* reported on a renewed round of talks held

⁹⁹ Vernon Pillay, "Who Are Johannesburg Rangers?" *South African Soccer*, August, 1978, 34.

¹⁰⁰ "Castle Cup Leagues," *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 10.

¹⁰¹ "Coke Shield Final," *South African Soccer*, January 1979, 41.

¹⁰² "Castle Cup Leagues," *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 10.

¹⁰³ Minutes, SACOS General Meeting, October 14, 1978, 28, Cleophas collection.

between George Thabe's SANFA, FASA and the Transvaal Soccer Board (TSB – a provincial affiliate of the SASF). Bhamjee represented the TSB at these talks, while Middleton was ordered by the SASF executive not to attend.¹⁰⁴ This was indicative of the precarious ideological position within which he found himself at this point. On the one hand he clearly felt that dialogue towards forming one controlling body was still the optimal course of action, yet on the other hand he faced stern opposition within his own constituency. In fact *Post* also reported that the SASF – “in a bid to pacify SACOS” – threatened Middleton with expulsion. Bhamjee had already been suspended from the SASF pending an inquiry.¹⁰⁵

The pressures exerted on Middleton provide context for later developments in which subsequent talks between SANFA, FASA and the SASF – planned for December – were postponed to January 1979 at the request of the SASF.¹⁰⁶ Within this milieu of uncertainty FPL clubs proceeded with dialogue on an individual basis and negotiated for openings in the 1979 NPSL first division. In light of the fact that – at an organisational level – no agreement was ultimately reached between the NPSL and SASF/FPL in terms of establishing a single league, the NPSL first division became the de facto “Super League” in South Africa. This came about by virtue of the defections by FPL clubs to the NPSL towards the end of 1978. In November Dynamos indicated that they would be making the move and proceeded to arrange a friendly against Highlands Park later that month – a surprising turn-around given the legal struggle over player contracts between the two clubs less than a year previously.¹⁰⁷

Within days the *Rand Daily Mail* reported that – apart from Dynamos – Bluebells, Swaraj, Cape Town Spurs, East London United and Suburbs United had all submitted applications to the NPSL for the 1979 season. This was of course in addition to the three teams, namely Cape Town City, Hellenic and Sundowns, that had already withdrawn from the SASF during the course of 1978.¹⁰⁸ At this point a question mark still existed over the intended course of action of the FPL's strongest club that season – Durban City. The public messages emanating from chairman Norman Elliott were mixed in this regard. Towards the end of October he highlighted the financial struggles endured by FPL clubs over the course of the 1978 season:

¹⁰⁴ Victor Tsuai, “Fed Holds Key,” *Post*, October 31, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Victor Tsuai, “Unity Talks are Postponed to Next Year,” *Post*, December 11, 1978, 15, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁰⁷ Jon Swift, “Dynamos' Row,” *Sunday Times*, November 12, 1978, 24, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁰⁸ Sy Lerman, “Soccer clubs quit Federation,” *Rand Daily Mail*, November 17, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

We have lost R60 000 this season and I know for a fact that Suburbs United are in the red to the tune of R50 000. Why even a team like Maritzburg, who have not spent a single cent on players, have lost R20 000. The only solution is a Super League.¹⁰⁹

Despite this apparent support for the idea of a “Super League” Elliott was at first reluctant to join the competition that was being mooted by NPSL officials towards the end of 1978. In light of the many defections by FPL clubs Elliott was concerned about a bloated league structure that would potentially pose even more problems than what the FPL had done during the preceding year: “I guarantee you that if this Super League is launched many clubs will drop out halfway in financial ruin.” As a result he called for a league in which the sponsors would invite only the leading clubs which had “proved their ability to draw crowds”, leaving the struggling clubs to form a regionally-based second division. “The sponsors could then invite as many teams as would ensure soccer stayed healthy. That is the only way to avoid the financial rut most clubs find themselves in now.”¹¹⁰

With limited options – particularly in light of the way they dominated the FPL in 1978¹¹¹ – and with the year drawing to a close Elliott eventually committed Durban City to the NPSL for 1979.¹¹² This came during a period when there was still much uncertainty regarding the exact composition of the NPSL first division for the coming season. A further development which complicated matters was SANFA’s decision to reshuffle the NPSL’s management committee in December 1978, with Gilbert Sekgabi (a Kaizer Chiefs official) appointed as chairman of the league.¹¹³ This created confusion amongst FPL clubs that had already defected prior to this move by SANFA, since they were not certain whether their participation in the NPSL first division would still be assured.¹¹⁴

A major challenge faced by league organisers revolved around trying to reconcile two opposing forces, namely the need to cater for all the top level NPSL teams (existing and newly joined) while simultaneously reducing the first division structure to a more sustainable number of teams. During the 1978 season the NPSL first division contained 24 teams – a nearly unmanageable number that necessitated further sub-dividing the league into two

¹⁰⁹ Gary van Staden, “Bhamjee faces chop by Federation,” *Star*, October 30, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. While the exact figures pertaining to the financial positions of other clubs quoted by Elliott cannot be corroborated, there is no reason to doubt the general sentiment that many clubs were struggling for financial survival.

¹¹⁰ Gary van Staden, “Elliott calls it suicide,” *Star*, November 11, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹¹ The prospect of continuing in the FPL, stripped of its leading teams, could not have been attractive since the likely scenario would have seen Durban City continue to win one-sided encounters with little spectator appeal.

¹¹² Khulu Sibiyi, “City join the NPSL,” *Star*, December 15, 1978, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹³ “Big NPSL Shock,” *Post*, December 13, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹⁴ “Ex-Fed clubs in confusion,” *Rand Daily Mail*, December 15, 1978, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

zones.¹¹⁵ A simpler structure was needed and this required a reduction in the first division teams – a process that was bound to upset those teams left out in the cold. At a meeting held on 6 January 1979 the league announced a list of eighteen teams set to comprise the top division that year, with a separate list of thirteen teams allocated to a second “National League” which essentially constituted a B-division.¹¹⁶ This sprouted a great deal of controversy since the allocation of teams was not done purely on the basis of on-field strength. This resulted in “weaker” teams usurping the places of “stronger” teams in some cases.¹¹⁷ Teams that had months ago defected to the NPSL also now unexpectedly found themselves in the second tier, leading to further frustration.

As far as former NFL teams were concerned Lusitano (NPSL champions in 1978), Wits University, Arcadia Shepherds and Highlands Park were set to be retained in the top tier. These teams represented four of the top five teams in the 1978 NPSL standings and consequently their inclusion was not questioned.¹¹⁸ Durban City and Cape Town City – having left the FPL – were also included on the list, although Hellenic was not. Even more contentious was the omission of Imperial (Germiston) Callies despite the fact that the team finished eleventh in the 1978 NPSL standings – well clear of African Wanderers, AmaZulu, Bloemfontein Celtic and Welkom Real Hearts, all of whom were included on the list. In terms of the Lenasia-based former FPL teams, only Dynamos was included in the top tier, with Bluebells and Swaraj allocated to the lower level. Pretoria-based Sundowns – which had followed Cape Town City by defecting early in 1978 already – was also left out of the top tier. Adding to the confusion was the fact that the NPSL management committee refused to discuss the method utilised for compiling the lists, stating only that the allocation was “provisional”.¹¹⁹

This gave rise to a heated debate in which delegates from various clubs questioned the process and attempted to argue for the inclusion of their own teams into the top tier. Cyril

¹¹⁵ As a present day reference point South Africa’s top professional league, the Premier Soccer League, currently consists of sixteen teams.

¹¹⁶ Ezra Mantini, “Kobus Calms Storm Over Premier 18,” *Sunday Times Extra*, January 7, 1979, 7, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹⁷ A purely merit-based approach would have seen a certain number of teams that finished at the bottom of the 1978 league table simply being dropped in order to streamline the size of the league and to create room for teams from the outside. However, this was not a simple downsizing exercise – the fact that new clubs had to be accommodated greatly complicated matters. Teams with long standing NPSL memberships would undoubtedly have felt more entitled to retaining their top division status irrespective of their relative playing strength. The league officials almost certainly also considered the potential drawing power of teams in making their allocation, while also trying to ensure geographic diversity in order to give credence to the “national” character of the league. It is worth noting that despite increased travel costs a wider geographic spread of teams would undoubtedly have been attractive to sponsors.

¹¹⁸ Castle Cup Leagues,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 9.

¹¹⁹ Ezra Mantini, “Kobus Calms Storm Over Premier 18,” *Sunday Times Extra*, January 7, 1979, 7, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

Kobus – by this time chairman of Orlando Pirates – proposed that a four-man ad hoc committee be appointed to reconsider the allocation of teams and to propose the final structure of the league within a week. This was accepted and the committee was immediately selected.¹²⁰ The following Friday saw more than 50 delegates from nineteen clubs present their cases to committee members Kobus, Raymond Hack (of Wits University), Kaizer Motaung (of Kaizer Chiefs) and John da Canha (of Lusitano).¹²¹ In a tense atmosphere some club chairmen made their feelings known to the media, including Abe Ephron of Germiston Callies:

Callies have never been out of the first division [of its league structure] in the last 75 years. It has the best ground facilities, is fully multiracial and caters for 400 juniors. [We joined the NPSL in 1978] when everybody thought it would be suicide to do so and I would like to have one good reason why we have been excluded from the Super League.¹²²

The *Sunday Post* also reported that some clubs (including Dynamos and Bluebells) had been asked to merge, although the ad hoc committee did not confirm this.¹²³ Later that month the NPSL gave the committee's verdict: The number of clubs contained in the top tier was to remain at eighteen and there was to be only one change in the allocation, with Hellenic replacing Bloemfontein Celtic.¹²⁴ This signalled the beginning of the end for Germiston Callies as a few days later it was announced that eight of the club's players had requested to be placed on the transfer list.¹²⁵ Callies entered the NPSL's second tier that season and amalgamated with Katlehong City – a club based to the south-east of Johannesburg – in May 1979.¹²⁶ Ephron attempted to keep the club going through the course of the 1980 season but ultimately threw in the towel. Towards the end of that year he reflected ruefully on the chain of events that led to the club's demise:

When the NPSL announced two years ago that the top 16 teams in the league at the end of their first season [1978] would form the so-called Super League, we started making big plans. Ground improvements were high on the list. New players were vetted. All the directors started to dig in their pockets for extra cash to make Callies the force they need to be...Then came the crunch...[It] was announced that 18 teams would form the league. But they had been picked on a regional basis which meant that Callies were excluded...Since that fateful day I have continued the fight. But with no

¹²⁰ Ezra Mantini, "Kobus Calms Storm Over Premier 18," *Sunday Times Extra*, January 7, 1979, 7, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹²¹ Phil Nyamane, "Clubs Queue To State Their Case," *Sunday Post*, January 14, 1979, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ "Hellenic in," *Cape Times*, January 22, 1979, 16.

¹²⁵ "Callies may fade away," *Cape Times*, January 25, 1979, 22.

¹²⁶ Gleeson, "History," 47.

success. Gates have fallen away to nothing. Players don't want to play for the club. We can't pay wages anyway. I got to the stage where I was having sleepless nights until I decided I have had enough.¹²⁷

With Callies having been demoted at the onset of the 1979 season the NPSL's top division contained seven former NFL teams that season. These comprised Arcadia Shepherds, Cape Town City, Durban City, Hellenic, Highlands Park, Lusitano and Wits University. The trials and tribulations of these clubs in the NPSL will be explored in the final chapter. At this point it is important to note that a number of smaller clubs were left without an obvious league structure to play in, thereby contributing to a revived NFL structure which came into being that same year.

Noises from the Grave: The "Revival" of the NFL

In and amongst the confusion that enveloped professional football towards the end of 1978, Syd Chaitowitz – honorary treasurer of the NFL – announced that the league would probably be conducting a "small local competition" in 1979.¹²⁸ According to the veteran official this was to be done at the behest of nine clubs, mostly former NFL second division members. East London United, a former first division club that played in the FPL in 1978, was also rumoured to be interested.¹²⁹ In December 1978 Chaitowitz made it clear that the NFL did not intend to function in opposition to any of the existing professional leagues and that it would be run on a multiracial basis. He also clarified the reasoning behind creating a new league:

We want to adopt a policy of complete friendship with everybody and will be part of any umbrella body that may be formed. Another thing, we will be multiracial in every respect. Should any black club want to join, they may apply. Clubs can play anybody they like. We are doing this because our clubs feel that the other leagues do not have the experience, the facilities or the referees and linesmen to run lower division leagues successfully.¹³⁰

Another stated aim of the league was to recapture white spectators that had deserted the game over the course of the preceding year. In this regard the NPSL had notable problems regarding crowd control throughout the 1978 season and the negative publicity which this generated undoubtedly contributed to a drastic reduction in white spectatorship at mixed

¹²⁷ John Dunn, "The NPSL are on the right track," *Sunday Times*, November 30, 1980, 50.

¹²⁸ Hymie Snoyman, "NFL plan to run competition next year," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 11, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. During the course of 1978 the NFL essentially constituted an empty shell. Vivian Granger occupied the position of chairman with Chaitowitz the honorary treasurer, but the organisation itself did not conduct any competitions.

¹²⁹ Hymie Snoyman, "NFL plan to run competition next year," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 11, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³⁰ "NFL back in the game," *Sunday Times*, December 3, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

football matches. This aspect – and how it affected the remaining former NFL clubs in the NPSL – will be analysed in the final chapter. As far as the revived NFL was concerned, strict discipline would be applied to its member clubs to ensure a safe environment for spectators. Vivian Granger stated bluntly: “If we want to get the white spectators back they will have to know that they can attend a match without fear of molestation in any way, and the same goes for players, referees and linesmen.”¹³¹

The news of the formation of the league was initially met with some resistance from George Thabe, who described the NFL’s revival as “an exercise in futility. All they are trying to do is to add some confusion to the smooth running of the NPSL”.¹³² To which Vivian Granger retorted: “Rather than criticise and fear us the blacks, including Mr Thabe, should welcome us. We are taking the overflow of clubs who cannot be accommodated in the NPSL at lower level because they do not have the organization and facilities.”¹³³ After the initial suspicion over the possible motives behind the re-establishment of the NFL it soon became clear that the league posed no realistic threat to the dominant position of the NPSL. In June 1979 the NFL was even accepted into the Mainstay Cup competition which fell under the auspices of Thabe himself.¹³⁴ As a point of reference the NFL’s lack of financial clout can be surmised from the fact that it offered prize money totalling a mere R3,000 at the outset of its 1979 season. By the time its fixtures commenced the league was also still in search of a sponsor.¹³⁵

Whereas it still carried the name “National Football League” it bore very little resemblance to its former incarnation and constituted a minor entity within professional football’s landscape. The term “national” was hardly an appropriate description either, since the league contained only two clubs (out of fourteen) outside the Transvaal in 1979.¹³⁶ For the purposes of this study the most notable participant (from 1980) was the latest incarnation of the Johannesburg-based Rangers club which had previously been an NFL first division stalwart. The NFL also followed through on its statement regarding multiracial football by including teams such as Spades United and Pixie United, two East Rand clubs previously affiliated to the (coloured) South African Football Association under the leadership of George Pfeffer. The latter had previously been part of the Top Level Committee under the chairmanship of

¹³¹ Hymie Snoyman, “The NFL is back in business,” *Rand Daily Mail*, January 29, 1979, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³² Brian Ross-Adams, “Revival of puny NFL is futile, says Thabe,” *Rand Daily Mail*, January 30, 1979.

¹³³ “NFL want co-operation only – Granger,” *Cape Times*, January 31, 1979, 22.

¹³⁴ Hymie Snoyman, “NFL get go-ahead to play in Cup,” *Rand Daily Mail*, June 12, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

¹³⁶ Peter Raath, *Soccer Through the Years, 1862–2002* (Cape Town: Peter Raath, 2002), 183.

Dave Marais.¹³⁷ According to a brief newspaper report in May the Vaal Reefs club was also “nicely balanced between black and white players”, thereby pointing to a degree of integration in some teams.¹³⁸

Ultimately the revived NFL represented another avenue to those clubs left out of the top tier of the NPSL in 1979. For example the likes of Rangers and Troyeville (another Johannesburg-based club with a Portuguese support base) both reportedly requested to be considered for the NPSL’s top division, but were left out, prompting them to join the NFL.¹³⁹ Other clubs such as East London United and Maritzburg toyed with the idea of joining the league but did not follow through on this course of action, with Maritzburg citing “travel difficulties” as the reason.¹⁴⁰ East London United in turn folded as a result of financial difficulties.¹⁴¹ The league continued for a number of years and according to noted football commentator and journalist, Mark Gleeson, became the equivalent of the “Transvaal Amateur One” league. Gleeson also recalls Chaitowitz – who became the league chairman during the course of 1979 – “a decade later still badgering the *Star* newspaper” for write-ups concerning league developments.¹⁴²

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the split in NFL ranks towards the end of 1977 as clubs tried to ensure their survival by joining either the NPSL or non-racial FPL. This process already saw some NFL clubs being culled as part of mergers or purchases by existing FPL clubs. Whereas the majority of former NFL teams moved to the FPL they found themselves in a specific ideological context – a scenario that led to notable discontent within the league throughout the 1978 season. It has been argued that the influence of SACOS was decisive in this regard as the latter’s hard line stance on dialogue (which it regarded as a form of collaboration) created a pressurised situation in which ideological outlook could no longer be reconciled with the realities of professional football.

In addition the increased travel costs which came about as a result of the enlarged FPL also placed significant economic pressure on clubs, resulting in calls for dialogue with the rival

¹³⁷ Hymie Snoyman, “NFL strengthened by CFA decision,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 21, 1979, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³⁸ Hymie Snoyman, “Grounded, but NFL is taking off,” *Rand Daily Mail*, May 13, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³⁹ Phil Nyamane, “Clubs Queue To State Their Case,” *Sunday Post*, January 14, 1979, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁴⁰ “Maritzburg withdraw from NFL,” *Star*, March 21, 1979, 19, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁴¹ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 170.

¹⁴² Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015.

NPSL. This gave rise to a split in FPL ranks as the clubs in favour of dialogue were outvoted by a conservative block of officials maintaining a hard line. This occurred on the backdrop of the SASF and FPL's suspensions from SACOS earlier in the year. As was the case with the NFL a year before, clubs took matters into their own hands and defected to the NPSL irrespective of the SASF/FPL policy. The defections of Cape Town City and Sundowns occurred during the early stages of the league season already, while other clubs followed from August onwards. This created a number of operational challenges in terms of fixture postponements and cancellations and added to the FPL's struggles in 1978.

The chaotic state of professional football – largely the result of competing interests and a lack of unity – created much uncertainty as the 1979 season approached. The NPSL was inundated with new member clubs all wanting to play top tier football and the final allocation of teams left many out in the cold. This even contributed to the NFL being revived in a truncated form as it provided an alternative league structure to former lower tier NFL clubs, as well as to those that were unable to secure a position in the NPSL's top tier. By the time the NPSL's top division – by now the de facto “Super League” in South Africa – was set to commence in 1979 it contained seven former NFL first division teams. These were the only such teams still playing top tier professional football in South Africa. The final chapter constitutes an analysis of their participation in the NPSL from that point onwards.

Chapter 7 – Playing away from Home: NFL Clubs in the NPSL/NSL, 1978–90

The 1978 season saw five former NFL teams – all based in the Transvaal – join the NPSL as part of a path chosen towards continuing their professional existence. One of these teams – Germiston Callies – was dealt a fatal blow when it was controversially relegated to the second division as part of an effort to truncate the first division prior to the 1979 season. At this point three prominent former NFL teams that had previously affiliated to the non-racial FPL – namely Cape Town City, Hellenic and Durban City – were accepted into the NPSL's top tier. This brought the total number of former NFL teams still playing top level professional football in South Africa to seven. By the time football unity arrived in 1991 only two such teams remained, namely Hellenic and Wits University. Consequently this chapter seeks to analyse the participation of former NFL clubs within the multiracial context of the NPSL (and later the NSL) as a means towards understanding the disappearance of the majority of these clubs during the period 1978–90.¹

Former NFL clubs that joined the NPSL found themselves in a radically different environment from the one they played in during the life span of the NFL. The 1977 Mainstay League Cup – the first multiracial experiment at club level – served as an initial indicator regarding factors such as spectator violence (often intertwined with questionable refereeing), declining white attendances, administrative difficulties as well as the financial pressures which lay in wait within the NPSL's multiracial context. By 1979 the NPSL had become South Africa's de facto "Super League", attracting massive sponsorships from South African Breweries in particular. This was an indication of the power shift towards black professional football as traditional NPSL clubs, such as Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallow Limited, were also able to attract notable sponsors keen to tap into these clubs' respective support bases. Within this milieu some former NFL clubs – despite producing strong on-field performances initially – were embroiled in a continuous fight for survival. This is further contextualised by considering factors such as player movement and stadium dynamics.

¹ A breakaway move by the NPSL's top division clubs at the start of the 1985 season saw the National Soccer League (NSL) being formed. It replaced the NPSL as the dominant league in South Africa from that point on and essentially constituted the same league structure under a new name (and new management with George Thabe having been ousted). This will be detailed further at a later juncture.

Crossing the Divide: Uncertainty Abounds

The legal battle between Highlands Park and the FPL's Dynamos United over the playing contract of Tony Stathakis towards the end of 1977 proved highly controversial – not only in terms of the question of player poaching – but more so as a result of testimony provided by Stathakis in an affidavit. In this regard the case became front page news in the *Rand Daily Mail* when it was revealed that Stathakis claimed that Highlands Park chairman, Rex Evans, had told his team in December 1977 that it would be better if a black club won 1978's NPSL league title “to avoid friction between black and white clubs”.² According to Stathakis the chairman also

...mentioned that security would be a problem because of the excitability of the supporters of black clubs. [Evans reportedly] stated further that the Highlands players would be asked to avoid hard tackling, lest it be misinterpreted by the partisan supporters of the opposing club as dirty play and which could spark off violent behaviour.³

Whether those were Evans's exact words – or whether he conveyed this message at all – is a moot point. The resulting speculation was still indicative of the uncertainty that existed with regards to the prospect of multiracial football, particularly in light of the previous season's controversial Mainstay League Cup competition. Stathakis's claims were also in line with developments in the NPSL historically, especially in terms of the prevalence of violence at matches – a notable problem for administrators since the league's inception.⁴ Table 7.1 constitutes a list of troubling incidents at NPSL matches during the period 1971–7. It is not meant to be an exhaustive list but provides credence to the notion that the NPSL did experience crowd trouble at matches on a fairly regular basis.

² Errol Symons, “Soccer ace's shock 'go easy' claim,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 1.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The NPSL came into being as the professional arm of the South African Bantu Football Association (SABFA) in 1967. The relationship with SA Breweries was forged in 1971 as the NPSL's “Keg League” was launched that year. See Peter Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South Africa* (Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2004), 187.

Selected Incidents of Crowd Violence at NPSL Matches: 1971-1977	
Date	Incident
18 Sept 1971	Match between Mamelodi XI and Real Katlehong City abandoned after pitch invasion by supporters.
31 May 1972	English guest referee, Norman Burtenshaw, runs for his life "after being set upon" by angry Orlando Pirates supporters.
7 June 1972	NPSL endorses Johannesburg City Council's decision to ban Pirates from Orlando Stadium after abovementioned fan riot.
24 June 1972	Pirates player, Solomon Padi, is hit by a stone. Three other players injured in ensuing fracas.
22 July 1972	Vaal Professionals supporters riot when Pirates are awarded a penalty. Match abandoned with 30 minutes to play.
5 Aug 1972	Orlando Stadium reopened and sees fan riot in which policemen are injured. 27 people appear in court.
28 July 1973	Fan riots bring two matches to a premature conclusion.
24 Mar 1974	Benoni United's coach is chased away by home supporters after another loss.
16 May 1976	One fan killed and two injured when a policeman opens fire during a match played at Thabong.
11 Sept 1976	A referee is stabbed during a match between Kaizer Chiefs and AmaZulu.
20 Sept 1976	Moroka Swallows Limited pay R98 to a referee for a wrist watch he lost after being attacked by supporters in August.

Table 7.1 – Crowd violence at NPSL matches: 1971–7.⁵

Supporter violence was not confined to the NPSL and it should be noted that the NFL itself was certainly not trouble-free. For example, on 30 July 1977 the high profile clash between Lusitano and Highlands Park “turned into a free-for-all with the referee fleeing the field and police with dogs having to go into action”.⁶ An aspect such as bottle throwing was also a regular occurrence at a ground like Hartleyvale in Cape Town, although it is worth postulating that the superior facilities available to NFL clubs reduced the security risks faced by players, officials and supporters. Peter Alegi’s analysis of the South African Soccer League (SASL) – the non-racial FPL’s forerunner during the period 1961–5 – serves as a valuable marker in this regard:

Overcrowding at [SASL] matches staged in inadequate, unsafe facilities created conditions in which fans’ participation easily derailed into violence. Football grounds open to blacks had no fences, walls, or moats to keep fans off the pitch, and there were very few policemen on duty. These conditions made burgeoning crowds difficult to control, and violence in and around SASL’s venues became more frequent. Excessive liquor consumption, rivalries between hard-core fans, and poor refereeing sparked fights, pitch invasions, stampedes, and riots at several SASL games.⁷

He also points to the “widespread practice of high-stakes gambling on matches” as an additional factor that led to a rise in football violence during this period. Furthermore,

⁵ Compiled from Mark Gleeson, “History of the Castle League,” (unpublished manuscript, 2003) 5, 8, 9, 14, 17, 29, 31. The absence of incidents during 1977 is in line with a later comment by Trevor Dreyer, administrative manager of Arcadia Shepherds. In May 1978 he defended the NPSL’s reputation by stating that during the 1977 season there had been only one incident of a bystander being hit with a bottle next to the field. See “Blankes bly nou weg van oop sokker [Whites now staying away from open soccer],” *Die Vaderland*, May 12, 1978, 4.

Whether this is entirely accurate remains a moot point since there were a number of controversial crowd-related incidents during the 1977 Mainstay League Cup which added to the uncertainty regarding integrated football.

⁶ Gary Dixon and John Dunn, “The ugly diary of shame...,” *Sunday Times*, November 11, 1979, file S341.7.3, South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) Press Cuttings 1928-1998 (Part A), Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as SAIRR press cuttings).

⁷ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 130.

...the development of football into a mass phenomenon in South Africa in the 1960s coincided with an intensification of fans' emotional attachment to their particular clubs and beloved idols. Defeat became unacceptable to young devotees and thugs who formed their sporting culture in the poor, aggressive, male-dominated street culture of South African townships.⁸

This analysis provides context to the uncertainty with which former NFL teams – and their spectators – entered the NPSL in 1978. The league's administrators were clearly concerned about the security aspect as well, as evidenced by an interest-free loan of R30,000 obtained from sponsors, Mainstay, to be used for security-related improvements at grounds in the short term.⁹ In a more drastic development it was also reported in the *Star* newspaper that vigilante groups would form part of tight security – “second in size only to the police anti-riot squads during the disturbances in black residential areas” – lined up by the NPSL for 1978. These groups, known in the townships as “The Mercenaries” and consisting mainly of hostel dwellers, were to be particularly attentive to the safety of white spectators attending their teams' matches in black areas. In this regard they were to “protect the fans in queues in the stadium during matches, escort them to their cars – which [were also to] be cared for during the match – [while also making] sure that they leave the townships safely”.¹⁰

During the build-up to the historic opening weekend of the newly integrated NPSL, Wits University planned to transport a number of its supporters by bus to the Orlando Stadium where the team was set to face Kaizer Chiefs. However, a few days before the fixture the West Rand Bantu Affairs Administration Board (WRAB) effectively slapped a ban on white supporters attending the match by refusing to issue the required permits allowing entrance into Orlando.¹¹ The purported reason for this decision given in the media related to the “lack

⁸ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 130–1.

⁹ “Mainstay Sponsors NPSL KO Series,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1978, 7. Mainstay's involvement in the NPSL from 1978 onwards was different to what was originally planned. The 1977 Mainstay League Cup was intended to pave the way towards the formation of a single “Super League” in South Africa the following year, with Mainstay as the title sponsor to the value of R100,000. This did not materialise for a number of reasons, among them the difficulties experienced during the 1977 competition, the failed unity talks between the different controlling bodies as well as the reluctance on the part of NPSL clubs to jeopardise the existing sponsor relationship with South African Breweries. With the NPSL becoming the de facto “Super League” Mainstay opted for an alternative avenue of involvement by sponsoring SANFA's premier knock-out cup competition which included both professional and amateur teams under the organisation's umbrella. This was essentially the equivalent of FASA's Castle Cup competition for white teams previously. It is incorrect when Alegi states that “sponsorship rose to R100 000” for the 1978 Mainstay Cup. This was the planned amount originally based on the assumption that Mainstay would continue with the second year of the initial agreement, which they did not. A new agreement was put in place for the 1978 competition – which was technically not an extension of the 1977 experiment since the format and name were different – and the sponsored amount was R61 000 (excluding the R30,000 loan for security related improvements at venues). See Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142 and “Mainstay Sponsors NPSL KO Series.”

¹⁰ Fanyana Shiburi, “Security: soccer's new plan,” *Star*, February 24, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹¹ “Sokkerwedstryd nie vir blankes [Soccer match not for whites],” *Beeld*, March 3, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

of separate facilities” for black and white spectators at the Orlando Stadium.¹² During the ensuing month it emerged that WRAB would allow no more than 30 white spectators (including team officials) at matches in black townships under its control, with board officials again quoted regarding the lack of separate facilities.¹³

This gave rise to criticism directed to Piet Koornhof – still the Minister of Sport and Recreation at the time – in parliament. The opposition’s chief spokesman on sport, Dave Dalling, described the ban on whites as having brought South Africa “back to the politics of the toilet”, and questioned Koornhof’s role in approving the WRAB’s decision. Dalling argued that the ban directly contradicted a recent assurance by Koornhof to the International Tennis Federation regarding spectators being allowed to obtain clearances to attend integrated events.¹⁴

Privately this was a sore point to Koornhof, as a hard copy of the relevant newspaper article contains a handwritten note from him stating that “my integrity is being compromised here”.¹⁵ Correspondence from the Secretary of Sport and Recreation, Beyers Hoek, to Koornhof a few days later reveals the complex nature of an issue which spanned the jurisdiction of more than one government department. It is further argued here that the exchange also highlights the air of paranoia – perhaps partially justified – which underpinned much of the decision making regarding the matter of white supporters in black areas. In recounting the process up to that point Hoek reveals that Koornhof approved the NPSL fixture list for the forthcoming season on 31 January 1978. Permission for matches to take place on a home-and-away basis was given a week later, with the proviso that prior approval would need to be obtained from the relevant Bantu administration board in the event of a white team playing in a black area. This condition was set on account of the fact that the Department of Plural Relations and Development, coupled with the Bantu administration boards, had jurisdiction over black residential areas.¹⁶

Based on Hoek’s memorandum to Koornhof it would appear as if the WRAB’s verdict to limit white spectators to 30 in total was a subsequent decision taken without the input of the minister (which is plausible since the issue of allowing whites into black areas fell outside

¹² “Sokkerwedstryd nie vir blankes [Soccer match not for whites],” *Beeld*, March 3, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹³ “Koornhof knew about ban on white spectators,” *Cape Times*, April 1, 1978, file PV476/1/34/31/2, Piet Koornhof Private Documents, Archive for Contemporary Affairs, University of the Free State, South Africa (hereafter cited as Koornhof papers).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.* The handwritten note is scribbled in Afrikaans and reads: “My integriteit word hier aangetas.”

¹⁶ Beyers Hoek, Department of Sport and Recreation Memo, April 4, 1978, 1, file PV476/1/34/31/2, Koornhof papers.

Koornhof's jurisdiction).¹⁷ According to Hoek the WRAB had no objection to white teams playing against black teams, but implemented a policy whereby black spectators would receive preference at their teams' home venues with white spectators simultaneously limited "to a minimum".¹⁸ The WRAB's position was ostensibly based on the fact that existing facilities were regarded as being inadequate to host all black spectators – not an inaccurate evaluation given the aforementioned references to burgeoning crowds and increased popularity of black professional football. Consequently the WRAB apparently feared a situation whereby whites could potentially stream to these venues resulting in "thousands of black spectators" having to be turned away at the gates. The view was that such a scenario would lead to friction and chaos, hence the limit on white spectators as a preventative measure.¹⁹

This line of argument was appreciably different from the purported reasons provided in the media and reveals a hidden dimension to this saga. It also illustrates the multi-layered complexity of administering multiracial football within the convoluted framework of apartheid legislation. A revealing aspect to this episode is the fact that the WRAB's reasoning appears to have enjoyed support from Michael Rapp – the former NFL chairman who by this time was a member of the NPSL's executive committee.²⁰ Hoek reported having a conversation with Rapp in which the latter indicated that the co-operation of the WRAB had been "very good" up to that point and that there was "not a large demand" from white spectators to attend matches in black areas.²¹ Rapp apparently also opined that – due to the insufficient capacity at relevant stadiums and the large number of black supporters – more whites could hardly be allowed at matches in black areas.²²

The benefit of historical hindsight could possibly lead to an over-simplified characterisation of the WRAB's standpoint as having been borne out of unsubstantiated paranoia. In this regard

¹⁷ This was a key question raised by Dalling, who wanted to know whether Koornhof had prior knowledge of the WRAB's decision. In response to a question in parliament Dr Ferdie Hartzenberg, Deputy Minister of Development, confirmed that Koornhof "was consulted" *before* the decision was taken to limit white spectators, although the nature of this consultation was not clarified. Judging from Hoek's memorandum to Koornhof it would appear as if the WRAB's decision – and the reasoning behind it – was news to the minister. In this regard Hoek detailed the WRAB's reasoning to Koornhof – something which would have been unnecessary had the minister been party to the decision itself. Koornhof's note regarding his integrity being compromised is also indicative of this. See "Koornhof knew about bar on white spectators," and Hoek, Department of Sport and Recreation Memo, 1–2.

¹⁸ Hoek, Department of Sport and Recreation Memo, 2

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ Rapp was joined on the NPSL executive by Monty Shapiro who had also served on the NFL executive previously. See Sy Lerman, "NFL boss Rapp joins the NPSL," *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 20.

²¹ Hoek, Department of Sport and Recreation Memo, 2. The memorandum makes reference to two notable matches involving black and white teams in the preceding month, namely the initial Kaizer Chiefs-Wits University encounter as well as a subsequent contest between Chiefs and Highlands Park. Rapp attended the latter and provided feedback to Hoek.

²² *Ibid.*

the prospect of thousands of white supporters flocking to venues like Orlando Stadium could be dismissed as unrealistic or unfounded. Such a viewpoint would, however, have to be reconciled with the fact that prospective supporter patterns would probably have been difficult to project within the uncertain environment of multiracial football. In addition the history of troubling incidents at NPSL matches, coupled with the reality of inadequate facilities for black sport in general, would have played into the thinking of government officials. The volatile nature of previous multinational experiments – particularly the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament – as well as the more recent difficulties experienced during the 1977 Mainstay League Cup, also lingered in the background.

Of course these elements also have to be viewed on the backdrop of increased political unrest in South Africa during this period, particularly in the townships. In this regard the Soweto uprising of 1976 – and the subsequent spread of disturbances to other townships around the country into 1977 – was still fresh in the memory.²³ It is therefore worth speculating that, by limiting white spectators at black venues, the WRAB adopted a stance which – from its point of view – offered the minimum amount of risk in terms of potential supporter conflict. In this regard it was reported later in 1978 that the police was reluctant to issue permits to white spectators wanting to attend matches in black areas “out of fear for the serious consequences that could sprout from a racial clash in a black residential area”.²⁴

Spectatorship in the NPSL: Some Early Trends

The reported reluctance on the part of white supporters to travel with their teams into townships is an important introductory component to a broader discussion relating to spectatorship in the NPSL in general. It is argued here that the latter represents a critical dimension towards understanding the struggles experienced by former NFL clubs from 1978 onwards. In this regard the ensuing years saw a decisive drop in white attendances leading to further pressure on clubs with regard to their financial sustainability. Already during the first few months of the 1978 season reports indicated that white support was on the decline. Lusitano was described as “one of the hardest hit among the top clubs”, having suffered a drop in average attendance from 5,000 per match (during the final NFL season in 1977) to around 3,000 during initial NPSL matches.²⁵ This is particularly notable for the fact that, as far as on-field performance was concerned, Lusitano was at its zenith during this period. Having narrowly missed out on winning the last contested NFL league title in 1977, the club

²³ David Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, (Johannesburg: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2009), 161–2.

²⁴ “Bont sportbyeenkomste word bloedbaddens [Mixed sport events becoming bloodbaths],” *Die Afrikaner*, August 18, 1978, 5. Quote translated from Afrikaans.

²⁵ “Lusitano want home games on Sundays,” *South African Soccer*, May, 1978, 16.

would go on to claim the first ever integrated NPSL league championship later in 1978. A reported drop in attendance is therefore surprising given the team's success.

This led to club chairman, John da Canha, calling for home matches to be allowed on Sundays in the hope of attracting families back to the game.²⁶ The family aspect was also referred to elsewhere. During the same month the *Cape Times* highlighted this dimension as a challenge facing teams:

A problem for the ex-NFL clubs concerns the family man. He used to take his wife and children to professional matches. Now he is nervous because of off-the-field violence and accordingly stays away. This is a problem which officials can [scarcely] afford to ignore.²⁷

The issue of violence at multiracial sporting events – in particular football – was gleefully seized upon by some quarters of the conservative Afrikaans press as evidence that racial integration would lead to inevitable tension and chaos. In August 1978 *Die Afrikaner*, a Transvaal-based newspaper, carried a detailed account of problematic incidents at various events organised since the unveiling of the government's amended multinational sports policy by Koornhof in September 1976. Reference was made to the trouble experienced at Mainstay League Cup matches during the course of 1977, as well as to more recent developments during 1978. The latter included spectator clashes at a multiracial boxing event in Johannesburg which saw South African heavyweight Kallie Knoetze take on Duane Bobick of the United States in February 1978.²⁸

Reference was also made to an NPSL clash between Wits University and Witbank Black Aces at the latter's home ground in Lynnville – a township on the outskirts of Witbank – the following month. The referee reportedly had to be led to shelter in a police van after the match, when unruly home supporters caused uproar after their team's defeat. Some members of the police and other supporters also fled the scene after having stones hurled at them.²⁹ The newspaper's reporting tone clearly betrays a conservative agenda as it directed a barrage of criticism towards Koornhof – specifically regarding the concessions made towards allowing racial integration at club level. However, setting this bias aside, the list of

²⁶ "Lusitano want home games on Sundays," *South African Soccer*, May, 1978, 16. As previously indicated Transvaal legislation dictated that NPSL matches could not be played at venues in white areas on Sundays. Lusitano utilised the Rand Stadium as its home ground.

²⁷ "Whites staying away from mixed soccer," *Cape Times*, May 12, 1978, 20.

²⁸ "Bont sportbyeenkomste word bloedbaddens [Mixed sport events becoming bloodbaths]," *Die Afrikaner*, August 18, 1978, 5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

troubling incidents – irrespective of its framing – does provide context for the drop in white attendance observed at professional football matches during this period.

Highlands Park's chairman, Rex Evans, confirmed a drop-off in white support during the early months of the season and speculated that this was indeed "out of fear". This view was echoed by Trevor Dreyer, administrative manager of Arcadia Shepherds. Evans did, however, rather optimistically expect white supporters to return "in time" once the uncertainty of the initial period had passed.³⁰ Germiston Callies reported an additional dimension to spectator movement, namely an influx of black supporters to white venues such as Driehoek, the team's home ground. This was due to black teams' travelling support and created a situation whereby the supporters of former NFL teams were in some cases outnumbered when attending home matches. Abe Ephron, the Callies chairman, indicated that his team had drawn an average of around 500 spectators to Driehoek during the NFL's final year and that this number was up to 3,000 for some matches during the early stages of the 1978 NPSL season. He admitted that "even some of the loyal 500 [white] fans of [1977] were now wavering in their support and [that] the majority of spectators were blacks".³¹ This latter trend is an important consideration in the context of later developments regarding the closure of specific venues, such as the Caledonian Stadium in Pretoria and the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg to professional football – an aspect to be explored later.

It is argued here that the general decline in white attendances observed during the early part of the 1978 season was exacerbated by a number of crowd-related incidents witnessed at NPSL matches, particularly during the second half of the year. These occurrences were undoubtedly harmful to the league's reputation and would have added to any sense of trepidation felt by white spectators. The month of August saw two particularly controversial incidents taking place at Balfour Park and the Rand Stadium respectively. During a match between Highlands Park and AmaZulu, played at the former venue, approximately 50 travelling supporters were reported to have stormed the pitch shortly after half time. With their team trailing 3–0 they set upon the referee, Ephraim Motswana, who was subsequently stabbed in the process. He was eventually treated on the pitch and taken to hospital, with the match being called off.³²

³⁰ "Whites staying away from mixed soccer," *Cape Times*, May 12, 1978, 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² "Geweld bars weer los by bont sokker [Violence erupts again at mixed soccer]," *Die Afrikaaner*, August 25, 1978, 1 and Vernon Woods, "Soccer's shame," *Sunday Express*, September 24, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

The Rand Stadium was the scene of an episode confirming some of the WRAB's previously stated fears regarding overcrowding at venues – albeit not at a venue under its jurisdiction. Thousands of Kaizer Chiefs supporters arrived at the stadium by bus for a high profile encounter against Lusitano. The ground filled up to capacity as an estimated 38,000 supporters crammed in to witness the fixture, but more significantly another 15,000 to 20,000 reportedly congregated outside, unable to gain access to the match. Some of the Rand Stadium gates were subsequently stormed, leading to police intervention in the process. Violent clashes ensued and a number of injuries were reported. Tear gas was also used to disperse the crowd.³³ Officials were subsequently told that approximately 2,000 of the estimated 3,000 white supporters at the match already left prior to kick-off “as they expected trouble”.³⁴

The damage caused to some of the Rand Stadium fencing during this episode led to the Johannesburg City Council announcing a R20,000 budget provision for the construction of a 100 metre-long wall (four metres high and 40 centimetres thick) at the front of the stadium. Suitable steel gates were also to be installed as part of an effort to prevent similar disturbances in future. The NPSL was also implored to limit future spectator numbers at the ground to 30,000.³⁵ Exactly how this was to be done would remain problematic given the fact that tickets were traditionally sold at the gates, thereby not preventing large numbers of supporters from arriving at the venue itself, irrespective of its capacity.³⁶

As the season wore on the security situation did not improve. The following month saw referee Bernard Farrell being struck by “half a brick” during a match between Germiston Callies and AmaZulu at the Driehoek Stadium. He was taken to hospital and his replacement, Dave Griffith, received similar treatment from irate travelling supporters as more objects were hurled onto the field. The match was later delayed due to a pitch invasion and at the final whistle “Griffith had to receive protection to enable him to get back to the dressing room”. Callies won the encounter 3–0.³⁷ Referees were a regular target of violent fan behaviour – so much so that the NPSL constitution at one point included a clause stating that “[players] of both teams shall, when and where necessary, protect the Referee and

³³ “Geweld bars weer los by bont sokker [Violence erupts again at mixed soccer],” *Die Afrikaaner*, August 25, 1978, 1, and “Riots are crippling soccer’s progress,” *Sharpshoot Soccer*, September/October, 1978, 8.

³⁴ Leon du Plessis, “R20 000 riot wall for Rand Stadium,” *Citizen*, September 6, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ An independent review of the NPSL’s affairs in 1983 conceded that an extension of the use of the Computicket pre-booking system would potentially lead to “a certain level of ‘consumer’ resistance”. See *Operations Review of the National Professional Soccer League*, August 1983, file PC114/1/8/1, Papers of the Football Association of Natal and KwaZulu, Alan Paton Centre, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa (hereafter cited as FANK papers).

³⁷ Vernon Woods, “Soccer’s shame,” *Sunday Express*, September 24, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

linesmen against assaults”.³⁸ However, coaches were prone to receiving the same treatment if their teams produced unsatisfactory displays. Stanley “Screamer” Tshabalala was one example in this regard as he “was attacked by a knife-wielding man” after his team, Orlando Pirates, lost 1–0 to Callies in October.³⁹

In September 1978 the *Financial Mail* carried an article detailing the state of professional football in South Africa at the time. It reported that a “problem for both leagues [was] the fall-off in Reef white attendances, mainly because of reports of crowd violence at NPSL matches”.⁴⁰ Incidentally this specific article is cited by Archer and Bouillon in *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* as part of their analysis of the impact of multinationalism on white football in general.⁴¹ While the latter text is a highly regarded work detailing the influence of South Africa’s political dynamics on sport in the country, it is argued here that its analysis of professional football – particularly within the framework of multinationalism – contains not only factual errors, but also some highly questionable lines of argumentation that need to be highlighted.⁴²

In this regard the *Financial Mail* article is cited in support of Archer and Bouillon’s statement that “the invasion of the white clubs’ stands by black spectators caused some Whites to give up watching football altogether”.⁴³ While the latter statement is in all likelihood true – as evidenced by the aforementioned situation relating to Germiston Callies – the citation itself obscures the fact that the article actually makes a specific reference to “crowd violence at NPSL matches” driving away whites, as opposed to a general “invasion” of white facilities by black supporters.⁴⁴ The citation is also placed in a section detailing the decline of the NFL – in other words the period leading up to 1978 – which renders the *Financial Mail* article irrelevant since it is dealing specifically with the first season after the NFL had already disbanded.⁴⁵ Archer and Bouillon appear to have used the article in support of their general

³⁸ *National Professional Soccer League Constitution*, no date, 24, file PC114/1/1/3, FANK papers.

³⁹ Force Khashane, “Stanley threatens to quit,” *Post*, October 31, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁴⁰ “Who scores?” *Financial Mail*, September 1, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. The article was referring to both the NPSL and non-racial FPL.

⁴¹ Robert Archer and Antoine Bouillon, *The South African Game: Sport and Racism* (London: Zed Press, 1982), 253.

⁴² A major challenge faced by Archer and Bouillon was the breadth of subject matter dealt with in *The South African Game*. Alegi describes their end product as a “meticulous, lucid, and nuanced analysis of the complex and changing relationship between social, political, and economic structures and individuals’ agency in the history of both white and black sport”. He also regards it as “an indispensable scholarly guide for researchers of South African sport”. See Peter Alegi, “Keep Your Eye on the Ball: A Social History of Soccer in South Africa, 1910–1976,” (PhD diss., Boston University, 2000). Whereas much of this praise is indeed justified, it does have to be tempered to some degree given the incongruences hidden beneath some of the detail regarding professional football.

⁴³ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 253.

⁴⁴ “Who scores?” *Financial Mail*, September 1, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁴⁵ Archer and Bouillon, *The South African Game*, 252–3.

assertion that the multinational football tournaments of 1974–5 caused a drop in attendances in the NFL – a highly questionable analysis.⁴⁶

Alegi, in turn, cites Archer and Bouillon's summary in support of his own contention that the decrease in NFL attendances was "partly the consequence of white spectators' flight from stadiums entertaining racially mixed audiences watching 'multinational' sport".⁴⁷ The same criticism directed towards Archer and Bouillon applies here, since multinational competitions took place separately from the NFL and therefore do not explain the drop-off in attendances from the latter.⁴⁸ It is argued here that a contention linking the flight of white spectators to racial integration only becomes applicable once integrated professional football became a reality at league level in 1978.⁴⁹ It is this dimension specifically with which this section is concerned, although it has simultaneously been necessary to point out how this line of argumentation has been questionably applied to a preceding period.

Declining White Attendances: An Irreversible Force

Ultimately the 1978 NPSL season was described in some quarters of the football press as "the year of arguments and troubles" as a result of "riots at several big games".⁵⁰ Security was clearly a pressing concern heading into the 1979 season and in this regard the league "made several loans to the owners of grounds, including Township Boards, on which NPSL

⁴⁶ The analysis should be regarded as questionable for a number of reasons. Firstly, the multinational tournaments were short-term events which did not function as like-for-like alternatives to watching league football. Their mere existence can therefore not be regarded as an alternative form of football entertainment over the long-term. Secondly, apart from some fixture congestion, they had no discernible impact on the way league football was conducted – in other words NFL venues were not suddenly more open to mixed crowds, leading to a decline in white spectators (as was indeed the case later in 1978). In fact Archer and Bouillon also argue the opposite: namely that multinational events provided an opportunity for SANFA and SASF clubs to showcase their quality, thereby drawing away (black, coloured and Indian) spectators from the white NFL. This is perhaps their weakest line of argumentation, since there was only one club-based multinational tournament during the period 1974–5 (the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions) in which the SASF clubs did not even participate. In addition, the two participating black clubs, Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, already had strong followings by that time (and were beaten by the NFL teams in direct competition). To make a case that multinationalism suddenly "unveiled" SANFA and SASF clubs to supporters is not only unsubstantiated speculation, but completely implausible given the dynamics of the multinational tournaments. The same would apply if the 1977 Mainstay League Cup was to be cited in support of Archer and Bouillon's argument – which it is not. Again the SASF clubs did not participate in the latter, and NFL clubs were victorious in all four groups of the competition. It was also demonstrated that only clubs with strong existing followings were able to draw decent crowds to their Mainstay matches. These and other elements have been detailed at length in preceding chapters.

⁴⁷ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142.

⁴⁸ Even if the controversial 1977 Mainstay League Cup is cited as a possible example it would still not explain a decrease in league attendances since it was a separate competition.

⁴⁹ The reference to integrated professional football "arriving" in 1978 is framed from a government viewpoint, since that was the first year in which such football was officially sanctioned. Due cognisance is taken of the fact that the non-racial FPL regarded itself as having played integrated professional football throughout its history prior to this date.

⁵⁰ "NPSL must hand the offenders a life ban," *Sharpshoot Soccer*, February, 1979, 28.

games are played, to enable them to build security fences".⁵¹ Green Point Stadium in Cape Town – home of Hellenic (which joined the league in 1979) – also had security fencing installed as part of an inner perimeter to protect players and officials from crowds.⁵² Another major issue on the league's agenda was the state of refereeing – often the catalyst for crowd violence. In this regard administrators intended to implement a two-pronged approach by improving not only the standard of NPSL referees, but also the fans' understanding of the rules. In April 1979 the league's stated intention was "to import three top overseas referees to conduct crash courses, not only for officials and players, but also the spectators". The first of these imported referees was Alan Robinson, secretary of the English Referees' Association, who was set to arrive for a three-week "lecture tour" the following month.⁵³

This visit was marred by controversy, however, as Robinson himself experienced the volatile nature of high profile NPSL fixtures when he was assigned to the derby fixture between Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, played at the Orlando Stadium on 20 May 1979. According to the *Citizen* newspaper

[a] frenzied section of the crowd swarmed over the security fence and jostled Mr Robinson who had his hair pulled while officials hurried to his rescue. The game was held up for 40 minutes while order was restored...The incident...came after [he] gave an off-side decision in favour of Kaizer Chiefs.⁵⁴

The *Rand Daily Mail* also reported that "some of the fans were armed with knives and empty liquor bottles".⁵⁵ Robinson's experience was not an isolated incident and referees and linesmen continued to be targets for abuse from spectators during the course of 1979. In November it was reported that three match officials had decided to quit professional football "because of missiles hurled at them by the crowd" at a match between Orlando Pirates and Dynamos United at Balfour Park in Johannesburg.⁵⁶

The continued prevalence of violence at NPSL matches led to a warning from the Minister of Sport, Punt Janson, who stated that the "time [was] nearing when the Government and the administrators and sponsors of the game [would] have to get together and try to thrash out a

⁵¹ Sefako Nyaka, "NPSL still financing security," *Rand Daily Mail*, April 27, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Derek Amoore, "Orlando mob attacks top English ref," *Citizen*, May 21, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁵⁵ Sy Lerman et al., "Soccer derby turns into a near riot," *Rand Daily Mail*, May 21, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁵⁶ Gabu Tugwana, "Soccer officials quit after crowd violence," *Rand Daily Mail*, November 19, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

solution to this problem, which seems to be growing instead of subsiding”.⁵⁷ Janson communicated this view in an interview with the *Sunday Times* newspaper and was reacting to further incidents of trouble during matches played over the course of the first weekend in November. In this regard a photographer and policeman were “felled by bottles” at a Kaizer Chiefs-Arcadia Shepherds match at the Rand Stadium, while a Dynamos player was hospitalised after being hit by a brick during a match against Benoni United at Balfour Park.⁵⁸

It was on the backdrop of these developments that white attendances dropped off during the early years of the integrated NPSL. Of course this trend was already evident during the final seasons of the NFL and it has been argued that economic and on-field factors – such as the decreasing entertainment value of matches – were important factors as the 1970s wore on. The latter factors would in all likelihood still have been at least partially relevant to former NFL teams within the NPSL, although it is argued here that the advent of multiracial integration, coupled with the damaging impact of supporter violence on the NPSL’s reputation, were far more significant in explaining the “white flight” from matches during the post-1977 period.

Some operational factors worth noting were also proposed by the *Citizen* newspaper during the early months of the 1979 NPSL season. In this regard it pointed to the difficulty experienced by white spectators in obtaining permits for matches in black townships as significant⁵⁹ – although this would not have explained the drop-off in home attendances in white areas. In this regard it argued that fixture layout was also a factor worth considering. The newspaper’s early season sample of NPSL matches comprised 73 fixtures up to that point – of which 51 had been staged in black townships, thereby leaving 22 games that whites could have watched more freely. Yet of those 22 fixtures a large majority (fifteen) were played on Friday nights – a time slot when there was “competition from TV, the pub and, with winter fast approaching, the cold”.⁶⁰ In this regard Saturdays were described as the “day that a White family in the days of the old National Football League set aside for soccer,” having “had a choice of at least three games on the Reef” during Saturday afternoons.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Gary Dixon and John Dunn, “Stop! Or we’ll step in – Punt,” *Sunday Times*, November 11, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. Janson took over the portfolio of minister of sport and recreation from FW de Klerk during the course of 1979. De Klerk himself succeeded Koornhof at the end of 1978.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Derek Amore, “Why whites miss out in soccer,” *Citizen*, April 26, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

It is difficult to gauge the impact of individual factors – such as the arrival of television in South Africa in 1976, for example – on white attendances in isolation. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) first started showing NFL football matches in 1977,⁶² but this coverage was limited due to the fact that there was only one television channel and that the SABC-TV sports programming was confined to a Saturday afternoon time slot.⁶³ This meant that only one live match – whether it be football or another code such as rugby – could be shown in a given week and as a result the best way for football supporters to follow their teams through the season was still through mostly attending in person. In addition the arrival of television in the country as a whole did not imply that all white households would immediately obtain the device. In this regard the *Rand Daily Mail* reported in March 1976 on the high cost of South African television sets during the early months of the medium's introduction.⁶⁴

However, the broadcasting of selected live matches could certainly not have helped white attendances and therefore has to be noted as a relevant factor. In this regard Wits University chairman, Ronnie Schloss, reportedly told SABC-TV in June 1978 that they were not welcome to broadcast his team's match against Orlando Pirates at the Rand Stadium. "All they do is ruin the gate [attendances]," he said.⁶⁵ In addition a more pertinent question would be to what degree the mere availability of television as an alternative form of entertainment – not necessarily in the form of live football – impacted on the leisure time of whites. This is a very difficult aspect to quantify. At best it can be qualitatively speculated that the absence of a narrative in the media classifying the arrival of television as a decisive factor in driving down white attendances supports the notion that there were more notable variables involved. It has been argued here that crowd violence at NPSL matches is a primary example of the latter. The fact that white support decreased during the early years of the integrated NPSL cannot be disputed, however, and this represents one of the most important considerations when analysing the troubles experienced by former NFL clubs within this environment.

⁶² Alegi, *Laduma!*, 142. Alegi states, however, that live broadcasts of football matches in South Africa only commenced in October 1981. This is incorrect since there were already such broadcasts in the years leading up to this date. For example, with the arrival of integrated football in 1978 SABC-TV's initial agreement with the NPSL dictated that any matches screened live would have to feature at least one white team. See "NPSL must take a stand," *Post*, May 11, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. The latter article refers to a live match between Arcadia Shepherds and Orlando Pirates in 1979. The significance of the October 1981 date relates to the fact that this month saw the first live broadcast conducted from Soweto – an important distinction. The match in question was contested between Kaizer Chiefs and Witbank Black Aces at the Orlando Stadium on 31 October. See Gleeson, "History," 63.

⁶³ Ian Reid, "Will it become a spoil-sport?" *Rand Daily Mail*, March 26, 1976, 15.

⁶⁴ "Why SA TV sets cost so much," *Rand Daily Mail*, March 30, 1976, 20.

⁶⁵ Gleeson, "History," 42.

Despite a positive outlook from some team chairmen – most notably Rex Evans of Highlands Park – the decrease in white spectators was never reversed. In October 1983 the veteran football writer, Vernon Woods, summarised the state of professional football at the time:

Blacks are streaming through the turnstiles, but primarily when a black team is involved. Inter-white-team matches draw peanuts. Rightly or wrongly white fans, if still interested in soccer, boycott the NPSL whilst white-run clubs fail to attract black support. But for black support, let's face it, SA professional soccer would die.⁶⁶

More recently the noted football journalist and commentator, Mark Gleeson, regarded the disappearance of white supporters as the most important challenge faced by former NFL clubs in the NPSL:

...I think the massive challenge was the complete desertion of their support...and which ultimately today means that there's none of [the former NFL clubs] around, except for Wits, who never really were an NFL club. So the massive erosion of their support...the fact that the white community basically deserted football, and has never really come back.⁶⁷

In his view the controversy surrounding the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions final between Hellenic and Kaizer Chiefs represents “the pivotal point” leading up to this process, since it demonstrated the potentially volatile nature of mixed football.⁶⁸ The aforementioned analysis of the decrease in white spectators at NPSL matches provides important context for events which led to the disappearance of former NFL clubs over time. An erosion of their respective white support bases not only represented a direct financial challenge in terms of gate revenue, but also rendered these clubs as weak propositions to potential sponsors or new owners – as will be demonstrated below.

Winning on the Field but Losing in the Boardroom

The aforementioned power shift to the NPSL prior to and during the course of the first few seasons of integrated professional football masked notable difficulties faced by clubs at operational level – irrespective of their background.⁶⁹ It might be argued that the decision by

⁶⁶ Vernon Woods, “Whites’ tragedy is of their own making,” *Frontline*, October 31, 1983, 26.

⁶⁷ Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015. Gleeson’s reference to Wits University “never really” having been an NFL club relates to the fact that the team first gained promotion to the NFL’s first division in 1976 – in other words it was never part of the NFL’s traditional elite dating back to 1959.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ In June 1979 the *Rand Daily Mail* carried an insightful piece on what it described as the death of professional football in Lenasia, with specific reference to former FPL teams, Bluebells and Johannesburg City (formerly Swaraj), which had defected to the NPSL for the 1979 season. These teams were not accepted into the top

some former NFL clubs to join the NPSL (as opposed to the FPL) at the onset of integrated football in 1978 proved to be the optimal move from the limited options available, particularly given the defections from the FPL to the NPSL at the end of that season.⁷⁰ However, while sponsorship money streamed to the NPSL and placed the league on a firm financial footing, this was not necessarily the case for the clubs themselves. This was particularly true in the case of the former NFL teams.

In reality the NPSL was an unbalanced league with a wide disparity between its constituent clubs – not only in terms of on-field quality, but also with regard to finance and support. This was especially true during the first season of integrated professional football in 1978 when a bloated first division contained no fewer than 24 teams. The reason for this unsustainably high number was largely due to the influx of the former NFL teams that season, thereby necessitating a drastic culling of teams the following year. The latter process already left one former NFL team by the wayside as Germiston Callies was demoted to the second tier despite finishing in the top half of the 1978 league table.

The gulf in quality between certain NPSL teams was clearly evident during the 1978 season which saw a number of one-sided scores being produced. Highlands Park, for example, thrashed Moroka Lions 12–1, while Arcadia Shepherds dealt 12–0 and 10–0 defeats to Mangaung United and Pilkington United Brothers respectively.⁷¹ *South African Soccer* reported at season's end that the "uneven competition of the enlarged NPSL was clearly shown by the fact that some teams received rugby scores".⁷² The fact that former NFL teams were producing many of these one-sided victories was indicative of their general dominance on the field of play during the early years of integrated professional football. In this regard Lusitano won the 1978 league title – a year in which the top three places were occupied by former NFL teams.⁷³ During the ensuing years league titles were also claimed by Highlands Park (1980) and Durban City (1982 and 1983). The only team capable of breaking the stranglehold of former NFL teams on the upper reaches of the league table was Kaizer Chiefs – the most popular team in South Africa. Chiefs in fact proved to be the most consistent team in the integrated NPSL, only once finishing outside the top three positions

division and consequently had to play in the second tier where attendance were dreadfully low (in one match the players outnumbered the spectators). Bluebells was reported to be in "dire financial straits", with a highest attendance of 468 spectators at the opening match of the season. See Ameen Akhalwaya, "Lenasia's lost passion," *Rand Daily Mail*, June 11, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁷⁰ It has to be remembered that the decision making of clubs was influenced by a number of factors, particularly their existing status at the time. Smaller clubs – such as Roodepoort Guild – would have had very little chance of being accepted into the NPSL's top tier (given the limited spaces available) and consequently gambled on first division football in the FPL. The choice was therefore not a simple matter of selecting one league over the other.

⁷¹ "FPL & NPSL Castle Cup Leagues," *South African Soccer*, July, 1978, 34.

⁷² "Castle Cup Leagues," *South African Soccer*, January, 1979, 9.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

during the period 1978-1984.⁷⁴ The rest of the traditional NPSL teams struggled to match the performances of former NFL teams, however, as Table 7.2 demonstrates.

NPSL Consistency Index: 1978-1982		
Rank	Club	Avg Finish
1	Kaizer Chiefs	2.2
2	Highlands Park (former NFL)	3.0
3	Arcadia Shepherds (former NFL)	4.0
4	Wits University (former NFL)	5.0
5	Hellenic (former NFL)	5.3
6	Durban City (former NFL)	6.5
7	Orlando Pirates	7.0
8	Dynamos	7.5
9	Witbank Black Aces	7.8
10	Moroka Swallows	9.0

Table 7.2 – Top ten most consistent teams in the NPSL: 1978–82.⁷⁵

Apart from Kaizer Chiefs establishing itself as one of the elite teams within integrated professional football, a core group of former NFL teams produced consistently strong league finishes during the initial years of the integrated league.⁷⁶ An in-depth analysis regarding the relative strengths of former (white) NFL teams compared to traditional (black) NPSL teams lies beyond the scope of this study, but the most likely factors can be proposed with relative ease. These could include – but would not necessarily be limited to – long standing access to superior training facilities, superior coaching (particularly with regard to importing foreign coaches) as well as access to experienced professional players from the British lower leagues. Mark Gleeson refers to contrasting tactical approaches, while also proposing the existence, at least initially, of a “fear factor” from black teams in terms of going up against the NFL’s traditional elite:

I think because of the naivety of the tactical approach of the black teams, and their emphasis on entertainment, the fact that their football [until] that stage had been...attack-based, entertainment-based, shows and skill-based...playing against teams, [many of which were] technically not very

⁷⁴ League tables obtained from Hans Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”, last modified April 30, 2015, <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/zafchamp.html#national>.

⁷⁵ The table is compiled from league tables provided at Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”. It denotes the average finishing position of teams on the NPSL league table during the period 1978–82 – the first five years of integrated professional football. The table contains the ten most consistent teams ranked in order of best average position on the league table. The numbers for Hellenic, Durban City and Dynamos were calculated over a four-year period (1979–82) since these teams were not in the NPSL during the 1978 season.

⁷⁶ Wits University also won the 1978 Mainstay Cup, while Highlands Park finished as runners-up (to Kaizer Chiefs) in 1979. See Ian King and Hans Schöggel, “South Africa Cup Winners”, last modified December 18, 2014, <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/zafcuphist.html#npslov>.

good, but tactically quite sound, quite disciplined, a little bit fitter because of the facilities that they had, I think it's only natural that [the former NFL teams] dominated. And...I think there was also a confidence factor...⁷⁷

However, there was a distinct contrast between what NFL teams were experiencing on the field of play and what was happening in the boardroom. Joining the NPSL did not eradicate the financial pressures which had already accumulated during the final seasons of the NFL and in this regard Lusitano was a notable example. Outspoken club chairman, John da Canha, already referred to this aspect in July 1978 when he decried the distribution of gate revenue within the NPSL. In this regard a 16% deduction was applicable prior to the home team paying its own expenses such as ground rental, handling fees (for gate control and security) and other administrative costs.⁷⁸ Da Canha reportedly threatened to quit the NPSL and claimed that he could not “keep the club going under the present financial structure of the league”.⁷⁹

Part of Lusitano's financial predicament was in all likelihood created by the club itself. Having first obtained promotion to the NFL's first division after the 1972 season, the team never finished in the top half of the table during the years 1973–6, with a best result of ninth in 1974. In fact it narrowly avoided relegation in 1976 when a thirteenth place finish was obtained – one place above the relegation zone.⁸⁰ At the end of that season club chairman, Durval Marques – “a prestigious banker in the Portuguese community” – resigned and was succeeded by Da Canha, described as a “liquor tycoon” in the football press.⁸¹ The club duly went on a spending spree prior to the 1977 season in which it acquired a number of top players in an attempt to win (what turned out to be the final) NFL league title. At the beginning of that season Sy Lerman reported that “Lusitano brought a symbolic brass band to the Rand Stadium [on 18 February 1977] for their R50 000 team's inaugural game”.⁸²

The spending paid off in the short-term as the team finished second that year while claiming the prestigious Castle Cup trophy. This was followed by the NPSL league title in 1978. Reflecting on this period in the club's history some years later Lerman described Da Canha as “the man who transformed Lusitano from a colourful, enigmatic and volatile combination

⁷⁷ Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015. It has been argued that an element of fear was certainly applicable at the 1973 South African Games football tournament.

⁷⁸ John Dunn, “Lusitano threat to quit NPSL,” *Sunday Times*, July 2, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. The 16% deduction comprised the following components: 1% to a Development Fund, 2% to the Travel Fund, 5% to the NPSL and 8% to SANFA (the umbrella body headed up by George Thabe).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

⁸¹ Sy Lerman, “Lusitano's Durval Marques quits,” *Rand Daily Mail*, October 5, 1976, 28 and Sy Lerman, “Talking Soccer,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1985, 19.

⁸² Sy Lerman, “Gallant Callies hold out,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 19, 1977, 12.

in the old NFL to league and cup holders in successive years”.⁸³ However, the trade-off to this strategy was that the club was saddled with a large wage bill within the uncertain environment of the NPSL, which came with a drop-off in white attendances. This model proved unsustainable and as a result Lusitano disappeared from prominence as quickly as it had arrived. The club finished fourteenth in 1979, eleventh in 1980⁸⁴ and sixteenth in 1981 – the latter result leading to relegation. The team never returned to the top tier of professional football.⁸⁵ Da Canha remained as a prominent personality within professional football, however, as he was later elected as NPSL treasurer in 1983.⁸⁶

The case of Lusitano serves as a reminder regarding the potential impact – positive or negative – of club chairmen and owners on the fortunes of their respective teams. While clubs were subject to the broader forces impacting professional football in general, it should be remembered that chairmen and owners could significantly alter the trajectory of clubs through investment into the first team, for instance. However, they also had the potential to overplay their hand, with Lusitano representing one of the best examples of these two extremes within a short period of time – hence the team’s supernova-like fall from prominence in the early 1980s. It is perhaps no coincidence that white football’s two most successful teams, Highlands Park and Durban City, were characterised by stable, yet contrasting, leadership throughout their histories.

While Lusitano represents a somewhat unique example in terms of suffering relegation a mere three years after claiming the league title, they were certainly not the only former NFL team struggling financially. The *Sunday Times* reported in July 1978 that even “mighty Highlands Park have admitted their distress by offering star striker Bobby Viljoen for sale or loan in order to try and cut down the wage bill”.⁸⁷ A year later Rex Evans commented that the biggest problem with mixed football was “the financial position of the NPSL first division clubs”. In his view there were “too many matches not drawing sufficient spectators; and the big matches succeeding in this aspect was not sufficient compensation. Consequently most of the clubs [were] not making profits”.⁸⁸ These views were echoed by Durban City’s Norman Elliott a month later when he renewed his call for a single league consisting of only twelve to

⁸³ Sy Lerman, “Talking Soccer,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1985, 19.

⁸⁴ In September 1980 the Lusitano players threatened to go on strike as a result of outstanding wages – an indication of the club’s financial predicament by this point. See Gleeson, “History,” 56.

⁸⁵ Schöggli et al., “South Africa Champions”. This precipitous drop-off in performance after 1978 is the reason why Lusitano is not listed in Table 7.2. According to the latter it would have ranked twelfth in consistency during the period under observation.

⁸⁶ Gleeson, “History,” 70.

⁸⁷ John Dunn, “Lusitano threat to quit NPSL,” *Sunday Times*, July 2, 1978, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁸⁸ “Otto Krause vra uit... waarom blankes wegbly van gemengde sokker [Otto Krause asks...why whites are staying away from mixed football],” *Die Vaderland*, August 10, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings. Quotes translated from Afrikaans.

fourteen teams to be formed. He claimed that the 1979 season “had left him R60 000 out of pocket, and that he could not face the same sort of loss [in 1980]. It is a question of economics,” he said.⁸⁹

The fact that only a handful of teams – such as Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates – were capable of drawing large crowds impacted the league at an operational level. Proceeds from gate takings were split 50-50 between the home team and their opponents for each individual match.⁹⁰ This meant that teams lacking support were desperate to take full advantage of matches against the well supported clubs in order to maximise their share of the gate revenue. In this regard Ron Paterson⁹¹ opined in *South African Soccer* that whenever “one of the better known white [clubs] play [against Kaizer Chiefs] at home, they switch the game to the Rand Stadium, not I imagine as they would like you to believe, in the interest of safety – but rather with an eye towards the gate receipts...”.⁹² He described the NPSL management’s hand in allowing these arrangements as “exploitation of the African by the African” and also decried the switching of venues as “making a mockery of the whole league”.⁹³

A further indication of the unbalanced nature of attendances can be gleaned from minutes of a meeting of the Arcadia Shepherds directors in September 1978. During a discussion regarding finance it was stated that if the club “could get R24 000 from the Orlando Pirates, [Kaizer] Chiefs and Lusitano games [it] could reach [its] end-of-season gate target of R33 200”.⁹⁴ This is particularly significant since it shows that the Pretoria-based club was hoping to accrue approximately 70% of its gate revenue from only three fixtures that season. This state of affairs placed clubs on a precarious financial footing since there was such a high reliance on only a handful of fixtures.⁹⁵ The situation was exacerbated by falling attendance as well as the aforementioned deductions from gate income channelled towards SANFA and the NPSL.

⁸⁹ Dave Beattie, “Unite – or there is no future – Elliott,” *Star*, September 20, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

⁹⁰ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, May 7, 1979, 1, in Papers of the Football Association of South Africa, 1892–1992, Historical Papers Research Archive, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa (hereafter cited as FASA papers). The gate takings were split between clubs after the aforementioned 16% deduction of fees due to the NPSL and SANFA was made.

⁹¹ Paterson was one of the founders of the NFL through his role as an official at the Benoni United club at the time of the league’s inauguration in 1959. See Vivian Granger, *The World Game Comes To South Africa* (Cape Town: Howard Timmins, 1961), 32.

⁹² Ron Paterson, “The Gullible Age,” *South African Soccer*, October, 1978, 25.

⁹³ *Ibid.* This might have been true in a utopian sense, since ideally all teams in a given league should play their home matches at their respective venues in order to ensure complete fairness. Such a view ignored the realities of the integrated NPSL, however, where economic and security factors were legitimate concerns for clubs and administrators.

⁹⁴ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, September 14, 1978, 1, FASA papers.

⁹⁵ Financial returns could therefore potentially have been seriously affected if any of these fixtures produced a turnout lower than expected (as a result of inclement weather for example).

Another aspect which complicated matters for former NFL clubs related to the way they compensated their players. In this regard players earned their remuneration via contracts guaranteeing monthly salaries and bonuses. This was a different system to that utilised by the majority of traditional NPSL clubs whereby players were paid out of the club's share of gate takings.⁹⁶ The latter model decreased the risk for the club since lower gate revenue simply meant lower payments to players, whereas former NFL clubs would be committed to a set monthly wage bill irrespective of gate revenue. During the course of 1979 Highlands Park manager, Joe Frickleton, bemoaned the situation:

The crowds just aren't there [anymore]. A game between Highlands and Lusitano, which always drew 10 000 people, attracted 4 000 this season. And that is a local derby. Take Highlands [versus] African Wanderers or AmaZulu and you are talking peanuts. There is no ways we can pay the wage bill off these games.⁹⁷

These struggles regarding club administration were initially masked by the on-field performances of former NFL teams in the NPSL. In fact strong showings in the league and cup competitions brought much-needed prize money to teams and this would have relieved at least some of the financial pressure in the short-term. In this regard the 1979 season represents a good example. The R200,000 South African Breweries sponsorship allocated to the NPSL made provision for prize money to be paid to the top six teams in the league, with the champions receiving R11,500 and the runners-up R8,000 respectively.⁹⁸ Arcadia claimed the latter prize which in the context of the season represented the equivalent of gate income from almost nine matches (since the club reported in August that it was averaging "R900 a game" that season).⁹⁹ Highlands Park claimed an additional R12,000 for reaching the final of the 1979 Mainstay Cup which – coupled with R6,000 for finishing third in the league – represented a much needed source of additional income.¹⁰⁰

However, from the mid-1980s onwards former NFL teams found it increasingly difficult to obtain these valuable cash injections as their on-field performances dropped off markedly. By that time black clubs¹⁰¹ had closed whatever gap had existed between them and former

⁹⁶ John Dunn, "It's a tragedy!" *Soccer – Local & International*, September, 1979, 14.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ "R200 000 for NPSL," *South African Soccer*, March, 1979, 19.

⁹⁹ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, August 8, 1979, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, September 5, 1978, 2, FASA papers and "R200 000 for NPSL," *South African Soccer*, March, 1979, 19.

¹⁰¹ The labelling of NPSL clubs as either "black" or "white" is something which continued in the media throughout the league's history. Not only was this a reference to the origin of the individual teams – i.e. either being a traditional (black) NPSL member club or formerly from the (white) NFL – but it was also an indication of the

NFL teams during the early years of the integrated league. Figure 7.1 is testament to this trend. During the period 1978–84 there were at least three former NFL teams within the top five places on the league table each season. Four of the seven league titles contested during that span were also claimed by former NFL clubs. This scenario was reversed in subsequent years. During the period 1985–90 only one former NFL team won a league title (Rangers in 1986) while the top five places were dominated by traditional (black) NPSL clubs. In the final season prior to unity (1990) not a single former NFL club finished in the top five league positions – the first time this occurred. The reasons behind the struggles of former NFL clubs are numerous and will be further expanded upon below. At this point it is important to note that on-field struggles – which became more pronounced as the decade wore on – compounded the financial predicament felt by many of these teams since it had a negative impact on one of the few viable sources of income, namely prize money.

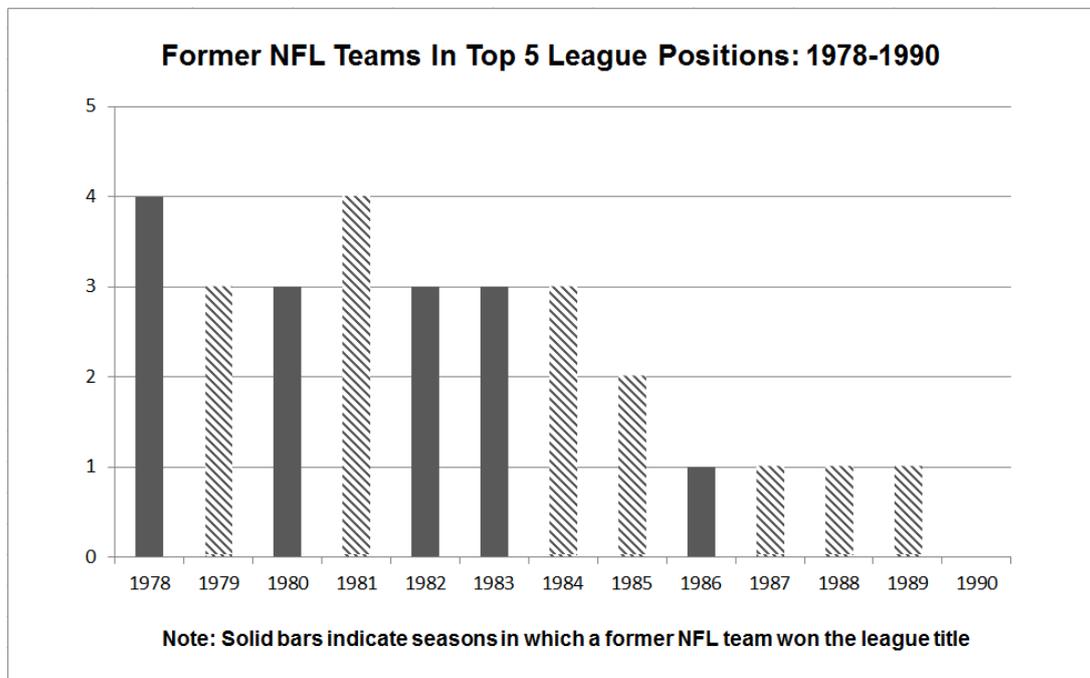


Figure 7.1 – Performance of former NFL teams in the NPSL/NSL: 1978–90.¹⁰²

It can be argued that this shift in on-field results was partially the result of developments in the realm of club sponsorship. In this regard the drawing power of the most popular black clubs certainly did not escape the attention of potential sponsors, leading to a dramatic increase in the financial resources of these teams. In 1980 Kaizer Chiefs obtained the

relative lack of integration within teams. Former NFL clubs, for example, retained their largely white identities in terms of squad composition. One team which fell outside this simplistic categorisation was former FPL club, Dynamos, which was described as the only truly mixed team in the league during the early years of integrated professional football. See John Dunn, "It's a tragedy!" *Soccer – Local & International*, September, 1979, 14. Some trends with regard to player movement will be explored later.

¹⁰² Compiled from Schöggli et al., "South Africa Champions".

biggest club sponsorship in South African football history when a five-year agreement constituting a minimum value of R350,000 was signed with the Premier Milling Company, manufacturers of Iwisa maize meal.¹⁰³ Later that same year their arch-rivals, Orlando Pirates, concluded a three-year R160,000 agreement with Fruitree (a fruit juice brand).¹⁰⁴ The third Soweto-based giant, Moroka Swallows, followed suit a few years later when a five-year R450,000 agreement was reached with Mobil Oil in 1986.¹⁰⁵

These amounts dwarfed the resources of most former NFL clubs. As an illustration Arcadia's sponsorship with Pepsi was renewed for one year after the 1979 season to the value of R25,000¹⁰⁶ – approximately 35% of the annual R70,000 value of the Chiefs sponsorship with Iwisa. Club chairman, Saul Sacks, summarised the prevailing attitude of sponsors in his report on the 1979 season:

Our two-year sponsorship contract with Pepsi Cola Africa expired at the end of 1979. Like many other sponsors, Pepsi became a little disenchanted with the happenings in football, and were reluctant to renew their association with us. After lengthy consideration, they finally agreed to sponsor us for a further year on the same terms and conditions as [1979]. Unless the image of football improves this year, I doubt whether Pepsi or any other sponsor will be interested in getting involved with us.¹⁰⁷

Similar difficulties were experienced by Wits University which lost its sponsorship from Holiday Inns at the end of the 1981 season. The agreement was not renewed for 1982, thereby bringing an end to a six-year relationship.¹⁰⁸ As Alegi aptly points out, some of these “less popular teams” readily sold their club naming rights to corporate sponsors as a means to survive. Arcadia played as “Arcadia Pepsi” and later became “Arcadia Fluoride”, while the most notable example was Highlands Park's agreement with Dion Discount Centres¹⁰⁹ – forged for a five-year term in 1978.¹¹⁰ The latter agreement was taken to an extreme when the club became known simply as “Dion FC” in 1980¹¹¹ – a move which came in for notable criticism in the football press.¹¹² The club later reverted to “Dion Highlands”.

¹⁰³ Gleeson, “History,” 52, as cited in Alegi, *Laduma!*, 143.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

¹⁰⁶ Saul Sacks, *Arcadia Shepherds End of Season Report 1979*, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Gleeson, “History,” 62. The latter source lists the sponsorship as having been R25,000 for the year, whereas *Goal* (the official organ of SANFA and the NPSL) lists it as R35,000. See “Holiday Inns lavish gifts on Wits,” *Goal*, June 5, 1981, 1.

¹⁰⁹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 143. Former FPL team, Dynamos, was also at various stages known as “Casio Dynamos”, “Sanyo Dynamos” and “Jade East Dynamos”.

¹¹⁰ Rex Evans, e-mail message to author, August 26, 2015. The deal commenced in the 1979 season.

¹¹¹ Rex Evans, Letter to Sports Editor of Rand Daily Mail, September 17, 1980, in Julian Turner, *The History of South African Football 1955–1985: Segregation to Integration, Part 1*, DVD-ROM Disc 2, 2012.

¹¹² Sy Lerman, “Talking Soccer,” *South African Soccer*, May, 1980, 9.

Highlands Park's agreement with Dion stores represents a rare example of a former NFL club remaining competitive in the sponsorship market as it carried an approximate financial value of R50,000 per year.¹¹³ This was in the same range as the aforementioned Orlando Pirates agreement with Fruitree. It can be argued that Highlands Park's status as the premier team within white professional football historically – particularly with regard to on-field success – made it a more attractive proposition to potential sponsors. In January 1983 Durban City – the other historically dominant power within the NFL¹¹⁴ – secured a two-year R100,000 sponsorship from Sanyo.¹¹⁵ This came on the back of winning the NPSL league title in 1982 and undoubtedly laid the foundation for the team repeating this result in 1983.¹¹⁶ However, two years later in July 1985 it was reported that the club was operating without a sponsor and that “for the past three years City [had] battled with finances”.¹¹⁷

The battle for sponsorship highlights the plight of former NFL teams within the NPSL – something which was initially masked by strong on-field performances. However, this was not the case for all teams and in this regard 1979 saw two notable casualties. Germiston Callies was of course already controversially demoted at the start of the 1979 season, with chairman, Abe Ephron, throwing in the towel the following year. Cape Town City, on the other hand, was accepted into the top tier and managed to play out its league programme, producing a credible seventh place finish on the table.¹¹⁸ But this was not enough to sustain the club further as it was already placed into provisional liquidation on 9 October 1979 – a month before the end of the season.¹¹⁹ At the conclusion of the latter Cape Town City was disbanded, thereby leaving Hellenic as the only Cape Town-based former NFL club playing in the NPSL. Developments such as these have to be considered in the context of the increasing might of the popular black clubs – initially in terms of finance, but ultimately in terms of playing strength as well. This drastically altered the landscape of South African professional football – a trend that can also be considered through the window of player movement.

¹¹³ Rex Evans, e-mail message to author, August 26, 2015. Prior to the agreement with Dion stores the club was sponsored by Teljoy (a commercial supplier of television sets), followed by Beechies (a brand of chewing gum). Both deals averaged in the region of R30,000 per year.

¹¹⁴ Durban City won four NFL league titles, compared to the eight by Highlands Park. Only one other team managed to win multiple league titles, namely Cape Town City with two.

¹¹⁵ Gleeson, “History,” 68. The club would receive R40,000 in 1983 and R60,000 in 1984.

¹¹⁶ Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

¹¹⁷ Butch Webster, “Star Writer Butch Webster,” *South African Soccer*, July, 1985, 5.

¹¹⁸ Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

¹¹⁹ Gleeson, “History,” 50.

Player Movement

Throughout the history of the integrated NPSL (and NSL later) the media continued to refer to the majority of clubs as either “black” or “white” based on the racial makeup of their respective squads. This was partly the result of a relative lack of integration – at least not to the point where the racial makeup of clubs prior to 1978 was altered beyond recognition.¹²⁰ This was especially true in the case of former NFL teams. Figure 7.2 and Figure 7.3 are indicative of this. The fact that integrated professional football – as sanctioned by government – arrived in 1978 did not result in an immediate mass cross-over of players from different race groups between the various clubs. In this regard statistics provided to Piet Koornhof in August 1978 indicated that a total of 24 blacks had moved to white football clubs up to that point during the year, while six whites had moved to clubs from the race groups other than white.¹²¹

¹²⁰ One exception to this was the Pretoria Callies club (previously known as Bantu Callies) based in Atteridgeville, a township west of Pretoria. Towards the latter part of 1977 the club appointed Englishman Trevor McMillan – who had been playing in South Africa – as coach and the latter proceeded to sign five white players in November that year with an eye on the 1978 season. This made headlines in Pretoria, viewed as the citadel of apartheid. Peter Raath’s summary of this period in the club’s history contains some colourful quotes and anecdotes relating to this episode, including McMillan stating that he was phoned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pik Botha, regarding the acquisition of the white players. McMillan stated in a 2010 article that Botha congratulated him for starting “a revolution in South African football”. See Peter Raath, *Soccer Through the Years, 1862–2002* (Cape Town: Peter Raath, 2002), 193–4, and “‘Would South Africa be staging the World Cup if I hadn’t done what I did? I can’t answer that,’” *Hull Daily Mail*, June 11, 2010, <http://www.hulldailymail.co.uk/South-Africa-staging-World-Cup-hadn-t-did-t-answer/story-11958758-detail/story.html>. Pretoria Callies was relegated from the NPSL’s top tier after the 1980 season and made a brief appearance in the NSL for two seasons in 1985 and 1986 before being relegated again.

¹²¹ Beyers Hoek, *Vermenging van Sportlui: Statistiek 1978* [Mixing of Sportspeople: Statistics 1978], August 7, 1978, file PV476/1/34/37/1, Koornhof papers. The figures provided were further calculated as percentages of overall participation in the various sport codes. For football the total participation figures included amateur players, but it can reasonably be speculated that the cross-over of players occurred almost exclusively at professional level since amateur football was still being administered on a segregated basis by racially defined controlling bodies such as SANFA and FASA. While the accuracy of these figures cannot be verified the results support the conclusions drawn from analysing team photographs published in the football press, namely that racial mixing within teams was limited.



Figure 7.2 – Former NFL teams, clockwise: Lusitano (1978), Cape Town City (1979), Highlands Park (1980) and Arcadia Shepherds (1981).¹²²



Figure 7.3 – Former NFL teams, clockwise: Hellenic (1983), Wits University (1983), Durban City (1985) and Rangers (1987).¹²³

¹²² Compiled from photos contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 2, 2012.

¹²³ Compiled from photos contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 2, 2012.

In the coming years, however, a notable number of white players did sign on for black clubs. The playing career of Phil Venter is an oft-cited example since the former Germiston Callies defender (in the NFL) became the first white player to ply his trade for all three of the so-called Soweto giants, namely Orlando Pirates, Moroka Swallows and Kaizer Chiefs.¹²⁴ A glance at the team photos of Chiefs during the 1980s also confirms a fair sprinkling of whites in the first team.¹²⁵ Figure 7.4 serves as an example. From a purely numerical standpoint it can be argued that the movement of white players to black clubs was partly a logical outflow from the disappearance of former NFL clubs over time. In this regard Abdul Bhamjee – the former public relations officer of the non-racial FPL, who later took up the same role within the NPSL – stated early in 1985 that “almost 40% of the first division players in the NPSL were white”.¹²⁶ It is therefore instructive to note that during the 1984 season 28% (five out of eighteen) of the first division clubs were formerly from the NFL. The fact that this was a smaller proportion than the total number of white players in the league was indicative of an inevitable overflow of some of these players to black teams. In this regard Bhamjee also noted that “it was particularly gratifying in our non-racial set-up to see three and more whites regularly included in teams like Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates”.¹²⁷



Figure 7.4 – Kaizer Chiefs first team (1984).¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 181. Venter signed for Orlando Pirates in 1978. After the 1977 season he “didn’t see any future for white football” and decided to join a black club since the alternative of playing amateur football was not appealing either. From Phil Venter, personal interview with the author, Boksburg, February 10, 2015 (as a note the author and Venter are not related).

¹²⁵ Sekola Sello, *Chiefs, 21 glorious years: the official history of SA’s glamour football club* (Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers, 1991), 97–104. The 1984 first team photo contains three whites, for example.

¹²⁶ “Another record year for the NPSL,” *South African Soccer*, February, 1985, 24.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ From Sello, *Chiefs, 21 glorious years*, 100.

This phenomenon is worthy of further research in itself, but falls outside the scope of this study which is primarily concerned with the decline of the former NFL clubs as entities, as opposed to the careers of individual players. At this point it is worth reflecting on George Thabe's previously analysed fears regarding white clubs potentially purchasing the top black players to the detriment of established NPSL teams. Thabe expressed these fears before the arrival of integrated professional football. In fact Tony Stathakis – the player at the centre of a contract controversy between Highlands Park and Dynamos after the 1977 season – claimed in his court affidavit that it had been agreed that white clubs would not be allowed to approach top black players in the NPSL, but that black clubs would be entitled to attract top white players. He stated that this “was for the purpose of attempting to equalise the strength of the teams in the NPSL”.¹²⁹ Recently Rex Evans – chairman of Highlands Park at the time – stated unequivocally that “this issue was never discussed”, which directly contradicts the testimony of Stathakis.¹³⁰

If it is assumed that such an agreement indeed did not exist (even informally), it poses the question as to why former NFL teams appear to have obtained relatively few black players once integrated professional football arrived in 1978. It is particularly noteworthy that two of the NPSL's brightest stars, Jomo Sono and Patrick “Ace” Ntsoelengoe,¹³¹ never played for former NFL teams in the integrated NPSL – this after Durban City chairman, Normal Elliott, claimed back in 1974 that he would “write out a R20 000 cheque to Orlando Pirates for Sono” immediately if he had permission to play him. Elliott also stated confidently that Sono was “worth five times that amount on the international market”.¹³² With the benefit of historical hindsight it is possible to argue that Thabe's fear regarding an exodus of black talent to former NFL clubs was in all likelihood unwarranted – primarily as a result of the financial struggles experienced by these clubs.

It is also important to note that a concomitant development saw a number of the very best black (and white) players begin to sign contracts with clubs in the North American Soccer League (NASL)¹³³ from the mid-1970s onwards.¹³⁴ This meant that these players were not

¹²⁹ Errol Symons, “Soccer ace's shock ‘go easy’ claim,” *Rand Daily Mail*, February 2, 1978, 1.

¹³⁰ Rex Evans, e-mail message to author, July 14, 2015. Mark Gleeson also believes that there was never such an agreement regarding player acquisitions. Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015.

¹³¹ As a point of reference these two players scored all five the goals in the first integrated South African team's 5–0 win over the Argentine Stars XI in 1976.

¹³² Sy Lerman, “Elliott: Sono is worth R20 000,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 19, 1974, 32. Sono turned 24 in 1979, the year that Durban City joined the NPSL. He was therefore still in his prime five years after Elliott's original statement.

¹³³ The NASL spanned the period 1968 to 1984 and represented an attempt to establish professional football (soccer) in the United States of America. It gained particular prominence in 1975 when the New York Cosmos became the league's glamour club by signing Brazilian superstar Pelé – by then at the back end of his career – to

available for the majority of the South African football season, leaving during the early part of the year and only returning during the latter stages of each league campaign once the NASL fixtures had concluded. Sono himself amassed notable wealth during his six-year career in the NASL.¹³⁵ In 1980 he was quoted regarding the annual player exodus to the United States: “Players are getting a raw deal and will never be able to make a living out of soccer in South Africa, at least not while the present state of affairs continues. Most of the players seek greener pastures overseas because they know they can get a better deal over there.”¹³⁶

According to Toy Mostert, an agent for many of the NASL moves, players’ wages were upgraded “by 400%” through these transfers which also netted “attractive signing fees” for both the player and his South African club.¹³⁷ Other prominent black players that played in the NASL during this period were Ntsoelengoe (1973–84), Webster Lichaba (1979–81), Andries Maseko (1978–80) and Kenneth Mokgojoa (1978–81).¹³⁸ Local clubs (black or white) clearly could not compete with these figures which meant that during the first few years of the integrated NPSL a number of star players were unavailable for the majority of each season. In fact Arcadia Shepherds serves as an example of a club that benefitted from the much needed revenue obtained by letting one of its own stars, Vincent Julius, sign for the San Diego Sockers in the NASL at the end of 1979. The club was set to “net R9 000” from the transfer.¹³⁹ Julius was still at the top of his game by that time, having been the

a three-year contract. The Cosmos also obtained the services of other fading stars such as Carlos Alberto (Brazil), Franz Beckenbauer (Germany), Giorgio Chinaglia (Italy) and Johan Neeskens (Netherlands). Other franchises followed suit by importing the likes of George Best, Johan Cruyff, Gerd Müller, Eusébio and Gordon Banks. See David Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Football* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 529–31. For a colourful documentary on the Cosmos phenomenon in particular, see *Once In A Lifetime: The Extraordinary Story Of The New York Cosmos*, DVD, directed by Paul Crowder and John Dower (GreeneStreet Films, 2006). Incidentally the team was coached for a time by a South African, Eddie Firmani, who had had a successful playing career in Britain and Italy during the 1950s and 1960s.

¹³⁴ An earlier pioneer was Kaizer Motaung who played for the Atlanta Chiefs (1968–71) and Denver Dynamos (1974–5). Motaung founded his own team in South Africa, known initially as the Kaizer XI, in 1970. He renamed it “Kaizer Chiefs” in 1971 – after his first American team. See Alegi, *Laduma!*, 138, and Mark Gleeson, “American soccer shapes South African game,” *Soccer America*, June 5, 2000, 13, <http://library.la84.org/SportsLibrary/SoccerAmerica/2000/sa1456k.pdf>

¹³⁵ He played for the very same New York Cosmos team in 1977, followed by stints at the Colorado Caribous (1978), Atlanta Chiefs (1979) and Toronto Blizzard (1980–2). See Mark Gleeson, “American soccer shapes South African game,” *Soccer America*, June 5, 2000, 13, <http://library.la84.org/SportsLibrary/SoccerAmerica/2000/sa1456k.pdf>

¹³⁶ “Where does all the money go?” *South African Soccer*, May, 1980, 8.

¹³⁷ Sy Lerman, “Talking Soccer,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1980, 21.

¹³⁸ For a full list of South African players that played in the NASL see Gleeson, “American soccer shapes South African game,” 13. Top white players also made the journey across the Atlantic, the likes of which included the brothers Steve, Geoff and Roy Wegerle, as well as David Byrne, Mike Connell, Andrew Parkinson, Neill Roberts and Derek Smethurst. This also resulted in some of the former NFL teams being deprived of their own star players – Arcadia Shepherds being a notable example with regards to the Wegerle brothers.

¹³⁹ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, November 14, 1979, 1, FASA papers.

club's leading scorer for three successive years and been named Arcadia's "Footballer of the Year" in 1979.¹⁴⁰

Mark Gleeson proposes the existence of an additional dimension when considering the relative lack of movement of black players to former NFL clubs, namely the social realities prevalent in South Africa at the time:

...[When] you bought a black player, you didn't really buy a black player – because although he came with the potential of winning you football games there was a lot of other potential difficulties around his integration with the rest of the team *et cetera, et cetera*. That was certainly the time where there was no...social mingling and a lot of those white football teams were sort of a gang of buddies and a lot of their...success [relied] on the passion they brought to the game, the sort of fighting spirit for each other – that was...part of their strength and to almost potentially soil it with an uncomfortable social situation I think was not an attraction for club owners...It doesn't make logical sense today but in the prevailing atmosphere of the time it was...uncomfortable. Black players were uncomfortable to move to white teams, I think whites were uncomfortable to have blacks...within the team dynamic...¹⁴¹

In this regard it can be argued that a black player had to be of star quality in order to make him attractive to former NFL teams, otherwise the potential complications regarding integration into the team would have acted as a possible counterweight to his playing ability. Yet as has been demonstrated a number of the star players were unavailable on account of their commitments in the NASL, and when coupled with the financial strain under which former NFL clubs operated it explains – at least partially – why these clubs would have found it difficult to invest large sums of money towards acquiring the best available black players via the transfer market. It is also worth noting that Jerry Sadike, who was born and bred in Orlando East and played for Highlands Park during the period 1978–81, was at times labelled as a "sell-out" by certain sections of black supporters.¹⁴² Kenneth Mokgojoa, another Highlands Park player, also reported being booed by black supporters who felt that he was at "a wrong club".¹⁴³ While it is difficult to ascertain how widespread this practice was, these two examples serve to illustrate some of the social realities that black players were potentially faced with when moving to former NFL clubs.

¹⁴⁰ "Vincent Julius heads for the big time," *Soccer – Local & International*, January, 1980, 21.

¹⁴¹ Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015.

¹⁴² Sekola Sello, "The Highlands striker who doesn't live in the suburbs," no date, scanned press cutting contained in Turner, *The History of South African Football*, Disc 4, 2012.

¹⁴³ "Kenneth 'The Horse' Mokgojoa," *Sharpshoot Soccer Mirror*, March, 1983, 29.

Progression of South African Transfer Fee Record: 1966-1990				
Season	Player	Seller	Buyer	Fee
1966	Bobby Chalmers	Durban City	Durban United	R 20 000
1982	Thomas Hlongwane	Arcadia Shepherds	Moroka Swallows	R 22 000
1983	Andries Maseko *	Moroka Swallows	Benoni United	R 25 000
1984	Fetsi "Chippa" Molatedi *	Moroka Swallows	Kaizer Chiefs	R 35 000
1986	Mike Mangena	Bush Bucks	Mamelodi Sundowns	R 40 000
1986	John Salter	Arcadia Shepherds	Mamelodi Sundowns	R 40 000
1989	Ernest Chirwali	Bloemfontein Celtic	Mamelodi Sundowns	R 70 000
1989	Zane Moosa	Wits University	Mamelodi Sundowns	R 70 001
1989	Noel Cousins	Arcadia Shepherds	Moroka Swallows	R 110 000
	* Part of a swop deal			

Table 7.3 – Progression of South African transfer fee record.¹⁴⁴

Player movement also has to be viewed in the context of the rising financial might of the top black clubs. A summary of the progression of the South African transfer fee record for individual players – provided in Table 7.3 above – is insightful in this regard. While tracking the most expensive player purchases in South African history does not facilitate a broad generalisation regarding transfer trends – since these player moves constitute a small number of transactions done at the top end of the spectrum – there are some facets worth noting. The first of these is the fact that a former NFL club was never on the buyer's end of any of these transactions – again a testament to the rising financial clout of black teams. Secondly, it is revealing to find a club like Arcadia Shepherds being on the seller's end on multiple occasions during the 1980s – undoubtedly a strategy that helped it to survive under trying circumstances.

In fact chairman, Saul Sacks, indicated as much during an interview in 1988 when he stated that the club “always sold players when the financial needs arose”.¹⁴⁵ The off-loading of its prodigious goal scorer, Noel Cousins, to Moroka Swallows for a record fee in 1989 is an example of such a move. Other former NFL clubs also utilised profits from the transfer market as a means for survival. A prime example was Wits University. According to Ronnie Schloss, formerly the president and chairman of the club, Wits

...[in order] to survive had to sell a player every year to bring in additional income. That was basically the policy of the club, to balance its books – that

¹⁴⁴ Compiled from Gleeson, “History,” 65, 71, 77, 90, 92, 107, 108, and Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 287. Gleeson lists the fee for Chirwali as R150,000 (as opposed to R70,000), but states that the R70,001 fee paid for Zane Moosa shortly thereafter was indeed an attempt by Mamelodi Sundowns to break the previous record which they set for Chirwali. Amounts listed are not adjusted for inflation.

¹⁴⁵ “Club Spotlight: Arcadia,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1988, 8.

was always the greatest criticism of the club that they used to sell off their best players – but there was no other way of surviving in those days.¹⁴⁶

In this regard Wits developed a large junior section over the years and according to Schloss the intention was to have a “nursery” that would feed the professional team. He notes that “a lot of the players that came into the Premier League team at that stage came through the [club’s] youth development programme”.¹⁴⁷ It is argued here that this was a critical factor in ensuring the club’s survival throughout and beyond the period under consideration. Hellenic was another club which came in for criticism for perceived inactivity in the transfer market, at least from a purchasing perspective. *South African Soccer* opined in 1988:

Owner George Hadjidakis is a highly-successful businessman but one wonders if the Hellenic management have learned by now that local products alone, will not bring success. The foundation for success is there, but are the board of directors prepared to put their money on the table and delve into the transfer market for the first time in a number of years[?] ¹⁴⁸

This critical view undoubtedly did not take full cognisance of the financial forces at work in the league. Hellenic’s geographic positioning could possibly also have played a role in the club’s strategy. On the one hand the club’s excessive travel distances functioned as a financial burden, but on the other hand its isolated position in the Cape offered access to a large pool of amateur players in the region.¹⁴⁹ It would therefore have made sense to tap into the local amateur market as opposed to spending aggressively to bring in outsiders. Gleeson regards this as one of the reasons why Hellenic was able to survive while other former NFL clubs fell by the wayside.¹⁵⁰

Club-specific factors also played a role in creating difficult financial circumstances for some members of the league. Arcadia Shepherds was a notable example. In this regard the club was embroiled in a constant battle for survival that was largely the consequence of losing access to its traditional home venue, the Caledonian Stadium in Pretoria, from 1980 onwards. This development necessitates an analysis of another aspect which, it is argued, had a decisive impact on the fate of former NFL clubs in the NPSL, namely stadium dynamics.

¹⁴⁶ Ronnie Schloss, telephonic interview with the author, August 31, 2015.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ “Hellenic: Road To Nowhere,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1988, 16.

¹⁴⁹ During the period 1978–90 there was never more than two Cape Town-based professional clubs in the top tier of the NPSL/NSL. In fact on six occasions (1980–82, 1986–7, 1990) Hellenic was the only such club. This would have resulted in less competition for the signatures of local amateur players.

¹⁵⁰ Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015.

Stadium Dynamics

During the course of the 1983 season the NPSL contracted an external management consultancy to conduct an “initial operations review” of the league’s affairs.¹⁵¹ One of the identified problem areas revolved around ticket and gate controls. In this regard the report stated that during “the course of interviews held during this assignment, many comments were passed, at different levels of seniority, to our firm as regards the apparent weakness in the gate control system”. A key limitation in the latter related to the “high human involvement in selling and control over tickets and entry to grounds” – a situation that was “compounded by the fact that the majority of fixtures [had] ‘gate only’ sales”.¹⁵²

Two suggestions made in this regard were for the NPSL to extend the use of the Computicket pre-booking system, while also strengthening the controls over the current gate control system. Despite this the report conceded that its proposal “would not prevent the situation of the Cashier receiving cash and not issuing a ticket (and the gate controller allowing these ‘specially identified’ spectators into the grounds without paying)”.¹⁵³ It is impossible to quantify the extent to which this practice was prevalent in the NPSL, but it was certainly a matter of concern at a number of levels. Paul Winslow, sports sponsorship manager for South African Breweries at the time, commented in October 1979 that it was

imperative that the tightest gate and financial controls be devised and implemented at all venues. This is one of the most important aspects which should exercise the minds of the elected football administrators for the 1980 season.¹⁵⁴

This indicates that it was a pressing matter at that point. According to Derick Klugkist, one of the white players signed by Pretoria Callies late in 1977, the skimming of entrance money at matches by gate controllers eventually led to him and some of his teammates leaving the club. This was due to the fact that the Callies players were being paid partly out of the club’s gate income and consequently smaller gate takings resulted in smaller wages.¹⁵⁵ In a frank assessment Gleeson states that “the pilfering of money from the gates continues to this day, but it was rampant in the 70s, the 80s and the 90s”.¹⁵⁶ It should also be remembered that teams shared gate money equally in the NPSL and consequently both parties would have

¹⁵¹ The review was conducted by Pim Goldby Management Services. See “Management Summary,” *Operations Review of the National Professional Soccer League*, August 1983, file PC114/1/8/1, FANK papers.

¹⁵² *Operations Review of the National Professional Soccer League*, 18–9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

¹⁵⁴ “Professional Soccer signs of becoming a major industry,” *Soccer – Local & International*, October, 1979, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Derick Klugkist, telephonic interview with the author, July 22, 2015.

¹⁵⁶ Mark Gleeson, personal interview with the author, Cape Town, July 28, 2015.

missed out on revenue, irrespective of the match venue. In the context of this study this represents an operational issue pertaining to NPSL stadia which further added to the financial challenges facing clubs, including those formerly from the NFL.

Another important aspect that needs to be considered is the lack of access (by clubs) to certain football venues at various points in time. In this regard the Johannesburg City Council terminated professional football's lease pertaining to the use of the Rand Stadium in February 1980, meaning that NPSL matches could no longer be played there.¹⁵⁷ This was ostensibly done on account of violence that occurred during NPSL matches during the preceding season, although the likes of George Thabe and other football administrators saw the move as being "racially motivated".¹⁵⁸ Similar sentiments came to light the year before when the council first refused the use of the stadium by Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows – two teams with large black support bases – for the final of the NPSL's early season BP Cup competition.¹⁵⁹ On that occasion the council argued that the encounter "should be played in the townships both for the convenience of black [football] fans and for the maintenance of peace in white residential areas situated near the Rand Stadium".¹⁶⁰

The closure of the stadium to the NPSL therefore represented the culmination of a series of controversies surrounding its use and had a negative impact on some clubs, most notably Lusitano.¹⁶¹ The latter used the venue as a home ground and consequently had to move to the Driehoek Stadium in Germiston. This move deprived the club of "proper training facilities", according to chairman, John da Canha, who also described the closure of the Rand Stadium as "the turning point for the club".¹⁶² The following year, 1981, was Lusitano's last in the NPSL's top tier. Events during the course of that season are indicative of the club's struggles at that point. This included renaming the team "Inter United" in an effort to attract more supporters outside its traditional Portuguese support base.¹⁶³ This lasted only a

¹⁵⁷ Gleeson, "History," 51.

¹⁵⁸ Loraine Gordon, ed., *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1980* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1981), 589.

¹⁵⁹ "City council laughs at stadium ban," *Daily News*, March 9, 1979, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁶⁰ Loraine Gordon, ed., *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1979* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1980), 584–5. Towards the end of the year the council also dictated that the replay of the Mainstay Cup final (played on Tuesday 24 November between Kaizer Chiefs and Highlands Park) should kick off at mid-day in order to avoid peak hour traffic congestion. Again the accusation was made that the underlying reason behind this decision was to prevent black supporters from being in proximity of white residential areas at night. See Gordon, *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa: 1979*, 585.

¹⁶¹ Keeping in mind the undoubted conservative nature of the Johannesburg City Council it should be noted that its action in closing the Rand Stadium was not entirely without precedent. In June 1972 the council banned Orlando Pirates from using the Orlando Stadium in the wake of a fan riot during the derby encounter against Kaizer Chiefs. On that occasion the NPSL endorsed the council's decision. See Gleeson, "History," 8.

¹⁶² Bafana Shezi, "Bafana Shezi spells it out," *South African Soccer*, January, 1982, 28.

¹⁶³ Da Canha reportedly reckoned that "survival lay in integration" which led to the adoption of a new name "that would have an appeal to all races". Lusitano's supporters had a reputation for volatility which adversely affected the image of the club. In 1980, for example, the team was penalised six league points after one of its supporters

few months as the team soon reverted back to the name “Lusitano”. In August the club merged with Computer Stars – a second tier team owned by former Kaizer Chiefs star, Vusi “Computer” Lamola, who also became player-coach at that point. This was not enough to avoid the drop, however, as some established Lusitano players later quit the club amidst allegations of favouritism on the part of Lamola.¹⁶⁴ The club was relegated at the end of the season, never to return.

The Rand Stadium’s closure also presented a logistical challenge to another former NFL team based in Johannesburg, namely Rangers. Having joined the revived NFL in 1979¹⁶⁵ the club won consecutive league titles in 1980 and 1981, the latter of which culminated in promotion to the NPSL’s top tier through a set of play-offs.¹⁶⁶ Rangers was therefore unable to utilise the Rand Stadium as a home venue in the NPSL which limited its income potential since it could not maximise attendances against well supported black clubs (as other former NFL teams had done prior to 1980). This remained the case until March 1984 when the Johannesburg City Council finally reopened the Rand Stadium to professional football by allowing Rangers to use it as a home venue.¹⁶⁷

Another team that suffered greatly as a result of being denied access to its home venue was Arcadia Shepherds. In this regard the Pretoria City Council decided in June 1980 to ban all matches involving Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates at the Caledonian Stadium in central Pretoria.¹⁶⁸ This came in the wake of a controversial encounter against Kaizer Chiefs on 24 May during which a reported 16,000 supporters crammed into the ground while thousands congregated outside, unable to gain access. Due to the high profile nature of the clash the club opted for a 10:30 am kick-off to minimise potential trouble, but despite this measure

fired gun shots into the air which led to the abandonment of a match against Bloemfontein Celtic. Commenting on the name change the following year Da Canha decried the fact that “a few hooligans who supported the club were giving the entire Portuguese nation problems”. See Bafana Shezi, “Bafana Shezi spells it out,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1982, 28 and Gleeson, “History,” 55.

¹⁶⁴ Bafana Shezi, “Bafana Shezi spells it out,” *South African Soccer*, January, 1982, 28 and Gleeson, “History,” 62.

¹⁶⁵ See previous chapter.

¹⁶⁶ “PG Rangers could bring the whites back,” *Goal*, December 31, 1981, 2. By this time the NFL had affiliated to SANFA (the umbrella body for the NPSL) thereby making it the equivalent of an NPSL lower tier. See Minutes, FASA Executive Committee Meeting, March 7, 1981, 1, FASA papers. The NFL’s champion teams therefore had the opportunity to gain promotion to the NPSL’s top tier through promotion play-offs. One of the reasons for the club’s success was a sponsorship from PG Glass which apparently counted a number of “ardent Rangers supporters” amongst its senior executives. The club’s promotion was unique in the sense that it was the only occasion during the period 1978–90 that a former NFL club managed to return to top tier professional football having first gone down to the lower ranks.

¹⁶⁷ Gleeson, “History,” 76.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

subsequent reports described the ensuing events outside the stadium as a “near riot” in which police were stoned and surrounding property was damaged.¹⁶⁹

In July the council extended its ban to all Arcadia’s matches at the Caledonian ground by invoking an antiquated clause in the stadium’s lease agreement. The latter stated that written permission had to be obtained each time a black player turned out for one of the competing clubs, and by refusing to grant such permission the council left Arcadia out in the cold.¹⁷⁰ The blanket ban of professional football at the stadium was formally ratified at a council meeting in February 1981.¹⁷¹ Arcadia was never able to regain access to the venue throughout the remainder of its professional team’s existence. Instead it had to make use of venues such as Balfour Park in Johannesburg (some 50 kilometres away), the Super Stadium in Atteridgeville township west of Pretoria, as well as Berea Park – a smaller venue in Pretoria – in later years.

This further deprived the club of its support base – a fact which soon became evident in 1981. The team’s opening league fixture that season was a “home encounter” against defending champions, Highlands Park, played in Atteridgeville. Barely 200 paying spectators, including “a handful of whites”, turned out for the match. Club chairman, Saul Sacks, summarised the state of affairs: “It’s obvious. Atteridgeville couldn’t care less about seeing two white clubs in action. We feel like intruders.”¹⁷² He further indicated that the clash against Highlands Park would, under normal circumstances, have drawn “at least 5 000 spectators” at the Caledonian Stadium. “As it is, both clubs will have to pay in to meet the costs,” he lamented.¹⁷³

By the end of that season Arcadia found itself in a precarious financial position as a trading loss of approximately R30,000 was conservatively projected for 1982. This led to a suggestion that players would have to take a 25% wage cut, while one club director questioned the wisdom of remaining in the NPSL.¹⁷⁴ The club decided to soldier on “and hope for the best” as league officials were reportedly working through the government “to get a ground” for the club. It was also hoped that increased television coverage in 1982 would

¹⁶⁹ Keith Abendroth, “Pretoria’s racial soccer dilemma,” *Citizen*, January 13, 1981, 7; Raath, *Soccer Through the Years*, 246, and Gleeson, “History,” 54.

¹⁷⁰ “Troublesome clause,” *Pretoria News*, February 16, 1981, 16, and Gleeson, “History,” 55. Arcadia was fielding black players in its team at the time and therefore could not obtain permission to use the stadium.

¹⁷¹ Keith Abendroth, “Caledonian soccer ban: Pretoria Council says it’s definite,” *Citizen*, February 27, 1981, 3.

¹⁷² Dave Beattie, “All white games doomed in black townships,” *Star*, March 2, 1981, 22.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.* It is important to note that a drop-off in attendances at Arcadia’s matches would also have had a negative effect on the income of their opposition, given the fact that gate income was split equally between teams.

¹⁷⁴ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, November 11, 1981, 1–2, FASA papers.

revive interest in football, especially by attracting youths to the game.¹⁷⁵ The loss of the Caledonian Stadium was a key facet underpinning Arcadia's battle for survival in the coming years, as will be detailed further below.

At this point it is necessary to highlight a final significant stadium issue which contributed to the disappearance of white professional football's most successful club. In this regard a watershed moment occurred in January 1983 when it was announced that Jomo Sono had bought Highlands Park. He renamed the club "Jomo Cosmos" – an ode to the NASL's New York Cosmos for which he played in 1977.¹⁷⁶ While Sono was lauded in the press for his move,¹⁷⁷ Highlands chairman, Rex Evans, was criticised in some quarters for letting the club "disappear without a whimper".¹⁷⁸ It is argued here that such a view did not take into full consideration the difficulties faced by former NFL clubs in general and Highlands Park in particular.

In this regard the critical factor that led to the transfer of the club was the fact that its home ground, Balfour Park, was sold to a property developer that intended to construct a shopping centre on the site.¹⁷⁹ According to Evans the club was given "a year's notice" to move out.¹⁸⁰ This created the prospect of Highlands Park being left homeless since the logical alternative venue, the Rand Stadium, was at this point still closed to professional football. Evans recounts:

It just wasn't practical...we didn't have a home ground; we didn't have a place to train, so we decided to call it quits...Jomo Sono approached us, and he paid all our debts and we gave him the name of the club. We were supposed to keep the name, but he changed it. I was supposed to be chairman, and he changed that as well because he said he didn't think the fans of what would [become] Jomo Cosmos would appreciate sort of having the white association.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁵ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, November 11, 1981, 2, FASA papers.

¹⁷⁶ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 143, 188. Reports of the purchasing price vary. Gleeson lists it as R100,000 while *Sharpshoot Soccer Mirror* reported it as R110,000. During an interview in 2014 Sono himself mentioned that he paid R50,000 for the club, although this discrepancy was possibly due to the fact that he had external financial backers, so the smaller amount could have been his personal contribution. Rex Evans believes the price to have been R120,000. See Gleeson, "History," 76; Euphony Legae, "Jomo's R110 000 bid buys Dion," *Sharpshoot Soccer Mirror*, March, 1983, 9; Sy Lerman, "Talking Soccer," *South African Soccer*, April, 1983, 11; Jomo Sono interviewed in *Supersport: In Conversation With Jomo Sono*, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDwLoe1_Hlc&feature=share (published August 13, 2014), and Rex Evans, e-mail message to author, August 31, 2015. Given the fact that, prior to the sale, Highlands Park was about to enter the final year of its sponsorship agreement with Dion the team played as "Dion Cosmos" in 1983.

¹⁷⁷ See for example Euphony Legae, "Jomo's R110 000 bid buys Dion," *Sharpshoot Soccer Mirror*, March, 1983, 9, and Louis Mazibuko, "Jomo Sono has bought Highlands," *Cape Times*, January 30, 1983, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁷⁸ Sy Lerman, "Talking Soccer," *South African Soccer*, April, 1983, 11.

¹⁷⁹ The Balfour Park shopping centre is today situated on the site of the old stadium.

¹⁸⁰ Rex Evans, personal interview with the author, Johannesburg, February 11, 2015.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

The reference to the club's debt is also indicative of the financial strain under which it operated – this despite the sponsorship agreement with Dion. In this regard Evans explains: “[The] board and myself – at the end of the year we were always short – we stuck in from our pockets, so we subsidised the club every year...We had an overdraft at Standard Bank which we used to use, and we got along.”¹⁸² This state of affairs, coupled with the stadium situation, provides context for Evans's decision to sell the club to Sono. Dion Cosmos played out the 1983 season at Balfour Park before Sono announced in October that his team would be moving to Meadowlands in Soweto for the 1984 season.¹⁸³ This was also an indication of the club's metamorphosis in terms of its support base – an aspect further alluded to in the quote above.

It has been argued that stadium-related challenges played a significant role in curtailing the survival prospects of former NFL teams in the NPSL. The disappearance of Highlands Park and Lusitano were prominent examples during the early 1980s, while Arcadia Shepherds – as a result of the Caledonian Stadium's closure – also found itself on a precipice as it struggled for survival throughout the remainder of the decade. It is instructive to note that Wits University football club did not face the same problem since its stadium was owned by the university itself. This meant that access could not be jeopardised by actions of an external entity such as the city council. From a financial perspective the club also did not have to pay rent for the facility, although Ronnie Schloss mentions that any additional improvements to the stadium – as required by the league – were for the club's account.¹⁸⁴

Last Rites: The Arrival of the National Soccer League

At the start of 1985 a total of five former NFL clubs remained in the NPSL's top tier. This group comprised Arcadia Shepherds, Durban City, Hellenic, Rangers (which had arrived via promotion in 1982) and Wits University. Their respective courses in the NPSL were chartered on a backdrop of continued struggles. In 1982 the public relations officer of Mainstay, Geoff Wald, stated bluntly that “it could be disastrous if two white-supported teams [reached] the final” of that season's Mainstay Cup competition. This comment was made in the wake of a weekend round of fixtures in which Arcadia, Highlands Park and Wits “could all

¹⁸² Rex Evans, personal interview with the author, Johannesburg, February 11, 2015.

¹⁸³ Gleeson, “History,” 73.

¹⁸⁴ Ronnie Schloss, telephonic interview with the author, August 31, 2015. Improved flood lights were an example.

barely draw crowds in the vicinity of 1 000” spectators.¹⁸⁵ A year later the operational review of the NPSL stated that “it would appear that the majority of [clubs] in the League suffer from liquidity problems” and that certain clubs “were reported to be in such a negative cash flow situation that they would have to cease operating at the end of the current season”.¹⁸⁶ The unbalanced nature of the NPSL meant that only a select few could thrive financially. Former NFL clubs certainly did not fall into this latter category.

The difficult circumstances under which they operated gave rise to rumours regarding a planned breakaway on more than one occasion. Such rumblings surfaced back in June 1979 when *Post* reported that “concerted underground moves [had] been afoot to form a new non-racial league composed of almost all the white clubs presently playing in the NPSL”.¹⁸⁷ None of the clubs supported this notion publicly and some officials condemned it as “work of a small clique”.¹⁸⁸ Two years later Sy Lerman again reported that a “‘mystery’ chairman of one of the former NFL clubs playing in the NPSL, who is a self-proclaimed pioneer of non-racial soccer, has secretly tried to split South African soccer on racial lines”. In this regard several other chairmen revealed that they had been invited to a meeting of former NFL clubs, but that they refused to have anything to do with the mooted breakaway.¹⁸⁹ One such unnamed chairman aptly summarised the situation:

The old NFL clubs are battling financially because they do not have sufficient supporters of their own, but their lifeline is the massive band of supporters of the black clubs, who at least assure them of several bumper crowds. How can anyone imagine we will be better off financially without the huge mass of black support?¹⁹⁰

While the identity of the “mystery chairman” was not made known, it is revealing to consider the minutes of an Arcadia Shepherds directors’ meeting in February 1983. During discussions relating to the future of the club its chairman, Saul Sacks, “reported that it was impossible for him to organise a meeting of the White-club [chairmen]. Highlands have sold out [to Jomo Sono] and the other white clubs, although disenchanted, are carrying on”.¹⁹¹ At

¹⁸⁵ Sy Lerman, “‘White final could be disaster’ – Cup PRO,” *Rand Daily Mail*, September 14, 1982, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁸⁶ *Operations Review of the National Professional Soccer League*, 14, as cited in Alegi, *Laduma!*, 143. These conclusions were based on unconfirmed statements in media reports and interviews with executives from five NPSL clubs, of which Durban City was formerly from the NFL. Although the operational review did not entail an all-encompassing investigation into the state of each individual club, its findings were in line with developments in subsequent years. Arcadia’s financial struggles stand out as a notable example.

¹⁸⁷ Phil Nyamane, “Enf of NPSL?” *Post*, June 7, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁸⁸ Sy Lerman, “NPSL – the greatest says top soccer men,” *Rand Daily Mail*, June 7, 1979, file S341.7.3, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁸⁹ Sy Lerman, “Secret plan to split non-racial soccer setup,” *Rand Daily Mail*, April 23, 1981, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, February 8, 1983, 1, FASA papers.

the very least this indicates that Arcadia was trying to initiate discussions with the other former NFL teams at that point. Given the club's own financial predicament – largely as a result of the Caledonian Stadium situation – it is therefore not beyond the realms of possibility that Arcadia also initiated the “mystery meeting” in 1981, although this is obviously circumstantial speculation.¹⁹²

In 1983 the club's directors seriously considered selling the professional franchise after having received an offer from lower division Vosloo United – a team based in the township of Vosloorus south-east of Johannesburg.¹⁹³ The offer was purported to be in the region of R80,000, but amidst a last-ditch plea by the NPSL and George Thabe for Arcadia to continue playing in the league, the club decided not to sell.¹⁹⁴ The situation was to be reviewed at the end of the season. The tone of some of Arcadia's internal discussions during this period is also worth noting. During the February 1983 meeting one of its directors, Eastwood van Schoor, stated that “White clubs in the N.P.S.L. would eventually go by the wayside” – a largely accurate observation as can be gaged with hindsight.¹⁹⁵ It was also reported at the same meeting that the “Black clubs are getting stronger financially which will eventually be to the detriment of the white clubs. Black clubs can buy white players, but it is very difficult for white clubs to buy black players”.¹⁹⁶ These comments were indicative of the difficulties experienced by former NFL clubs at the time.

This trend continued in the post-1984 period which saw the arrival of the National Soccer League (NSL) as a breakaway entity early in 1985. This move was instigated by a group of powerful officials led by Kaizer Motaung (arguably the most dominant club chairman at the time), Abdul Bhamjee (who had, since his appointment as the league's public relations officer in 1983, become increasingly influential) and Cyril Kobus (the NPSL's general manager at the time). In February 1985 these officials, coupled with all the NPSL first division teams, except for Moroka Swallows, declared their independence from George Thabe's SANFA (the NPSL's umbrella body).¹⁹⁷ Thabe was also the chairman of the NPSL

¹⁹² The FASA documents collection at the University of the Witwatersrand does not contain a full set of minutes for Arcadia Shepherds meetings. After a directors meeting on 20 February 1981 the next meeting for which minutes are available took place on 11 November 1981. If minutes for the intervening period, particularly April–May 1981, do exist they could possibly be more revealing.

¹⁹³ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Special General Meeting, May 26, 1983, 1, FASA papers. Earlier in February the possibility of exiting the NPSL was discussed, but it was decided to “carry on in the NPSL and if any offer was forthcoming that was advantageous to the club it would be considered”. See Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, February 8, 1983, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁹⁴ Sy Lerman and Thomas Kwenait, “Stay with us’ plea to Arcs,” *Rand Daily Mail*, May 24, 1983, file S341.7.4, SAIRR press cuttings, and Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Special General Meeting, May 26, 1983, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁹⁵ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, February 8, 1983, 1, FASA papers.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 144.

at the time, and according to Alegi “conflicts over money and power” lay at the root of this conflict.¹⁹⁸ There was also “dissatisfaction with [Thabe’s] leadership and wealth accumulation”.¹⁹⁹ According to Ronnie Schloss, the NPSL’s treasurer at the time of the break-away, a central point of contention was the fact the professional clubs felt that they “were basically funding SANFA”, and that they wanted to have more control over their own destiny.²⁰⁰

The formation of the NSL saw Thabe basically being rendered as an insignificant official in one fell swoop. He had undoubtedly been the most powerful football official since the formation of the Football Council of South Africa in 1976, but the breakaway clubs took with them the critical element on which the majority of Thabe’s power rested, namely the financial backing of sponsors and broadcasters. In this regard a R400,000 SAB sponsorship for the NSL was announced, while SABC-TV forked out a further R450,000 for the league’s broadcasting rights.²⁰¹ The NSL and its newly formed amateur equivalent, the South African Soccer Association (SASA), also aligned itself more closely with the broader political struggle to end apartheid. Representatives of these bodies subsequently met with the ANC in exile and were ultimately part of the negotiations that brought about football unity in 1991, while Thabe’s SANFA was left on the side line.²⁰²

It is argued here that, despite the NSL supplanting the NPSL as the premier professional league in South Africa, the change did not improve the situation for the remaining former NFL clubs. This was largely the consequence of the NSL essentially being the old NPSL minus the leadership of Thabe. It retained the same teams, sponsors, venues, and apart from the more pronounced ideological alignment it bore a very close resemblance to the pre-1985 league. Arcadia Shepherds, for example, reported a trading loss of R55,000 for the 1986 season – a year in which some of the club’s gate takings were “less than the gateman’s wages”.²⁰³ Another offer to purchase the club (for a reported R175,000) had been received and was considered, but the team continued in the NSL after obtaining a lease for

¹⁹⁸ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 144.

¹⁹⁹ Peter Alegi and Chris Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity: White Capital and Black Power in the Racial Integration of South African Football, 1976-1992,” *African Historical Review* 42, 1 (2010): 12.

²⁰⁰ Ronnie Schloss, telephonic interview with the author, August 31, 2015. Schloss was elected to the NSL’s management committee soon after the split. See Gleeson, “History,” 84. He is still involved in the upper levels of South African football administration today as he currently serves as the Chief Operating Officer of the Premier Soccer League (PSL).

²⁰¹ Alegi, *Laduma!*, 144.

²⁰² For a summary of this chain of events see Alegi, *Laduma!*, 144–6. SASA was the breakaway group’s equivalent to SANFA in that it controlled amateur football. The president of SASA was Solomon Morewa. Thabe and SANFA continued operating their own league under the “NPSL” name but this entity consisted of lower level clubs and was insignificant in terms of the professional football landscape. Even Moroka Swallows, which had initially sided with Thabe, defected to the NSL “within weeks” of the original breakaway move.

²⁰³ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, January 13, 1987, 1, FASA papers.

the Berea Park ground in Pretoria.²⁰⁴ By February 1988 the club's financial situation was reported to be critical after another trading loss of R55 000 was suffered in 1987. This even prompted the club to try and sell the team bus to Kaizer Chiefs for R26,000.²⁰⁵

By the time the NSL breakaway occurred the on-field performances of former NFL teams were also beginning to decline to the point where their appearances in the upper reaches of the league table were becoming increasingly rare. In the 1985 season only two former NFL teams finished in the top five league positions – the lowest number since the advent of integrated professional football in 1978.²⁰⁶ The period 1986–90 never saw more than one such team achieve this distinction, although ironically Rangers managed to win the league in 1986 – the last league title claimed by a former NFL club prior to the arrival of football unity.²⁰⁷ A closer inspection of the club reveals that, despite signing a three-year sponsorship with construction and electronics conglomerate Grinaker at the start of the 1986 season, the team's success was not built by means of a spending spree in the transfer market, as was the case with a club like Mamelodi Sundowns.²⁰⁸

The coach of the team was Alex Forbes, a former Arsenal and Scotland midfielder that had a distinguished coaching career in South Africa.²⁰⁹ He was assisted by player/manager Des Backos, and in this regard *South African Soccer* described them as having “moulded a team with limited skills into a forceful unit that grounded almost anything before them through sheer hard work, regimental discipline and team work”. Forbes himself opined: “We played within our capabilities and accepted international tactics because we would look stupid to match other teams for skill. I would say Shane MacGregor is the only player with real class we have.”²¹⁰ Two years later he bemoaned the club's lack of clout in the transfer market: “[Every time] we try to sign an established player he is priced beyond our reach.”²¹¹

²⁰⁴ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, January 13, 1987, 1, FASA papers. This venue had previously been used in the NFL by the Berea Park football club.

²⁰⁵ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, February 2, 1988, 1, FASA papers.

²⁰⁶ Rangers finished as runners-up while Arcadia finished in fifth place.

²⁰⁷ Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

²⁰⁸ During the period 1986–90 Mamelodi Sundowns, based in the Mamelodi township east of Pretoria, repeatedly broke the South African transfer record for spending on individual players. This strategy of aggressive spending was first instituted under the ownership of flamboyant Soweto businessman, Zola Mahobe, who was in his early 30s at the time. Mahobe was rumoured to have spent an estimated R2 million on club-related aspects during an eighteen month period. It later emerged that his wealth had been accumulated with the help of his mistress, a Standard Bank employee at the time, in an electronic fraud scam to an alleged value of R10 million. Mahobe was subsequently sentenced to sixteen years in prison with Standard Bank taking temporary ownership of the club. In 1989 it was sold to the Twins Pharmaceutical Group, owned by twins Abe and Solly Krok. The club's spending continued under the new owners. See Sy Lerman, “Castle League Round-up,” *South African Soccer*, December 1987, 19; Mark Gleeson, “Zola Mahobe: Soccer boss who lived large on loot,” *Sunday Times*, December 22, 2013, 19, and “Ups and downs of being a club owner,” *Star*, October 15, 2012, 18.

²⁰⁹ Forbes was the only coach to win titles in all three South African professional leagues during the period under observation. He won the NFL with Highlands Park, the FPL with Swaraj and the NPSL with Orlando Pirates (pre-integration) and Rangers (post-integration).

²¹⁰ “Champions – 1986 Grinaker Rangers,” *South African Soccer*, December, 1986, 21. Shane MacGregor, a leading source of goals for the team, was sold to Chiefs in September 1988. See Gleeson, “History,” 103.

²¹¹ Phil Nyamane, “Coaches Corner,” *South African Soccer*, October, 1988, 22.

A further indication of the growing influence of black entrepreneurs with regard to team ownership was the fact that early in 1986 Rangers was purchased by a group of black businessmen, headed by Victor Sethole. The latter owned a company by the name of Blackfin and was approached by George Thabe a few years earlier to raise funds towards the building of a planned football stadium at Crown Mines between Soweto and Johannesburg.²¹² Prior to purchasing Rangers in 1986 Sethole also considered buying Hellenic and made an offer to its chairman, George Hadjidakis. He was advised against moving Hellenic to an already over-crowded Johannesburg, however, and the purchase was never completed.²¹³ Despite winning the NSL league title during Sethole's first year of ownership, Rangers was unable to sustain this success. The club finished twelfth (1987), thirteenth (1988) and fifteenth (1989) in the three subsequent seasons, and by 1990 it was playing under a different name – Pimville United Brothers. The latter incarnation of the club was relegated that season.²¹⁴

Durban City, having suffered a precipitous decline in on-field results during the period 1985–7, ultimately also succumbed to financial pressures.²¹⁵ In July 1988 Norman Elliott sold the club to four former AmaZulu players who renamed it “Natal United”.²¹⁶ The team finished in last place that season and was relegated, thereby signalling the disappearance of the last remnants of Durban City. Arcadia Shepherds managed to survive the 1989 season – one in which the club suffered a reported loss of R60,000.²¹⁷ With the prospect of an even bigger R150,000 loss in 1990 – “unless advertising and sponsorship was obtained” – the directors felt that the club had two options heading into that season, namely to continue playing in Atteridgeville or to sell the professional franchise (with the remainder of the club reverting to amateur football). In this regard a group of businessmen connected with the Lenasia-based Swaraj club showed interest as potential buyers. The directors gave chairman Saul Sacks a “mandate to proceed with the sale on the best possible terms”.²¹⁸

²¹² “Star Writer Victor Sethole,” *South African Soccer*, May, 1987, 33. The Crown Mines project was to become the Soccer City Stadium (also known as the First National Bank Stadium) and was opened in 1989. It was South Africa's first football-specific stadium and had an initial capacity of 76,000. Extensive refurbishments were done in the lead-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup which saw the stadium host the final (with an increased capacity of 94,000). See Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 12–3.

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”, and Sy Lerman, “Previews of this season's Castle League,” *South African Soccer*, April, 1990, 20.

²¹⁵ Having won its last NPSL league title in 1983, the team finished third (1984), seventh (1985), fifteenth (1986) and sixteenth (1987) in subsequent seasons. See Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

²¹⁶ Gleeson, “History,” 102.

²¹⁷ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, December 12, 1989, 1–2, FASA papers.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

Amidst failed last ditch efforts to obtain access to the Caledonian Stadium as a home venue the negotiations were concluded early in 1990.²¹⁹ The final selling price was agreed at R380,000 and Sacks described the negotiations for the takeover of the club as “horrid and hopefully final”.²²⁰ The decision was ratified at a meeting of the club’s shareholders on 30 May 1990.²²¹ Arcadia Shepherds subsequently continued as an amateur team, while the professional franchise was renamed “Dynamos” by the new owners. The move brought top level professional football back to Lenasia after the previous incarnation of the Dynamos club had been relegated in 1984. The new club did not face the same problem regarding the Caledonian Stadium since it played its home matches in Lenasia.²²²

The aforementioned sales transactions relating to certain former NFL clubs were indicative of the fact that the arrival of the NSL did not alleviate the difficulties faced by these clubs, particularly with regards to finance and lack of support. This can be contrasted with the fate of Jomo Cosmos which came into being through the sale of Highlands Park in 1983. Cosmos won the 1987 NSL league title and announced a three-year R500,000 sponsorship from King Midas – a company in the automotive parts industry – by the end of that season.²²³ The arrival of football unity in 1991 serves as the final point at which to consider the state of white professional football within this study.

The Arrival of Football Unity in 1991

In September 1990 an agreement was reached between SASA (the NSL’s umbrella body), the non-racial SASF and FASA (the controlling body for white amateur football) to form a single, non-racial controlling body for football in South Africa. This body, which was to be known as the South African Football Association (SAFA), was inaugurated the following year.²²⁴ This development was the product of broader developments along the sport-political axis in South Africa over the course of the preceding years.²²⁵ An outflow of this process was a merger between the NSL and the non-racial Federation Professional League (FPL), concluded towards the latter stages of 1990. This brought about the effective unification of South African football at professional level and consequently saw the eighteen existing NSL

²¹⁹ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, February 24, 1990, 1, FASA papers.

²²⁰ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Directors Meeting, April 3, 1990, 1, FASA papers.

²²¹ Minutes, Arcadia Shepherds Football Club Members Meeting, May 30, 1990, 1, FASA papers.

²²² Phil Nyamane, “First Division Football Comes To Lenasia,” *South African Soccer*, May, 1990, 5, and Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”. Dynamos finished twelfth in the league in 1990, retaining its top division status.

²²³ “It’s a Half-Million Rand Smile From Jomo,” *South African Soccer*, December, 1987, 5, and Schöggel et al., “South Africa Champions”.

²²⁴ Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 16.

²²⁵ For a detailed account of this chain of events, see Alegi and Bolsmann, “From Apartheid to Unity,” 12–7.

teams being joined by six from the FPL in the new league – still known as the NSL – for the 1991 season.²²⁶

By this point only two former NFL clubs, namely Hellenic and Wits University, remained in South African professional football's top tier. This chapter has endeavoured to contextualise this state of affairs by considering the forces exerted on former NFL clubs within the integrated NPSL and NSL during the period 1978–90. It has been argued that a critical factor which underpinned this process was the rapid decline of white spectatorship at the onset of the integrated NPSL – largely as a result of negative publicity concerning violence at NPSL matches. This exacerbated the financial challenges experienced by many clubs – a situation which had already developed during the latter years of the NFL.

A parallel development to this was the rising financial power of the premier black clubs, particularly in terms of sponsorship. Whereas some NFL clubs were able to obtain much-needed sponsorships of their own, they could not compete with the gate revenue generated by the likes of Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates. This impacted the transfer market where record fees were paid by black clubs for top players, while former NFL teams often utilised the market as an additional source of revenue by selling their own top players. Ultimately this also impacted results on the field of play as the performances of former NFL teams in the league diminished over the course of the 1980s.

In addition, stadium dynamics played a significant role in curtailing the prospects of survival for some teams – most notably Lusitano, Highlands Park and Arcadia Shepherds. Furthermore, the rising influence of black entrepreneurs resulted in notable transactions whereby former NFL teams were sold as a means for previous owners to dispose of their toxic assets. The acquisition of Highlands Park by Jomo Sono stands out as the most significant of these transactions. It has been argued further that the arrival of the NSL in 1985 did not alter the course of the remaining former NFL clubs as the ensuing six-year period prior to football unity saw the disappearance of Durban City, Arcadia Shepherds and Rangers. The arrival of unity in 1991 represented the dawning of a new epoch for South African football which mirrored political developments in the country generally. It constitutes the chronological end point for this study which has been concerned with the disappearance of the whites-only NFL and its constituent clubs during the apartheid era.

²²⁶ “Envious eyes make little difference to historic merger,” *South African Soccer*, October, 1990, 25.

CONCLUSION

The passing of time since the end of apartheid has allowed a new set of questions to emerge in South African society generally as well as within academia specifically. In terms of the latter dimension attention is now being focused on apartheid's various echoes that are still being felt in contemporary South Africa. The issue of redress is a key question under perpetual consideration, particularly regarding its relationship with race. South African sport represents a public arena in which many of these debates are playing out and in this regard sport in many ways constitutes an uncomfortable reminder not only of apartheid's legacy, but also of the growing inequality which has characterised South African society since the advent of democracy. In a country grappling with the broader question of how to break free from the shackles of its racialised past, the regular controversies surrounding the racial composition of national sports teams – particularly the high profile team sports of cricket and rugby – serve as a reminder that the issue of race is still very much prevalent in the third decade of the new political dispensation. In this regard the issue of transformation in sport has begun to generate increased research interest over the last decade, and this study has been positioned as a contribution to this dimension by considering the historical change in the demographics of professional football in South Africa at an institutional level.

It has been argued that despite the fact that football itself has largely been positioned outside the contemporary debates on sporting transformation, the study thereof can still serve as a crucial lens through which to consider the demographic fluidity that has been present within South African sport historically. Consequently this study specifically constitutes a warning against potentially over-simplified categorisations of “white” and “black” sport in contemporary South Africa (with due cognisance taken of the fact that this study itself has made use of such a classification on account of the segregated nature of apartheid-era sport). In addition it represents a marker regarding the complex and multifaceted range of historical factors that impacted professional white football during the period 1959–90. Apart from contributing to the emerging literature – historical or otherwise – relating to transformation and redress in South African sport, it also makes a number of contributions towards an improved historical understanding of football in the country – an important advancement in its own right.

In this regard Chapter 2 built on the work of Bolsmann by analysing the structure of the whites-only NFL. It was argued that despite the success of the league during the 1960s and early 1970s, certain structural weaknesses limited its potential and also left it vulnerable to the effects of macro forces which in time influenced the football landscape to a significant

degree. These weaknesses comprised access to a limited player pool, inequality between clubs, South African football's international isolation as well as operational factors pertaining to certain clubs. Whereas Bolsmann and Alegi have both previously pinpointed declining attendance as a key factor that led to the eventual decline of the NFL, this chapter represents the first in-depth analysis of the underlying variables that led to these declining attendances. At the same time it was necessary to challenge previous arguments relating to the purported influence of multinationalism on NFL crowd figures. It was argued that the latter proposition is not plausible in explaining why whites attended professional matches in decreasing numbers, particularly from 1974 onwards. In this regard the analysis offered an alternative, two-pronged argument pointing to economic and on-field factors as elements that underpinned this process.

Chapter 3 shifted the overall analysis into the political sphere by considering the effects of the multinational sports policy on South Africa's football landscape. This constitutes a particularly valuable contribution to not only the existing scholarship on South African football, but also that relating to the nexus between sport, race and politics in the country more broadly. By analysing three separate multinational football tournaments – namely the 1973 South African Games tournament, the 1974 Embassy Multinational Series and the 1975 Chevrolet Champion of Champions competition – it was argued that multinationalism should not be viewed as a monolithic force, but rather as a multi-layered variable that affected local football in various ways.

In this regard the 1973 South African Games as a whole – and its football tournament in particular – constituted a sporting project of immense political importance to the government at a time by which South Africa's international position had been drastically weakened through isolation from various codes during the preceding years. It formed part of an effort to portray partial integration in sport locally with the intention of improving South Africa's image internationally. The football tournament was significant in that it represented the first “body contact” team sport to be played between the different race groups in an official capacity. The event was contested in a tightly controlled environment with a strict security presence to ensure order. Within this atmosphere the tournament proved extremely popular and was viewed as a huge success by those outside the non-racial movement, with the latter viewing it as an example of government orchestrated “window-dressing”.

While the government did not intend for multinationalism to be a stepping stone towards full integration it did offer a glimpse into an alternative configuration of South African society within a sporting context. Moreover the success of the 1973 South African Games football

tournament prompted white football officials to take the concept further by organising their own multinational tournament the following year, namely the 1974 Embassy Series. Multinational football was extended to club level the following year during the Chevrolet Champion of Champions competition and it was argued that these two tournaments were notably different from the South African Games in that they were played in a natural football setting. This was a far cry from the highly controlled environment of the South African Games and highlighted the potential dangers associated with racialised encounters – a situation that culminated in the highly controversial encounter between Kaizer Chiefs and Hellenic at the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg. It was argued that this dangling over the precipice towards tragedy served as an important marker for white officials who subsequently began calling for full integration at club level, as opposed to contests between racially defined teams.

The fact that prominent role players within the NFL entertained the idea of full integration brought into question the sustainability of a whites-only league. In this regard Chapter 4 explored the broader context of these sentiments by considering the position – both locally and internationally – of white football's controlling body, FASA. Here it was argued that the period between the two FIFA congresses held in Frankfurt in 1974 and Montreal in 1976 respectively constitute an important lens through which to consider FASA's deteriorating position on the football landscape in general. Events at the 1974 congress made eventual expulsion from world football's governing body a distinct possibility and in this regard FASA changed strategy as part of attempts to stave off such an eventuality. This entailed reaching out to the non-racial SASF as part of an attempt to form a single controlling body for the sport locally. In addition the first integrated national football team took the field – with the government's blessing – against an incoming touring team from Argentina packaged as international opposition. This represented a step closer to integration but failed to prevent FASA's expulsion from FIFA in 1976.

A key obstacle towards the formation of a single controlling body was FASA's historically acrimonious relationship with the SASF. In this regard the incoming tour by the Argentinians served as a valuable vantage point from whence to consider these organisational dynamics since all football stakeholders made individual submissions to a three-man FIFA delegation that was present during the initial stages of the tour. These submissions were indicative of the respective viewpoints held by the different controlling bodies and despite the fact that FASA had allies in the form of the other racially defined organisations the SASF was ultimately unwilling to come to the negotiating table. This was partly the result of justified

suspicion regarding FASA's motives and also has to be viewed in the context of the rising influence of SACOS, of which the SASF was an affiliate (and founding member).

It was then argued that FASA's expulsion from FIFA – which came shortly after the Soweto uprising – caused a split within white football between the professional and amateur ranks as long-standing administrator, Dave Marais, resigned from his positions in the NFL and FASA after the Montreal congress. This brought a new set of personalities to the foreground as the NFL mobilised towards protecting its own interests with its new chairman, property tycoon Michael Rapp, elected as vice-president on the newly formed Football Council of South Africa under the leadership of George Thabe. The latter's ascension to this position was also indicative of a broader power shift towards black professional football during this period. At the same time the influence of FASA was to become insignificant from this point onwards as the NFL dealt directly with Thabe and the other members of the Football Council as it tried to navigate the highly uncertain waters that had arisen in the wake of the developments in Montreal.

Chapter 5 considered these administrative manoeuvrings on the backdrop of further calls for integration by NFL officials during the same period. In addition the multinational sports policy was amended in September 1976 and constituted a formal extension of the experiment to club level. The Football Council proceeded within this framework and devised the 1977 Mainstay League Cup competition which included the professional teams from the NFL and the NPSL. In addition the council obtained permission from the Minister of Sport and Recreation, Piet Koornhof, for a limited number of players from the different race groups to be loaned amongst the competing teams. This represented another step – albeit a small one – to full integration in the form of multiracial football at club level – a scenario which was to arrive in 1978. It was argued that the Mainstay League Cup competition – and the controversies which ensued during its staging – constituted a microcosm of the broader professional football landscape in the country at the time.

The in-depth analysis of this competition constitutes an original contribution to the scholarship on the history of South African football and it was pointed out that this element had previously only received passing mention in the work of Alegi and Bolsmann. In addition it also provided insight into the struggles experienced by NFL clubs at operational level by that point, with Cape Town City having been a notable example. The 1977 season was a hugely uncertain one for club and league officials and it was within this context that a split occurred within the NFL with regards to the planned direction for 1978 and beyond. This dimension was analysed in Chapter 6.

Towards the latter part of 1977 NFL clubs rapidly approached a point of no return in terms of securing their respective futures within the drastically shifting football landscape. In this regard they were forced to make a choice between either joining the non-racial FPL – an option initially favoured by the majority of NFL teams – or throwing in their lot with George Thabe's NPSL. Chapter 6 considered the dynamics that underpinned this decision-making process which led to the final breakup of the NFL as a stand-alone league. Thereafter the analysis shifted to those NFL clubs that joined the FPL for the 1978 season in order to contextualise the developments which saw the majority of them eventually defect to the NPSL as well (as had been done by five Transvaal-based clubs in 1978 already). In this regard the examination of the FPL contributes to the existing scholarship on South African football by highlighting some of the internal divisions which emerged not only between the FPL's parent body (the SASF) and SACOS, but also within the FPL (and by extension the SASF) itself. A key argument relating to this dimension was the fact that within non-racial professional football material considerations outweighed ideological ones, which saw a number of traditional FPL clubs push for dialogue with the dominant NPSL as a means for self-preservation. The defection of former NFL clubs (and existing FPL members) to the NPSL for the 1979 season therefore had to be considered in the latter context.

Chapter 7 concluded the study with an evaluation of former NFL clubs within the integrated NPSL (and later the NSL). This in itself represents the first academic analysis along this axis and therefore adds to the limited scholarship pertaining to this phase in the history of the South African game which saw government-sanctioned integrated professional football arrive thirteen years prior to unity. It was argued that a critical facet that underpinned the struggles of many former NFL clubs within this environment was the rapid decline in white spectatorship at the onset of integrated football, largely as a result of violence that blighted the early years of the integrated NPSL. At the opposite end of the spectrum the power shift towards black professional football continued down to club level as the likes of Kaizer Chiefs, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows were able to obtain large sponsorships from a range of companies keen to tap into their vast collective black support base.

This power shift was not immediately transferred to the field of play as former NFL clubs produced consistently strong results within the NPSL during the early years. These performances served to mask the difficulties experienced in the boardroom as many of the financial pressures which had arisen during the final seasons of the NFL were exacerbated in the NPSL. It was argued that trends in the transfer market were indicative of this as former NFL teams were never able to dominate the transfer market by purchasing the cream of the

black players – a scenario originally feared by George Thabe prior to the arrival of integrated football. In fact a number of teams had to rely on player sales as a means for financial survival, instead opting to develop players from within and then converting these talents into profit at a later stage. Arcadia Shepherds and Wits University were two notable examples.

Another important factor under consideration was the impact of stadium-related developments whereby some former NFL clubs were denied access to their traditional home venues for reasons ranging from politics at the city council level to the plans of property developers. This created notable difficulties for the clubs in question and the nomadic existence of Arcadia Shepherds throughout the 1980s was a prime example. A concomitant development saw the rising influence of black entrepreneurs lead to a transfer in the ownership of some former NFL clubs, with Jomo Sono's purchase of Highlands Park standing out as the most significant move in this regard. By the end of the 1990 season only two former NFL clubs remained in the top tier of South African football.

The arrival of football unity saw the NSL absorb six FPL clubs for the 1991 season, thereby creating the first unified professional league in the country. It has been argued that institutional white professional football – in the form of clubs formerly from the NFL – had reached a state of insignificance by that point. The central concern of this study has entailed an analysis of the historical factors that brought about this state of affairs. In this regard it represents an important contribution to the academic literature concerning white football specifically and South African football generally. In conclusion it is worth pointing to potential avenues for further research that could serve as fertile ground for added academic investigation in future.

Avenues for Future Research

This study has been concerned with the historical changes in the demographics of South African professional football by specifically considering the history of white professional football at an institutional level during the period 1959–90. This comprised an analysis into the eventual breakup of the all-white NFL after its 1977 season, as well as the participation by the league's former clubs within integrated professional football thereafter. While it has been argued that this represents a significant contribution towards the academic understanding of the history of the game in South Africa, it does not purport to preclude additional investigations into ancillary elements. In particular this study has not been concerned with the cultural dimension of white professional football, instead focusing its

attention on the institutional history of the game. Consequently there is still room to address questions around the historical meaning of football to white players in a cultural sense.

In terms of the latter the post-1977 period could well prove fruitful. For example, a key research question could revolve around the possible reasons for a fair number of white players playing for black clubs during the turbulent 1980s, but not so presently. This study has not sought to address this question since it is argued that the post-unity period is one which would have seen a number of significant variables enter the historic equation, thereby necessitating a separate academic investigation. Two such variables can be discerned in the form of the migration of professional players from the rest of the continent into South Africa's professional league,¹ as well as the integration of amateur football locally. Amateur football represents a nursery for future professional players and consequently any such study would need to move towards creating an understanding regarding demographic participation patterns within the amateur ranks since unity. Such an analysis would possibly offer an explanation as to the observed demographic change of the men's national team since the mid-1990s.²

Whereas this study directed the gaze of one chapter towards the non-racial FPL as a result of the participation of some former NFL teams in that league in the 1978 season, there is certainly room to expand the analysis of the FPL both prior to and beyond that date. This study has pointed to the turbulent nature of the relationship between the SASF (the parent body of the FPL) and SACOS at a time when the latter took an increasingly aggressive stance on the issue of non-collaboration with government-affiliated entities. It would be worth while extending this analysis to the period beyond 1978. In addition an institutional history of the FPL as a league is still absent and in this regard it would be potentially illuminating to compare the operational efforts of the FPL with those of the NPSL (and later the NSL) . The latter established itself as the dominant professional league in the country from 1978 onwards, particularly with regards to sponsorship and television rights. This poses the question as to how the FPL was able to survive in the face of these challenges as it lacked some of the key sources of revenue afforded to the NPSL. A follow-up question would relate to the potential role of these factors in the eventual decision to merge with the NSL in 1991.

¹ For a study on the migration of African players to South Africa see Eirik Solberg, "The Contours, Dynamics and Impacts of African Football Migration to South Africa," (Master's Diss., Stellenbosch University, 2008).

² South Africa's squads at the 1996 African Cup of Nations tournament and 2010 FIFA World Cup were compared at the outset of this study as a reference point.

In this regard Ashwin Desai and Ahmed Veriava have pointed out that “[m]uch of the history of the unity process in sport has yet to be written” and this is certainly applicable to football.³ A number of other potentially rewarding lines of historical inquiry exist with regards to the game’s history in South Africa. Some of these could include a focused analysis of the apparent decline of Indian professional football in the country – along similar themes as has been explored in this study, but perhaps more at an individual level given the absence of an Indians-only league comparable to the NFL. There is also room for an extended exploration of the role of black entrepreneurs in terms of club ownership within the NPSL and NSL during the 1980s – an aspect which has already been alluded to in this study. Much has also been written about the Springbok rugby team and attempts to position it as a symbol of nation-building in the post-apartheid era. This invites similar questions into the national men’s football team, Bafana Bafana, which has seen a notable deterioration in its international standing since its high point in the mid-1990s.⁴

In light of the above the primary motivation behind this study has been to consider the historic demographic fluidity within South African football as a means to provide further context to some of the contemporary debates regarding sporting transformation in the country. In many ways sport is considered – rightly or wrongly – as a proxy for redress in South African society more broadly. In this regard the complex history of football under apartheid should serve as a historical reference point regarding the numerous interrelated factors that shaped the game locally over the course of the period under investigation. Whereas many of these factors have undoubtedly been replaced by a new set of variables since, debates regarding redress – and particularly demographic representation in national teams – are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Consequently this study represents a timely reminder as to the inherent complexities lurking beneath the proverbial playing surface, irrespective of the sport code in question.

³ Ashwin Desai and Ahmed Veriava, “Creepy crawlies, portapools and the dam(n)s of swimming transformation,” in *The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, ed., Ashwin Desai (Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2010), 28.

⁴ Bafana Bafana’s best world ranking was achieved in August 1996 when the team reached the 16th position in the FIFA rankings. As of September 2015 the team was ranked 72nd in the world. See “FIFA Coca-Cola World ranking,” FIFA, accessed September 30, 2015, <http://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/ranking-table/men/index.html>.

Appendix A – List of Notable Entities and Role Players

Abdul Bhamjee	Colourful and influential personality within football during the 1970s and 1980s. Served as the public relations officer of the SASF before being suspended in 1978 partly as a result of his pro-dialogue stance relating to the NPSL. He later joined the latter league in a similar capacity and became a key power broker within that milieu. He was one of the key movers behind the 1985 NSL break-away.
Cyril Kobus	Influential black official who formed part of the power group that instigated the 1985 NSL break-away.
Dave Marais	President of FASA during the period 1966–1976 and chairman of the NFL during the period 1959–1976. Johannesburg-based diamond dealer and United Party MP who also served as mayor of Johannesburg in the early 1960s.
Dudley Zagnoev	Secretary of FASA at the time of the multinational tournaments in the 1970s. Played a central administrative role in organising these events, as well as the 1977 Mainstay League Cup. Also an official of the Wits University football club at the time.
Eric Litchfield	Prominent sports writer and football administrator during the 1960s and 1970s. Played professionally in Britain. Helped to establish the NFL in 1959.
FASA	Football Association of South Africa: National controlling body for white football. Primarily focused on amateur football while the NFL served as its professional arm.
Football Council of South Africa	Replaced the Top Level Committee in November 1976 as the umbrella body for racial controlling bodies. George Thabe was elected as president.

FPL	Federation Professional League: Non-racial professional league founded in 1969 and affiliated to the SASF.
George Thabe	President of SANFA and the Football Council of South Africa. Became the most powerful football official in South Africa after FASA's expulsion from FIFA in 1976.
Ian Taylor	President of the (white) Western Province Football Association and chairman of professional club Cape Town City. Later also president of FASA for a short period.
John da Canha	Chairman of the Lusitano football club during its period of success in the late 1970s in both the NFL and the NPSL thereafter.
Jomo Sono	One of South Africa's top players during the 1970s and 1980s. Played successfully in the United States and used some of his wealth to purchase Highlands Park in 1983.
Kaizer Motaung	Powerful and influential club owner of Kaizer Chiefs. Played an important role in the 1985 NSL break-away.
Michael Rapp	Property mogul who became chairman of the NFL after Dave Marais's resignation in 1976. Saw the NFL through its final season and into the integrated context of 1978. Served on the NPSL's executive committee for one season.
NFL	National Football League: Whites-only semi-professional league founded in 1959 and which disbanded after its 1977 season.
Norman Elliott	Outspoken chairman of Durban City, one of the most successful NFL clubs.

Norman Middleton	President of the South SASF as well as founding president of SACOS. Resigned from the latter position in 1977 but continued in his role at the SASF.
NPSL	National Professional Soccer League: Founded in 1967 and reorganised as a league for “Africans” in 1971 with the backing of South African Breweries. Became a multiracial league in 1978 with the addition of five former NFL clubs.
NSL	Break-away professional league formed in 1985. Replaced the NPSL as the dominant league in South Africa from that point on.
Piet Koornhof	Minister of Sport and Recreation during the period 1973–8. The main driver behind the multinational sports policy.
Rex Evans	Chairman of Highlands Park, the most successful team in the history of the NFL.
Ronnie Schloss	Prominent football official that helped establish Wits University as a top professional club in the 1970s. Also served the NPSL and NSL in various capacities and is active in the administration of professional football to this day.
SABFA	South African Bantu Football Association: Controlling body for black (African) football. Changed its name to SANFA during the early 1970s.
SACOS	South African Council on Sport: National controlling body for non-racial sport in South Africa. Founded in 1973.
SAFA	South African Football Association: Unified controlling body for football in South Africa after 1991. Also the original name of the controlling body for white football founded in 1892, later to be renamed FASA (the Football Association of South Africa). During the 1970s there was also a minor controlling

body for coloured football under the same name which formed part of the Top Level Committee set up by FASA.

SANFA	South African National Football Association: National controlling body for black (African) football. Its professional league was the NPSL.
SANROC	South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee: Formed in South Africa in 1962 but reformed in exile in 1966. Campaigned actively for South Africa's sporting isolation internationally.
SASA	South African Soccer Association: A minor controlling body for Indians. Was a member of the Top Level Committee set up by FASA.
SASF	South African Soccer Federation: Controlling body for non-racial football formed in 1951. Later a founding member of SACOS. Its professional league was the FPL.
Saul Sacks	Chairman of the Pretoria-based Arcadia Shepherds football club that played in the NFL and NPSL/NSL.
Syd Chaitowitz	NFL official and chairman of the Rangers club up to the league's disbandment after 1977. Revived the NFL as an amateur league for lower level clubs in 1979.
Top Level Committee	Body set up by FASA in 1961 and revived during the early 1970s under chairmanship of Dave Marais. Committee members consisted of representatives from the different racially defined controlling bodies for football.
Vivian Granger	General manager of the NFL over the course of the league's entire lifespan.

Appendix B – Timeline of Events

1862	Oldest recorded football match in territory now known as South Africa. Played in Port Elizabeth in the Cape Colony.
1892	Founding of the South African Football Association (SAFA) – the original controlling body for white football. Later renamed Football Association of South Africa (FASA) in 1957.
1897	The Corinthian Football Club visits South Africa – the first incoming tour by a foreign team.
1899	First overseas tour by a team from South Africa. Made up of black players from the Orange Free State Republic.
1903	Founding of the South African Indian Football Association – the first national controlling body for a race group other than white.
1910	The Union of South Africa is formed.
1950	Population Registration Act and Group Areas Act are passed.
1959	Founding of the whites-only National Football League (NFL) – the first semi-professional league in South Africa.
1969	Annual NFL attendances reach a high point of just over two million spectators for the year.
1970	South African expelled from the International Olympic Committee (IOC)
April 1971	Prime Minister John Vorster announces the multinational sports policy.
March–April 1973	South African Games takes place in Pretoria under the banner of multinationalism.

April 1974	Embassy Multinational Series
March–April 1975	Chevrolet Champion of Champions tournament which culminated in the controversial encounter between Kaizer Chiefs and Hellenic at the Rand Stadium.
March 1976	Incoming tour by “Argentine Stars XI”.
June 1976	Soweto Uprising.
July 1976	FASA expelled from FIFA at the latter’s congress in Montreal.
November 1976	Formation of the Football Council of South Africa with George Thabe as president.
April 1977	Springbok football test against Rhodesia at the Rand Stadium.
May– November 1977	Mainstay League Cup organised as an extension of multinationalism to club level.
End of 1977	NFL disbanded after nineteen seasons.
1978	Five former NFL clubs move the NPSL, while eight join the non-racial FPL.
1979	NPSL ranks swell further with three more former NFL clubs joining its top division, bringing the total number of white clubs in the league to seven. However Cape Town City is liquidated at the end of this year
1981	Lusitano is relegated from the NPSL, never to return to the top flight.
1982	The Rangers club gains promotion to the NPSL’s top tier – the only former NFL club ever to do from within the lower divisions.

- January 1983** Highlands Park is sold to Jomo Sono in a symbolic development signaling the rising influence of black entrepreneurs within the NPSL.
- 1985** The break-away NSL is formed in opposition to the NPSL, with all the top division clubs in the latter defecting to the new league.
- July 1988** Durban City sold by Norman Elliott to a group of former AmaZulu players. Club renamed "Natal United" but is relegated at the end of the season.
- May 1990** Arcadia Shepherds sells its professional franchise to a group of Lenasia-based businessmen and continues as an amateur team from this point on.
- End of 1990** Pimville United Brothers, formerly known as Rangers, are relegated from the NSL.
- 1991** Football unity arrives as the NSL absorbs six clubs from the non-racial FPL, with the latter disbanding. This leaves South Africa with a single professional league for the first time. The unified South African Football Association (SAFA) is also formed.

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