

The Natal Inter-Race Soccer Tournament (1946-1960) and race identities in KwaZulu-Natal

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Abstract

This article focuses on the Natal Inter-Race Soccer Tournament, a little-known but popular tournament which was held under the auspices of the Natal-Inter-Race Soccer Board (NISB) between 1946 and 1960. Coloured, Indian and African teams participated in this competition which was staged at an important time in “race” relations in the province of Natal. This was a period of growing tension “on the ground” between Indians and Africans as they came into competition over housing and jobs in urban centres, but it was also a period of political co-operation across racial lines amongst the middle classes mainly through alliances between bodies such as the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and African National Congress (ANC). This article provides a narrative history of the tournament and, as such, makes an important contribution to the historiography of soccer in South Africa. The article also provides a glimpse into Afro-Indian relations during the middle decades of the twentieth century. None of the major works on South African sporting history focus in any significant way on this tournament. This article discusses some of the outstanding players and administrators, playing styles, scores of matches, and reflects on the importance of sport as a source of power and patronage for Black administrators, which accounts for the reluctance of some to embrace non-racialism when it was mooted in the 1960s.

Keywords: Soccer; Race; Class; Africans; Indians; Coloured; Apartheid; Natal; Inter-Race; Tournament.

Introduction

Sport has the power to change the world ... It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.¹

¹ Speech by South Africa’s first democratically-elected president, Nelson Mandela, at the Inaugural Laureus Lifetime Achievement Award, 25 May 2000 in Monaco (available at: http://db.nelsonmandela.org/speeches/pub_view.asp?pg=item&ItemID=NMS1148, as accessed on 20 June 2013).

Nelson Mandela, 2000

The little-known Natal Inter-Race Soccer Tournament was played under the auspices of the Natal Inter-Race Soccer Board (NISB) between 1946 and 1960 against the background of tensions between Africans and Indians. Existing tensions between Africans and Indians was a victory of the National Party in 1948 in an attempt to rigorously enforce a policy of racial segregation that was known as apartheid, and the attempt by Black² political elites to foster contact across race lines. This tournament, described by one contemporary as the “most coveted trophy in Natal non-European soccer”,³ has been largely ignored in the historiography of South African sport. These games attracted large multiracial (some would prefer the term “non-racial” as it implies the non-recognition of race) crowds.⁴ The term multi-racial is used here because the Inter-Race Soccer Tournament recognised that race was a key feature around the composition of teams, hence the name Inter-Race. Not only did the NISB organise the tournament among Natal teams, but every few years it selected a non-racial team comprising of Indian, African and Coloured players to represent Natal against a similarly selected team from the Transvaal.

While most studies of the 1950s focus on politics or the struggles around education, work and housing, this study on the Inter-Race Tournament broadens the subject of history and complements existing South African history. While the focus is on providing a narrative account of the tournament, given that one of the aims of the tournament was to improve race relations, one of the concerns of this article is the extent to which, if any, the tournament succeeded in creating cross-race contact among players, administrators and spectators.

Formation of the Natal Inter-Race Soccer Board (NISB)

The NISB was formed in 1946, two years before the National Party came to power and implemented its policy of apartheid. The Natal African Football

2 The term Black came into usage in the 1960s and 1970s to refer to Africans, Indians and Coloureds in relation to Whites. Previously, the term “non-White” or non-European was applied.

3 Anon., “Inter-race soccer begins today”, *The Leader*, 14 August 1948, p. 11.

4 For the purpose of this study, the key point is that while there is no agreement on the exact definition of “race” and while I agree that race does not have a biological significance and should not be essentialised, “race” is a social category that has meaning and significance in given contexts. Thus, Garner concludes that the object of study should not be “race” itself, but the process by which it becomes meaningful in a particular context. S Garner, *Racisms. An introduction* (London, Sage, 2010), p. 18.

Association (NAFA), Natal Indian Football Association (NIFA) and the Natal Coloured Football Association (NCFA) were equal partners in the NISB. The two key promoters of Inter-Race soccer in Natal were the Reverend Bernard Sigamoney, a Natal-born Indian Anglican pastor and trade union organiser from Johannesburg and Inkosi (Chief) Albert Luthuli.⁵

Luthuli is the better known of the two. He is a South African icon and a Nobel Peace Prize winner.⁶ His involvement in the NISB appears to have been his last major contribution to sport as he became more and more involved in the ANC and spearheaded the anti-apartheid struggle. He did not disappear completely from soccer but continued to hold ceremonial posts as “patron” of organisations such as the Durban and District African Football Association (DDAFA), the South African Football Association (SAFA) and the South African Soccer Federation (SASF).

Aside from Luthuli, the other individual whose name is synonymous with the NISB formation, Reverend Bernard Lazarus Emmanuel (BLE) Sigamoney (1888-1963), was a political activist, Christian minister, champion of non-racial sport, trade unionist, and educator who to this day is regarded as “Durban’s most significant socialist and Indian trade unionist”. Sigamoney, a grandson of indentured migrants, taught at Estcourt Indian High School and St Aidan’s School in Durban. He served as the first secretary of the Indian Workers Industrial Union in 1917 and was also a sports administrator and a prominent boxing promoter in Durban until 1922 when he “retired” from politics and studied for four years to become an Anglican pastor in Lincolnshire, England.⁷ Sigamoney was instrumental in forming the Transvaal Inter-Race Soccer Board in 1935 where he worked with the likes of Dr Williamson Godfrey, Dr Ray E Phillips, Dr Dexter Taylor, Dr Xuma, PS Joshi, KH Tavarua, and Solomon Sonoane to organise “friendly” soccer matches between Africans, Indians, and Coloureds - one such being the annual Inter-Race Soccer Tournament competing for the “Reverend Sigamoney Trophy”.⁸

5 See Inkosi Albert Luthuli Museum’s website. A Luthuli, president of the ANC 1952 to 1967 and Nobel Peace Prize winner, was a key figure in soccer during the 1930s. He was elected as the vice-presidency of the Durban and District Native Football Association in 1929 and served as secretary and treasurer of the South African Football Association (SAFA) in 1932.

6 For a critical biography of Luthuli, see S Couper, *Albert Luthuli: Bound by faith* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2010).

7 A Desai and G Vahed, *Inside Indian indenture. A South African story, 1860-1914* (Cape Town, HSRC Press, 2010), pp. 69-77, pp. 110-115.

8 TISB officials were G Ballendin (president), W Ernest (vice-president), Dr R Phillips (treasurer) and S Sonoane (secretary). W Ernest, “Inter-Race soccer in the Transvaal”, *South African Soccer Federation, Souvenir Brochure* (Durban, 1952), p. 51.

Others who played an integral part in the formation of the NISB such as Eddie Rooks, president of NCFAs, CW Nxumalo who was elected NISB president in 1949, played secondary fiddle to Luthuli and Sigamoney. The NISB held its first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April 1946. This meeting emphasised that the NISB was “responsible for the promotion of inter-race soccer matches between the various Non-European”, race groups.⁹ The meeting was also attended by George Singh, EP Naidoo and SL Singh of NIFA,¹⁰ CG Montgomery, EG Rooks and AF Woods of NCFAs, while NAFA was represented by LB Msimang, AC Maseko and EE Ntombela.¹¹ Alfred James Abraham was also active in the formation of the NISB.¹²

Broader context

According to Alegi, sport administrators from Natal played an important role in “transforming sport into a potent force for racial integration, equality, and human rights”.¹³ The attempts by sporting political figures to forge race unity preceded similar attempts of politicians. For example, cricketers undertook negotiations from 1945 to 1947 that culminated in the formation of a national body that organised matches between Africans, Indians and Coloureds during the 1950s for the Christopher Trophy.¹⁴ As far as soccer is concerned, an Inter-Race Soccer Board was formed in 1935. In the Transvaal, Indian, African, and Coloured football teams competed for the Godfrey Trophy and from 1952 to 1966 a biennial national Inter-Race tournament called the AI Kajee Cup was organised under the aegis of the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF).¹⁵ Apartheid became the

9 Anon., “Inter-Race Soccer board meeting”, *The Leader*, 20 April 1946, p. 6. The first NISB officials were Eddie G Rooks (president), AC Maseko (vice-president), George Singh (secretary / treasurer), Wolpert and Abrahams (auditors) and Dr DDT Jabavu (patron).

10 At the NIFA’s AGM in March 1946, R Kallie (president), M Govender (treasurer), and AC Naidoo (secretary) were elected, while SL Singh, G Singh and EP Naidoo were NISB delegates. Anon., “Soccer coaches needed”, *The Leader*, 16 March 1946, p. 6.

11 Anon., “Inter-Race Soccer board meeting”, *The Leader*, 20 April 1946, p. 6.

12 Anon., “Inter-Race Soccer official dies”, *The Graphic*, 16 January 1953, p. 2. “Alf”, as he was affectionately known, was the NCFAs treasurer and was vice-president of the organisation at the time of his death on 31 December 1952.

13 P Alegi, “The Football Heritage Complex: History, tourism, and development in South Africa”, *Africa Spectrum*, 41(3), 2006, pp. 415-426.

14 A Desai, K Reddy, V Padayachee, and G Vahed, *Blacks in Whites: A Century of Sporting Struggles in KwaZulu Natal, 1880–2002* (University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2002), pp. 206-210.

15 P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics and society in South Africa* (Scottsville, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press,

driving factor towards the establishment of inter-racial organisations such as SASF which was formed by African, Coloured and Indian soccer officials in Durban on 30 September 1951. Alegi observes that the formation of SASF “formalised ties” and hence “strengthened different segments of black sport”.¹⁶ Industrialisation, urbanisation, and racial segregation contributed to soccer’s growth as a popular pastime and to the particular form it took.

Soccer also became a means to bridge the class divide. Most sport was controlled by elites. In fact, there was a strong link between elites and the organisation of sport. Class was central to the way in which sport and other recreational activities developed in Natal as there were alliances which linked “teachers, political leaders, business people, clerics, petty bourgeoisie and workers”.¹⁷ An alliance existed between teachers, political leaders, businesspeople, clerics, petty bourgeoisie and workers. In important matches sport administrators often led their teams onto the field in proud parade.¹⁸ Luthuli saw soccer as a form of popular culture that cut across class, regional, and generational lines, and an activity that could assist to “build political alliances between Durban’s mostly Zulu urban workers, rural migrants and mission-educated elites”.¹⁹ Luthuli in his autobiography, *Let my people go*, stated “I think what has attracted me as much as the game has been the opportunity to meet all sorts of people, from the loftiest to the most disreputable”.²⁰

The NISB emerged at the same time as Black political movements assumed national prominence and membership often overlapped. In fact, the NISB, which aimed to bridge the racial divide in sport between Africans, Indians and Coloureds in Natal, was ahead of the political movements which followed separate trajectories until Dr Monty Naicker gained control of the NIC in 1945 and Dr Yusuf Dadoo took control of the TIC. Naicker and Dadoo actively sought to work with the ANC and in a joint declaration issued on 9 March 1947, Dr AB Xuma, president-general of the ANC, together with Naicker and Dadoo committed themselves to “working out a practical basis of co-operation between national organisations of the non-European peoples”.²¹

2004), pp. 108-109.

16 P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics...*, p. 88.

17 B Magubane, *Sports and politics in an urban African community: A case study of African voluntary organizations* (Master of Social Science [Sociology], University of Natal, 1963), p. 53.

18 B Magubane, *Sports and politics in an urban African community...*, p. 53.

19 P Alegi, “Sport, race and liberation before apartheid...”, *Africa Spectrum*, 41(3), 2006, p. 419.

20 A Laverty, “Sports diplomacy and apartheid South Africa” (available at: <http://theafricanfile.com/politicshistory/sports-diplomacy-and-apartheid-south-africa/>, as accessed on 15 July 2012).

21 A Desai, and G Vahed, *Monty Naicker. Between reason and treason* (Scottsville, Shuter and Shooter, 2010), pp. 240-268.

This paved the way for the non-racial struggles of the 1950s.

Soccer in Natal: A brief history pre-1946

Soccer was an integral part of African lives in Natal and “came to be a mainstay of black sporting experience” in urban areas. The ‘famous’ Bush Bucks Football Club was formed at Ifafa mission, south of Durban, in 1902.²² The sport’s popularity increased and as the numbers of Africans staying in the city grew, so did the demand for facilities. CP Layman, manager of the Native Affairs Department (NAD) wrote to the Town Clerk in 1929 that there was an “increasing demand for additional facilities for sport ... amongst the Natives of the Borough”. He added that soccer was the most popular sport amongst Africans. Twenty clubs were affiliated to the Durban and District Native Football Association (DDNFA) which had been formed in 1907 (formally constituted in 1916).²³ The DDNFA was South Africa’s first major African urban football organisation.²⁴ In the 1920s and 1930s educated Africans such as Charles and William Dube, who were the brothers of the first ANC President and founder of the *Ilanga* newspaper, John Dube, as well as Nkosi Albert Luthuli, played important roles in the organisation of soccer in Natal.²⁵ NAFA was formed in 1920. By 1933, the DDNFA had three sub-unions: Central (30 teams), North Coast (eight) and South Coast (seven). The association catered for players covering the area between the coast and Inchanga and from Tugela to Umtavuna, including Zululand.²⁶ The games drew around 5000 spectators each week. A rival Durban Bantu Football Association (DBFA) came into being in 1932.²⁷

Soccer was popular amongst Indians from the 1890s. A Natal Indian Football Association (NIFA) was formed in 1886 with four members, namely. Union Jacks, Eastern Stars, Yorkshire and Western Stars.²⁸ The Durban and

22 P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics...*, p. 1.

23 CP Layman, Manager, Native Affairs Department, to Town Clerk, 30 January 1929. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1165, 352. G Vahed, “The control of African leisure time in Durban during the 1930s”, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 18, 1998, pp. 67-123, p. 80.

24 P Alegi, “The Football Heritage Complex...”, *Africa Spectrum*, 41(3), 2006, p. 420.

25 J Nauright, *Sport, cultures and identities in South Africa* (Cape Town, David Philip, 1997), p. 106.

26 PD Mashao, General-Secretary, Durban and Districts Football Association, to Manager, Municipal Native Affairs Department, 11 December 1933. NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1165, 352. G Vahed, “The control of African leisure time”, p. 85.

27 NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/3/1606, 352(1), D Evans to Councillor JL Farrell, Chairman, Native Administration Committee, 31 January 1935. G Vahed, “The control of African leisure time”, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 18, 1998, pp. 67-123.

28 CG Henning, *Indentured Indians in Natal, 1860–1917* (New Delhi, Promilla and Company Publishers, 1993), p. 136.

District Indian Football Association (DDIFA) was formed in 1892, while Mayville (1902) and South Coast (1914) formed separate associations. There were around 40 clubs and 1000 members in Durban by 1912.²⁹ The Indian political leader Mohandas K. Gandhi even organised soccer teams in Indian “communities, or ashrams, which he set up”.³⁰ In 1910 a historic match was staged on a barren surface at the Johannesburg Rangers Mayfair ground between a “team of Passive Resisters” from Pretoria and their Johannesburg counterparts.³¹ Educated and business elites such as Albert Christopher, BLE Sigamoney, EM Paruk and S Emammally were prominent in a number of organisations and were influential in shaping sports associations.

There was an ongoing struggle for better facilities amongst Indian sportsmen. Indian elites formed the Durban United Indian Sports Association in 1911 to coordinate this struggle. In May 1912 lawyer Joseph Royeppen wrote to the Town Council requesting a ground. The Town Council replied in June that it had allocated a site.³² Nothing transpired until 1924 when the Council agreed to lease a ground to the Durban Indian Soccer Ground Association (DISGA) for a period of 25 years, provided that the association laid out and equipped the grounds.³³ Traders and educated elites such as Parsee Rustomjee, EM Paruk, BM Singh, and VSC Pather took leadership and drove the project which eventually led to the opening of Curries Fountain.³⁴

The organisation of soccer reinforced race identities as Indians and Africans played separately in Durban and in outlying towns such as Greytown, Pietermaritzburg, Dundee, Stanger and Ladysmith.³⁵ In 1903, Sam China of Kimberley, who had come to Natal as an indentured migrant to Natal, sponsored a trophy for an annual inter-provincial tournament known as the Sam China Cup. This tournament, which was played until the 1970s, further reinforced race identities.³⁶

29 *Indian Opinion*, 5 October 1912.

30 P Raath, “Fifa World Cup 2010: Kicking out apartheid” (available at: http://www.dnaindia.com/sport/report_fifa-world-cup-2010-kicking-out-apartheid_1392420-all, as accessed on 23 January 2013).

31 P Raath, “Fifa World Cup 2010: Kicking out apartheid”, 2010.

32 *Indian Opinion*, 13 July 1912.

33 NA, 3/DBN, 4/1/2/1165, 15/31, Minutes of the Town Council meeting, 6 March 1924. See G Vahed, “Deconstructing ‘Indianness’: Cricket and the articulation of Indian identities in Durban, c.1900-32”, *Culture, Sport, Society*, 6, 2/3, 2003, pp. 144-166, pp. 148-152 for a full discussion of these struggles.

34 Curries Fountain Sport Ground is located in Durban in close proximity to the Durban University of Technology ML Sultan campus (formerly Natal Technikon). Curries Fountain was a site of non-racial sport, cultural, political, entertainment and other important gatherings. See L Rosenberg, S Moodley, and G Vahed, *Curries fountain. sport, politics, identity* (Durban, DUT, 2013).

35 *Indian Opinion*, 3 March 1915.

36 A Desai and G Vahed, *Inside Indian indenture...*, pp. 323-328.

Afro-Indian contact and tensions

From the time Indians arrived in Natal as indentured workers in 1860, contact between them and Africans was mainly negative. On the sugar plantations where the indentured workers were employed, Africans were often placed in supervisory positions and used by the white “master” to administer corporal punishment. Given their small numbers, Indians came to see themselves as “a vulnerable ethnic minority” subjected to repatriation and labelled as “aliens in the country of their birth”.³⁷ When Indians and Africans moved to the cities from the 1920s and 1930s they competed for houses and jobs; Africans were also tenants of Indian landlords, customers in their shops, and passengers on Indian-owned buses. During the industrial expansion around the time of World War II, a “fear of competition” led to the “intensification of the colour bar” rather than its reduction. This economic competition became racialised over time, and led to conflict in the form of the January 1949 race riots in Durban.³⁸ These coincided with an attempt by the ANC, Natal Indian Congress (NIC) and Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC) to cooperate politically.

The period from the late 1940s to the end of the 1950s was a “busy” one as the ANC organised non-racial, non-violent protests against apartheid policies. While Indians arrived as indentured workers from various parts of India they became “Indian” in South Africa as they coalesced in a “process still very shadowily understood, into an ethnic group identified” as “Indian” regardless of any internal differences.³⁹ This formation of Indian identity together with the differential incorporation of Indians and Africans into the colonial economy triggered tensions and antagonism between them. Africans believed that they were sitting in the “auditorium watching Indians gain more ‘privileges’ while gradually reinforcing exclusivist tendencies”.⁴⁰ Given the fact that Africans and Indians, by and large, developed along different trajectories, it is not surprising that soccer developed along racially segregated lines.

This reflected the broader society where the lives of Indians and Africans were mostly racially segregated; when they did interact, it was mostly in

37 B Maharaj, “Ethnicity, class, state and conflict: The ‘Indian Question’ in Natal South Africa, in Kadekar, Laxmi Marayan, Sahoo, Ajaya Kumar and Bhattacharya, Gauri, eds, *The Indian Diaspora: Historical and Contemporary Context* (Jaipur, New Delhi, Rawat Publications, 2009), p. 70.

38 A Desai and G Vahed, *Monty Naicker. Between reason and treason...*, pp. 173-205.

39 B Freund, *Insiders and outsiders: The Indian working class of Durban, 1910-1990* (Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann, 1995), p. 10.

40 L Kirk, “The 1949 Durban riots: A community in conflict” (Masters diss. [history], University of Natal, 1983), pp. 44-45.

competition for work, housing and other services. This was a potent mix that could, and did explode in 1949. In October 1932 a member of the white Durban Rotary Club organised an Indo-African “Goodwill” soccer match “to bring about reciprocal understanding between the Indian and native communities of Durban”.⁴¹ The Town Clerk noted that the response of Africans was poor.⁴²

Sport was, as a rule, not a medium for cross-racial contact. In this context, could the NISB help to break down these racial barriers?

Crossing boundaries: NISB (1946-1951)

The inaugural NISB tournament kicked off with a match watched by 3000 spectators between the Natal Indians and Natal Coloureds on 24 June 1946 at Curries Fountain, Durban. *The Leader*⁴³ reported that Bulla scored the Indians’ first goal.⁴⁴ Josephs of the Coloureds equalised “following a clever through pass from Norkie”⁴⁵ before Montgomery’s free-kick won the Coloureds the match with a 2-1 score. On 18 August the Natal Africans and Natal Indians, in a match played before the “largest crowd of the season, estimated at over 5,000”.⁴⁶ The Africans and Coloureds played at the Somtseu Road African ground on 20 July 1946. The Africans won the first ever triple-tie tournament in a 3-0 win, courtesy of A Mthimkhulu’s hat-trick.

The teams were competing for the Singh Trophy which was co-sponsored by George Singh, a trade union and NIC activist and first secretary/treasurer of NISB and another prominent sport administrator, SL Singh. George Singh was an active sports administrator from the 1940s to the 1970s.⁴⁷ Affectionately known as “Geo” in football circles, Singh made an immense contribution to

41 4/1/2/1166 3/DBN 352, Letter, A Peters / Town Clerk, 12 October 1932.

42 3/DBN 4/1/2/1166 352, Letter, Town Clerk / Native Welfare Officer, 13 October 1932.

43 Coloured players who featured in this match included Jack Starkey, Mohamet, Eksteen, Oliver James, Joseph, Richen, Norkie and Montgomery. Indians included Hansa the goalkeeper, Fishy, Bulla, “Lightie” Chinniah at centre forward, Ganas at back and Chin and Naidoo, both at full-back.

44 Anon., “3000 Thrilled at Soccer Game. Coloureds XI’s Spectacular win over Indians”, *The Leader*, 29 June 1946, p. 6.

45 Anon., “3000 Thrilled at Soccer Game”, *The Leader*, 29 June 1946, p. 6.

46 Anon., “Africans Snatch Thrilling 3 – 2 Victory in Last Stages”, *The Leader*, 21 August 1946, p. 10.

47 Durban-born George Singh was also a trade unionist who studied law at the University of the Witwatersrand as the University of Natal did not admit Blacks in its law faculty. He was active in politics and served as an official of the Durban Indian Municipal Employees Society (DIMES) and was one of the members of the Natal Indian Congress (NIC) who volunteered for arrest during the 1946-1948 passive resistance campaign. A Desai and G Vahed, *Monty Naicker. Between reason and treason...*, pp. 88-92.

non-racial soccer in South Africa and supported the international boycott of South African sport during the apartheid era. His contribution was officially acknowledged in 2006 when he was posthumously awarded the “Order of Ikhamanga” in the silver category. He was inducted into the South African Sport and Arts Hall of Fame (SASAHOF) in 2007.

The NISB held its AGM in April 1947 at Curries Fountain.⁴⁸ In the first match of the season the Indians beat the Coloureds by 5-1. The second match between Africans and Coloureds took place on 26 June at Somtseu Road Grounds. The Africans were shocked when they were defeated 4-2 on their home ground. Following this defeat, there was an avalanche of letters to *Ilanga* in which fans voiced anger and disappointment at the selection of the African team. The main complaint was the non-selection of seasoned campaigners such as captain “Seven Days” and “Phemla”.⁴⁹

The 1948 season was opened by the Coloureds’ 2-0 win over the Africans at Curries Fountain on 14 August. The African team included three Dundee players A Sibisi, E Molife, and F Skhosana. Soccer was popular among Africans not only in major urban like Durban and Pietermaritzburg but throughout Natal, including the mining area of Dundee. There was one player, J Ziqubu, from Weenen, while the rest of the team comprised of players from Durban and District. The Coloureds played the Indians on 5 September at Curries Fountain.⁵⁰ It was reported that “after 5 minutes of play, the Indians changed into red jerseys owing to the clash of colours”.⁵¹ This reflects the amateurism of the time as things like jersey colours do not appear to have been decided beforehand. The Indians won by a whopping 4 goals to one. On 3 October the Indians and Africans played each other at Curries Fountain before an estimated 7 500 spectators, netting approximately £452 from gate takings.⁵² Within 30 minutes, the score was 5-1 in favour of the Indians and “the large crowd (presumably mostly? Africans) began moving out” in disappointment.⁵³ The Indians won 6 -1 to win the 1948 tournament.

48 The NISB officials were EG Rooks (President), AC Maseko (Vice-President), G Singh (Secretary / Treasurer), Wolpert and Abrahams (Auditors) and Dr DDT Jabavu (Patron).

49 Anon., “Where are ‘Seven Days’ and ‘Phemla’ and ‘Fix wheel’? We are watching nothing here. ‘Ngebhola LangeSonto””, *Ilanga Lase Natali*, 16 August 1947, p. 3.

50 *The Leader*, 4 September 1948, p. 10

51 Anon., “Coloureds Beaten By Indians”, *The Leader*, 11 September, 1948, p. 10.

52 Anon., “Africans beaten 6 – 1”, *The Leader*, 9 October 1948, p. 10.

53 Anon., “Africans beaten 6 – 1”, *The Leader*, 9 October 1948, p. 10.

Sport was not immune from politics. The Afro-Indian riots in Durban in January 1949 resulted in the NISB cancelling the tournament that year.⁵⁴ The 1949 riots have a large historiography the details of which will not be repeated. In light of the riots and general tension that was still in the air, it was decided by officials not to hold the tournament. At the 1950 NISB meeting George Singh, the secretary, explained why the tournament was cancelled: “The annual report for season 1949 must be necessarily brief owing to the unfortunate racial riots that occurred during January 1949 and owing to a certain amount of tension that existed, it was generally felt that Inter-Race soccer matches should not be held for the 1949 season.”

The fourth NISB tournament was held in 1950. The first match was between the Africans and Coloureds. One of the features of this period was that race did not automatically mean that players and officials were united. *The Leader* noted that, “it is understood that there was some hitch in regard to the selection of the team with the Maritzburg officials”, hence such “well-known players such as Dutlow and Woods did not make an appearance” for this match. The Coloured team was not representative of Natal as it featured only Durban players who were picked at the last minute. “In the name of sport, it is hoped that the Coloured Association will settle their dispute as soon as possible”, *The Leader* appealed. What happened was that when officials clashed, players were often the victims in selection debacles.⁵⁵ On 16 July at Curries Fountain the fourth tournament was held.⁵⁶ The Coloureds won 5-3 against the Africans. On July 29 the Indians IX beat the Coloureds 2-1 in the presence of 5000 spectators. A notable feature of the Indian team was the selection of players from out of Durban: PM “Spider” Pillay of South Coast, Reuben Pillay (captain) of Pietermaritzburg, Manni Naidoo (vice-captain) of South Coast, T Rampath (Pietermaritzburg), Billy Reddy (County), Gopal Maistry (Northern Districts), AM Govender (South Coast), S Marie (Weenen County) and Sundray Pillay (Pietermaritzburg). One feature of the games was the innovative nicknames of Indian players, such as “Spider”, “Lightie”, “Kondiah”, and “Scores”.⁵⁷ The Indo-African deciding encounter, played on 13 August before an estimated crowd of “7,000 people who paid

54 Anon., “Inter-Race Soccer Board”, *The Leader*, May 20, 1950, p. 14.

55 *The Leader*, 22 July 1950, p. 10.

56 *The Leader*, 15 July 1950, p. 10.

57 Natal selectors, R Loganatham, R Bijon and SB David chose the following Indian team: PM “Spider” Pillay of South Coast, VC Moodley (Durban), K Mariemuthoo (Durban), R Pillay (captain) of Pietermaritzburg, M Naidoo (vice-captain) of South Coast, T Rampath (Pietermaritzburg), R “Lightie” Chinniah, J Oliver (Durban), B Reddy (County), “Kondiah” Somalingam (Durban), G Maistry (Northern Districts), AM Govender (South Coast), S Marie (Weenen County), P “Scores” Naidoo (Durban) and S Pillay (Pietermaritzburg).

£350” in total, ended in a 1-1 stalemate resulting in Indians clinching a third successive Singh Trophy. During the pre-match festivities both teams were introduced to the African American “Negro” (as the paper termed them) actors Canada Lee and Charles McRae, together with Lionel Nkunkwane of Johannesburg. These actors were in South Africa performing in Alan Paton’s *Cry the Beloved Country*. Councillor Farrel of Durban and Captain Keyselringh of the South African Police were also introduced before the start of the match. *Cry the Beloved Country* was filmed by Zoltan Korda at Ixopo in the Southern Midlands of Natal. *The Leader* wrote: “Actors were brought to the grounds by Ashwin Chondree who met them during his stay in America while attending sessions of the United Nations at Lake Success”. Durban’s Counsellor Farrel presented the trophy to Reuben Pillay, captain of the Indian team. This reflects the fact that whilst Black sportsmen opposed apartheid for various reasons, including the need for facilities and funding, they often relied on the paternalism of white officials.⁵⁸

The year 1951 saw the change of fortunes. The thrilling Indo-African encounter on 8 July ended 3-2 in favour of the Africans. The Indians played the Coloureds on 17 August to a 4-4 thriller. The two teams took to the field “with almost the same colour all-green jerseys and white knickers” hence the Indians had to leave the field and change their kit to avoid confusion.⁵⁹ This was a repeat of a previous fiasco and reflects poor coordination. The Coloureds and Africans played at Curries Fountain on 9 September. Albert Luthuli handed the Singh Trophy to the African captain after their 3-0 victory. Amongst those present at the match was Professor DDT Jabavu.⁶⁰

Indians rule: 1952-1954

The federal soccer structure was well and truly ensconced by 1952. Soccer enjoyed wide popularity among urban Africans. This was the period when apartheid legislation sought to define and segregate people according to race through such legislation as the Group Areas Act of 1950 which was designed to segregate residential areas; the Population Registration Act of 1950 which classified people according to race; and the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951

58 Anon., “Natal Indians win for third successive year”, *The Leader*, 19 August 1950, p. 14.

59 Anon., “Indians fall out of Natal inter-race series”, *The Leader*, 17 August 1951, p. 10.

60 A win for the Coloureds would have secured them the Singh Trophy whilst a draw for the Africans would have been enough to clinch them the title.

Natives Laws Amendment Act of 1952, and Natives Act of 1952 (ironically named the Abolition of Passes) to regulate the presence of Africans in urban areas. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 gave the NP government widespread powers to suppress any opposition to apartheid. Political leaders were also striving for cross-racial collaboration and mass mobilisation.⁶¹

It is in the context of this charged political atmosphere and attempts to move away from race-based resistance that developments in soccer should be viewed. The Inter-Race tournament reflected attempts to promote contact on the sports field, albeit ephemeral. In the mid-1950s Indians dominated the tournament before the tide shifted in favour of Africans. The 1952 tournament kicked off with a match between the Indians and Coloureds on 3 August. The Indians won 3-1. The Africans beat the Coloureds 2-1 in the second match. Reflecting the multi-talented sportsmen of an era before professionalism, Coloured footballer, L McKenzie, was also a boxer who “fully exhibited his prowess as a footballer of merit”, a newspaper reported.⁶² On 7 September the Indians played Africans to a 2-2 draw at Curries Fountain in the midst of the Defiance Campaign. A replay was scheduled on 11 October and was won by the Indians 1-0.

The Indians beat the Africans 2-1 in the first Inter-Race tournament match of 1953 at Curries Fountain on 5 July. The Coloureds beat the Africans 5 – 3 on 19 July and on 2 August, the Indians played the Coloureds. The Africans lost their second match 5-3. The Indians won the Singh Trophy through a 6-4 win over the Coloureds.

The Coloured-African encounter, which kicked off the 1954 season, was played at Curries Fountain on 9 May with the Africans winning 5-2. The tournament commenced earlier than usual in the calendar year to accommodate the national provincial inter-race tournament organised under the auspices of the SASF for the A.I. Kajee Cup. On 23 May the Coloureds suffered a 3-2 loss at the hands of the Indians at Curries Fountain. Players and spectators showed their ‘softer’ side by holding a two-minute silence in memory of brothers Rajgopal and Mariemuthoo’s father who had died a few days before the match. The final match at Curries Fountain on 4 July was played before an estimated 9000 strong non-racial crowd. As was routine, the *Ilanga* published only the African starting eleven, possibly believing that

61 A Desai and G Vahed, *Monty Naicker. Between reason and treason...*, pp. 256-273.

62 Anon., “Last minute victory for Africans”, *The Leader*, 22 August 1952, p. 10.

only the African names were of interest to its readers.⁶³ The Indians won the final 3-2 in a match that was officiated by a white referee. The Indian victories, according to some elders whom I interviewed, came as a shock to Africans who did not believe that Indians, whom they always saw as weaker than themselves, could actually defeat them on the football field. This led to deep self-reflection in African soccer about discipline and whether their style of play was relevant to the period.

African Dominance: 1955-1959

Soccer developments at local level were marked by important changes on the African continent and globally. This period was marked by attempts by the non-racial South African Soccer Federation (SASF), formed in 1951, to give non-racial soccer international status. The white South African Football Association (SAFA) was accepted into the world body, FIFA, at the 1952 Helsinki Congress where just four countries, namely Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Africa, represented Africa. SAFA only represented 18 per cent of registered soccer players in the country.⁶⁴ The primary interest of Africans was to ensure that Africa had its own continental organisation. They were initially brusquely rebuffed by FIFA's European majority. The conception of the presidents of the world body, Sir Jules Rimet (1921-54), Rudolfe Seeldrayers (1954-56) and Arthur Drewry (1956-61) "followed a paternal and neo-colonial view of global development in which economic and cultural hegemony radiated from a 'modern' European centre to a 'pre-modern' third world periphery".⁶⁵

Confederation of African Football (CAF) was formed in Khartoum in 1957, with the first edition of the Cup of Nations held in Sudan in February of that year? South Africa was excluded from the three-team tournament won by Egypt, because of its racial policies. The exclusion was as a result of the NP regime which signalled its intention to either send an all-white or a Black South African team to the Cup of Nations, but not a non-racial team. This was in keeping with the philosophy of the white-dominated Football Association of South Africa (FASA) which had sent an exclusively white delegation to

63 R Mthembu, T Zondi, O Nazo, A Ndimande, D Dhlomo, A Luthuli, I Mabaso, W Ndimane, G Moeketsi, M Mvuni, and captain, H Shongwe.

64 P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics...*, p. 112.

65 P Darby, "Stanley Rous's 'own goal' football politics, South Africa and the contest for the FIFA presidency in 1974", *Soccer and Society*, 9(2), 2008, pp. 259-272.

the 1953 FIFA Congress.⁶⁶ Apartheid South Africa and its handmaidens in soccer faced a continent inspired by an insurgent pan-Africanism buoyed by struggles for national liberation.

Inside South Africa, the anti-apartheid struggle had spread through the Defiance Campaign of 1952. Many of these movements, led by the ANC, rallied around a common programme, the Freedom Charter adopted at Kliptown in 1955, to present united opposition to apartheid.⁶⁷ These developments placed apartheid strongly in the public imagination of Africans across the continent, especially in the newly formed independent states. None symbolised the drive for pan-Africanism more than Kwame Nkrumah who became Prime Minister of the Gold Coast in 1951 and leader of independent Ghana in 1957. Ghana immediately joined the CAF. The Ghanaian national team was called the “‘Black Stars’, a reference to Marcus Garvey’s chartered ship of 1922, *The Black Star*, in which he hoped to take Africans back to Africa from the Caribbean and the Americas. Ghana was a key player in the launch of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Abba in 1963”.⁶⁸ Please check the beginning and ending of the quote whether they are in the correct places

South Africa was duly barred from participation in the Cup of Nations. The issue of South Africa continued to dominate the activities of the CAF and FIFA. The non-racial SASF applied three times to take FASA’s place at FIFA. While it did not succeed, persistent protests by the SASF led to FIFA’s adoption of the Rome Resolution, an anti-discriminatory measure that was to lead to FASA’s suspension in 1961 for failing to operate as a non-racial association.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the number of African countries affiliating to FIFA continued to grow through the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Returning to the NISB tournament, the Africans emerged victorious in 1955 to clinch the Singh Trophy after beating the Indians 5-0. However, the Africans poor performance in 1954 did not go unnoticed by soccer fans. The popularity of the game amongst Africans in Natal symbolised more than the

66 D Goldblatt, *The ball is round: A global history of football* (London, Viking, 2006), p. 493.

67 See G Vahed, “Gagged and trussed rather securely by the law”: The 1952 Defiance Campaign in Natal, *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 31(2), 2013, pp. 68-89.

68 Reflecting on this period when he was still of school-going age, former South African President, Thabo Mbeki said that he and other freedom fighters “saw the black star rise on the firmament.... We knew then that the promise we had inherited would be honoured. The African giant was awakening!” M Gevisser, *The dream deferred: Thabo Mbeki* (Johannesburg and Cape Town, Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), p. xxxii.

69 P Darby, “Stanley Rous’s ‘own goal’ football politics...”, *Soccer and Society*, 9(2), 2008 p. 263.

actual match on the field. Victory implied Zulus, African superiority over other race groups. Defeat implied succumbing to the authority of others, especially Indians, which did not go down well. For example, in a letter to *Ilanga*, an African fan named Stompie, asked whether the Natal African team was ever going to regain its lost laurels. He was furious that the Africans had experienced defeat at the hands of Indians year after year. He blamed the poor performance on team selection and biased refereeing. Natal selectors were “either prejudiced against certain areas or clubs or they just don’t care very much about the interest of the game for the Africans”.⁷⁰

The Coloureds succumbed to a 3-2 defeat at the hands of the Indians for the first match of 1955 at Curries Fountain, on 3 July. The change in the fortunes of the African team was linked to the appointment by NAFA of coach EC “Topper” Brown, a former professional footballer of Arsenal in England. It was the visionary HPG Ngwenya, a local administrator, who took the decision to hire Brown, who mixed English discipline and organisation with natural African flair. As president, Henry Posselt Gagu Ngwenya built the Durban and District African Football Association into a soccer powerhouse and became president of SAFA. According to Alegi, he “seemed less interested in helping the national organisation than in using his new role as the head of the largest African sporting institution in the country to boost his personal power”. There was no doubt that others disliked him and they resisted the adoption of non-racialism because it threatened their hegemonic positions. Kuper observed that unity among Black sports players and administrators ... “is complicated by internal divisions. In much the same way that certain chiefs support the Government’s policy, so too there are non-Whites willing to serve in paternalistic associations, directly or by affiliation under white control.... Whites can offer attractive incentives to non-White affiliates and conversely they can exert pressure against non-affiliated associations, as indeed they have done in some cities, through municipal control over sports facilities....” The result is “antagonism by the more militant non-White sportsmen towards those of their fellows they regard as “selling out” to Whites, an antagonism analogous to that between the militants and the collaborators in the political field, though less intense”.⁷¹ The *Golden City Post* acknowledged that under Brown, “Natal soccer is now the country’s show-piece”.⁷² Prior to the

70 Anon., “Will D & D and Natal soccer teams regain lost laurels?”, *Ilanga LaseNatali*, 7 May 1955, p. 16.

71 L Kuper, *African Bourgeoisie. Race, class and politics in South Africa* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1965), p. 360.

72 *Golden City Post*, 17 July 1955. P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics...*, p. 103.

tournament, *New Age* commented that the “wisest thing Natal Africans have done so far is to engage a professional coach, ‘Topper’ Brown, to improve their soccer”.⁷³ Brown instilled discipline in the undoubted natural talent of African players.

1956 was an important year for Black soccer in South Africa as Stephen Mokone and David Julius became South Africa’s first Black players to sign professional contracts with Coventry City in England and Sporting Lisbon in Portugal, respectively. Johannesburg-born Mokone, better known as “Kalamazoo” or “Black Meteor” in football circles, was reputedly the first Black player in Africa to sign a professional contract overseas. Almost all the newspapers reported about the “big news”. *Ilanga* reported: “Stephen Mokone ... will be sailing to England to join an English team and play as a professional footballer ... Stephen is unmarried and stays with his parents at Lady Selbourne in Pretoria ... His name became prominent in the highlights of soccer fame when he was in Natal and played for the Shooting Stars of Adams College in 1950”.⁷⁴ Mokone had a remarkable soccer journey. He played for Heracles Almelo in Holland, Cardiff City in Wales, was in the books of Barcelona in Spain, Marseille in France, Torino in Italy, Valencia in Spain and Sunshine George Cross in Australia. Often referred to as South Africa’s best-ever export, Mokone, who schooled at Ohlange High, founded by *Ilanga* founder Langalibalele Dube in Inanda, Durban, has a street named after him in Amsterdam, Holland.⁷⁵ The year 1956 was also important as the apartheid government, through TE Donges, its Minister of Interior Affairs, articulated its first apartheid sports policy. The “Donges Declaration” declared mixed-race sport illegal. The inter-race tournament challenged this ideology.⁷⁶ The movement of African players to Europe underscored the potential among Black sportsmen and exposed the hollowness of this apartheid policy.

The 1956 tourney witnessed Indians beating Coloureds 3-2 at the Stamford Hill Coloured Sports Ground on 10 June. Somtseu Road Ground hosted a thrilling 7-4 victory for the Africans win over the Coloureds on 19 August. Somtseu Road was used for inter-race matches after it was renovated in the mid-1950s. From being a ground with three fields and a little “sitting room”,

73 J Dorasamy, “Natal Africans get coach”, *New Age*, 25 July 1955, p. 8.

74 Anon., “African footballer for overseas”, *Ilanga Lase Natali*, 21 January 1956, p. 4.

75 Anon., “Soccer greats. Kalamazoo: SA’s soccer ‘Maserati’” (available at: <http://www.southafrica.info/about/sport/greats/kalamazoo.htm>, as accessed on 10 September 2013).

76 Parliamentary Monitoring Group, “Sport and Recreation: Debate on Budget Vote17” (available at: <http://www.pmg.org.za/hansard/20080527-sport-and-recreation-debate-budget-vote-17-appropriation-bill>, as accessed on 20 September 2013).

the renovated sports arena had eight fields, with the main ground able to accommodate 15000 spectators, with raised banks, tiered seating for 6000 people, and a grandstand for 500 people. For the first time, most fans had a clear view of matches. It also had a fence around the playing area while a brick wall enclosed the main ground.⁷⁷ The Africans came into this match confident after their 5-0 triumph over the Indians in the Kajee Trophy for the national SASF tournament in what was reported as the “best-ever match” in the history of the competition. The Africans “started to indulge in individual showmanship of their artistry with the ball and took pot-shots and were skidding around on banana-skins of their own creation” when they were leading.⁷⁸ Five goals were scored in eight minutes. The final match, watched by 15000 spectators, between the Indians and Africans on 30 September 1956 at Somtseu Road, saw the Africans defend the trophy through a hard fought 3-2 win. George Singh, secretary of the NISB, released the advertising poster for the final two weeks before the match. Tickets were priced at 2/s for the open stands, while the “VIP” section in the main Pavilion cost an extra 1/s.

The year 1957 would see a shift in the balance of power that assumed a sense of permanency. The date for the NISB match between the Indians and Africans at Somtseu Road was set for 7 July 1957.⁷⁹ The crowd exceeded the ground’s capacity- 25 000 people entered through the turnstiles. The Africans won 7-2. The loss meant that for the first time in a decade the Indians were not in contention for the trophy. One writer vehemently asked - “What is happening to Indian Soccer These Days?”⁸⁰ At Somtseu Road grounds on 22 September the Africans won the Singh Trophy by defeating the Coloureds 5-4.

The first match in 1958 saw the Indians win 2-1 against the Coloureds. Somtseu Road hosted the African-Coloured encounter on 3 August. The match was said to have attracted the interest of two scouts from Europe.⁸¹ The Africans won 4 -3.

Non-racial soccer was headed for new heights as its iconic Curries Fountain stadium was refurbished. The NISB organised a match for the official re-opening of Curries Fountain, the “headquarters” of Inter-Race matches since

77 P Alegi, *Laduma! Soccer, politics...*, p. 90.

78 Anon., “Record 12 goals registered: Coloureds lose to Africans”, *The Graphic*, 25 August 1956, p. 7.

79 The match officials for the day were referee R Richen, and linesmen OK Crewell and J Starky of the NCSA.

80 Anon., “Coloureds triumph”, *The Graphic*, 9 August 1957, p. 10.

81 Anon., “Coloureds vs. Africans on Sunday. A grand match is expected”, *The Leader*, 1 August 1958, p. 16.

1946. The local press described Curries Fountain as “the first international stadium for non-Whites in South Africa”.⁸² The stadium was officially re-opened on 24 August 1958 in a match between combined (non-racial) Natal and Transvaal teams. *Ilanga* described the match as an “epoch-making event in Natal’s soccer history”.⁸³ Seating capacity was increased and the “new” stadium had embankments, ablution blocks, showers, a tea room, servants’ quarters, and a new playing surface.

The stadium was scheduled to be opened by the Mayor of Durban, Councilor HW Jackson, but the sudden death of Prime Minister, JG Strijdom forced Jackson to cancel at the last minute.⁸⁴ While the match went ahead, the opening ceremony was postponed to 7 September when the Indians played the Africans for the Singh Trophy.⁸⁵ The Africans stamped their inter-race dominance when they narrowly defeated the Indians 2-1 at Curries on 7 September.

In 1959 the matches were all scheduled for the newly-revamped Curries Fountain. The Indians defeated the Coloureds 5-1 on 7 June. Prior to the match, the visiting English first division team, Bolton Wanderers, who were guests of honour, were introduced to the players and the 10 000 strong crowd. Ironically, Bolton was in the country to play against all-white Natal and South African teams. Bolton captain Nat Lofthouse, a football legend, and the team coach, addressed the crowd before the match. Ronnie Govender interviewed Lofthouse at half-time. When he asked him about the standard of play, Lotfhouse said that he was particularly impressed with Bob Pillay, Jamalooden, Rampath, and P Minnie: “I think the standard of play is very good, especially taking into the fact that these boys didn’t receive much coaching”. Many in the crowd sought the autographs of Wanderers’ players at half-time and after the match. Roy Parry, a Bolton legend, was singled out for special attention.⁸⁶ The “wounded lions”, the Coloureds, again fell victim as goals by Sono, Zulu and Gama gave the Africans a 3-0 upper hand. The Africans missed the services of star left-winger, Dairus Dhlomo, who had signed a contract with a club in Holland but they still fielded a very strong

82 Rayraj, “Natal-Transvaal inter-race teams meet at Curries Fountain. 20 000 expected at stadium opening”, *The Leader*, 22 August 1958, p. 16.

83 “Combined Natal IX to play Tvl. At opening of Curries Fountain”, *Ilanga LaseNatali*, 23 August 1958, p. 12.

84 Rayraj, “Natal-Transvaal inter-race teams meet at Curries Fountain. 20 000 expected at stadium opening”, *The Leader*, 22 August 1958, p. 16.

85 *Ilanga* referred to Natal’s keeper, VC Moodley as *ugoalkeeper weNdiya* (the Indian goalkeeper); “Yehlulwe Kabi ngo 6-1 iNatal Ngomdlalo Oshisayo Ihlulwa YiTransvaal”, *Ilanga LaseNatali*, 30 August, 1958, p. 13.

86 R Govender, “Ronnie Govender has a chat and finds Nat a ‘Great Guy’”, *The Leader*, 12 June 1959, p. 16.

team with many familiar faces. The Indians won the 1959 Singh Trophy 5-1 over the Africans on 2 August.⁸⁷

Ronnie Govender, a schoolteacher and later an award winning playwright, was, at this time, also a well-acclaimed, “no-nonsense” and respected sports journalist with *The Leader*. Govender offered strong criticism of nepotism, corrupt officials and Inter-Race sports and irked many officials in the process. His reputation was underscored by letters to newspapers.⁸⁸ Govender strongly criticised the system of race-based soccer, suggesting that this was reinforcing race identities and that Indian soccer should “throw open their doors wholeheartedly to other races”.⁸⁹

The clamour for non-racial soccer grew louder in 1960.

1960: A triple-tie finale

1960 saw an end to Inter-Race soccer. Pressure for non-racialism came from many quarters. While the question of professional soccer and non-racialism was being debated, the 1960 NISB tournament went ahead as scheduled. Defending champions, the Indians, defeated the Coloureds 2-0 at Curries Fountain on 29 May. The Inter-Race matches took a break to allow the national SASF tournament which was hosted in Durban. That match was cancelled at the last minute due to inclement weather and a re-match was rescheduled for 31 July. Fans were irate as many had travelled long distances to get to the match.

The earlier lockout and crowd anger probably had something to do with the events on the day as a capacity crowd of 28 000 participated in riots which suggested racial connotations.⁹⁰ This was a record crowd for a ‘non-white’ soccer match and generated £2 542 pounds in gate takings- also a new record. However, the crowd exceeded the ground’s capacity and many spectators broke through the barriers and moved onto the field long before the match started. *The Leader’s* eyewitness reporter wrote that “despite repeated appeals from the officials’ stand, supporters jumped over the crush barriers and seated

87 R Govender, “This is a soccer bonanza”, *The Leader*, 31 July 1959, p. 16.

88 See VD Padayachee, “Congratulations”, *The Leader*, 19 June 1959, p. 14; “No-hater, ‘Venom’”, *The Leader*, 19 June 1959, p. 14.

89 R Govender, “An open letter to SAIFA”, *The Leader*, 29 May 1959, p. 16.

90 For an analysis of the riots see M Ngidi, “Inter-race Soccer and the 1960 Riots in Durban, South Africa”, *Historia*, Forthcoming, pp. 326-343.

themselves on the ground". The police took no action against them.

A fracas was triggered when the African team scored; this at a time when "a section of the crowd was angered by the robust tactics of some of the players".⁹¹ The violence became unstoppable as stones and bottles were flung at the players and police. Attempts by officials to calm the scenes proved fruitless. Calm was restored but reignited when play resumed and an African player was hit by a bottle. Though many factors, including overcrowding were at the heart of the dispute, critics felt that racial differentiation was the trigger of the fracas to an extent that Ronnie Govender vehemently demanded that "racial football had to go" because it was a "recipe for racial conflict".⁹²

Despite the violence at Curries Fountain, the NISB went ahead with the match on 28 August 1960 at Somtseu Road between the Coloureds and Africans, which the Coloureds won. The last ever match of the tournament was played on 30 October between the Indians and Africans. The Coloureds were watching eagerly as there was a possibility of a three-way tie as the Coloureds and Indians were both on two points, the Coloureds having beaten the Africans but lost to the Indians. The match was won 1-0 by the Africans and for the first and only time the Singh Trophy tournament ended all square in terms of points.

It was, perhaps, the perfect way to end the tournament – a three way tie.

Conclusion

The majority of urban Indians and Africans lived in Durban and Pietermaritzburg it was these centres that sport flourished though it was played elsewhere as well, a fact reflected in the selection of players from outlying areas in the Natal teams. The important themes that emerge from this article are that the leisure time activities of Indians, Africans and Coloureds were primarily male institutional forms of leisure. The state played a significant role in providing for and seeking to control African sport; elites dominated sports administration and sports activities were largely racially segregated. This reflected the broader society where the lives of Indians, Africans and Coloureds were mostly racially segregated. When they did interact, it was mostly in competition for work, housing and other services. This was a potent

91 Anon., "What Sparked Off Ugly Soccer Riot", *The Leader*, 5 August 1960, pp. 1, 4.

92 R Govender, *In the manure. Memories and reflections* (Cape Town, David Philip, 2008), p. 139.

mix that could, and sometimes erupted into violence in 1949.

The parallel sport structures meant that the citizens of Natal did not socialise across racial lines. The NISB tournament was meant to challenge this but it could be argued that tournaments and games that were organised between same-race teams fortified race identities. The attempt by Indians, Africans and Coloureds to forge links that transcended racial identities and segregation was nevertheless a noble, yet flawed endeavour.

The inter-race matches drew spectators from all walks of life. Although the matches involved African, Coloured and Indian players, they attracted some white spectators. The colour bar was not part of the stadium's entry requirements. Fans shared seats and standing space regardless of race. At first glance, the design of the matches was not a desirable solution. Old folk that I spoke with informally say that Coloured supporters mostly supported the Coloured team, Indians patronised the Natal Indians and Africans supported "their" team. This perpetuated racial identities. Local newspapers also peddled an "us" against "them" mentality. Although the riot only occurred 15 years after the inception of the tournament, the racial friction at Curries Fountain remains one of the darkest days in the history of South African soccer, not only because of the violence but also because of the racial implications of the fracas.

Whatever the underlying reasons for the conflict, and even though violence occurred frequently at soccer matches, this incident had racial undertones. It is contended that the "mixed teams" organised by both the Transvaal and Natal Inter-Race Boards were a healthier idea than matches between race-based teams. Mixed-team matches were not a frequent occurrence, but did pave the way for non-racial soccer in the 1960s.

In retrospect, it can be argued that the move towards non-racial soccer, however noble the motive, was based on a faulty logic because it reinforced the consciousness of racial identities. Nevertheless, the NISB matches were the most anticipated and eagerly followed and the most talked-about soccer games in Natal in the 1950s. Despite the failures and successes of Inter-Race matches the organisers were forced to blow the final whistle as the matches failed to serve the purpose of improving racial relations between the relevant racial groups. This ushered in a period of non-racial soccer in the 1960s which will form the subject of a future study.