

**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**

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ABSTRACT

This study explores a range of questions about sport and society in the context of racial division, and the difficulties of uniting rugby in contemporary South Africa. This work begins by outlining and analysing how black rugby originated and developed in East London, and later Mdantsane, through the twentieth century and analyses this long history of black rugby in South Africa, in the East London and Border areas of the Eastern Cape. To a certain degree, this work, seeks to “set the South African rugby record straight”, using oral evidence and content analyses of available documents that include early vernacular newspapers, and academic and non-academic articles on the subject. Also, a loosely structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Further, a programme of interviews was carried out with members of the chosen rugby clubs.



Paramount to this study has been the idea to exposing the rugby culture, and the nature and the standard of the game, in the selected areas of the Eastern Cape. This study also brings to light some of the unknown, and perhaps highly underrated, stars of black rugby that have emerged in these communities over the years. In achieving this objective, black-coloured rugby test matches; the interprovincial tournaments and the apparently vibrant club rugby have been examined. Black rugby is shown to have the potential to integrate people and communities.

This study also shows that democracy has brought lively aspirations to black South African rugby players that they can play and succeed in rugby, like their white colleagues, at the highest levels of the game, as opposed to what was the case for their fathers a couple of decades ago. Most South African players, black and white, often take for granted and fail to appreciate the significance of the recent opportunity to play together as one nation under one controlling body, South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU). This situation is relatively new, not only in South African rugby, but also to the entire country's sport and the country's social order. The advent of a democratic South African society reinforced this dramatic change and the end of a longstanding segregationist society, as it emphasised human dignity and equal rights for all its citizens.

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my original work, except where specific acknowledgement is made to the work of others, and has not been submitted for a degree to any other university.



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Date: January 2004

Place: Alice

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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

AAC	All African Convention
ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ANOCA	Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa
APO	African Political Organisation
AZAPO	Azanian Political Organisation
BARFB	Border African Rugby Football Board
BBRFB	Border Bantu Rugby Football Board
BCRU	Border Coloured Rugby Union
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
BRU	Border Rugby Union
BRFU	Border Rugby Football Union
BR	Black Rugby
CINP	Ciskei National Independence Party
CNP	Ciskei National Party
CLASSC	Cyril Lords African Sports and Social Clubs
CRA	Ciskei Rugby Association
CU	Christian Union ([Hall] of Fort Hare University
DET	Department of Education and Training
EBL	East Bank Location
EL	East London
ELBSB	East London Bantu Sports Board
ELCC	East London City Council
ELCRU	East London Coloured Rugby Union
ELRU	East London Rugby Union
ELNRFU	East London Native Rugby Football Union
EP	Eastern Province
EPARFB	Eastern Province African Rugby Football Board
EPCRU	Eastern Province Coloured Rugby Union
FRU	Frontier Rugby Union
GAA	Group Areas Act
GRFU	Gompo Rugby Football Union
GRU	Gompo Rugby Union
GWCRFU	Griqualand West Colonial Rugby Football Union
ICU	Industrial Commercial Union
IL	Industrial Leagues
IOTT	Independent Order of True Templars
IU	Industrial Union
JLAB	Joint Locations Advisory Board
KWT	King Williams Town
KWARU	KwaZakhele Rugby Union
MDARU	Mdantsane Rugby Union
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement
MK	Mkonto Wesizwe
NDR	National Democratic Revolution
NED	North Eastern Districts
NEC	National Executive Committee
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement

NRC	Native Recruiting Corporation
NP	National Party
NOSC	National Olympic Sports Congress
NSC	National Sports Congress
NU	Native Unit
NWD	North Western Districts
PAC	Pan African National Congress
PEARFB	Port Elizabeth African Rugby Football Board
PE	Port Elizabeth
RFC	Rugby Football Club
RP	Rubusana Park
SA	South Africa(n)
SAARFB	South African African Rugby Football Board
SABRFB	South African Bantu Rugby Football Board
SACOS	South African Council of Sport
SACRFB	South African Coloured Rugby Football Board
SACBOC	South African Cricket Board of Control
SANCBOC	South African Non-European Cricket Board of Control
SANDF	South African National Defence Force
SANROC	South African Nonracial Olympic Organisation
SANNC	South African National Native Congress
SASA	South African Sport Association
SARFU	South African Rugby Football Union
SARU	South African Rugby Union
SARB	South African Rugby Board
SARFB	South African Football Board
SARA	South African Rugby Association
SARFF	South African Rugby Football Federation
UDF	United Democratic Front
UFH	University of Fort Hare
UM	Unity Movement
USSASA	United School Sports Association of South Africa
VERU	Victoria East Rugby Union
WB	West Bank
WBL	West Bank Location
UWC	University of the Western Cape

DEDICATION

‘With each new day, I’m reminded how precious it is being alive. Sure, there are bumps in the road, but I wouldn’t trade any of it... it’s all part of the ragga game [dance]. Living every moment with gratitude and without fear – for every moment is sweet, even if it is bitter-sweet. It’s that thought that truly inspired this collection of memories [songs]. This was a joyous piece of work to write [album to record]. Many came forward to share in its making...and we had a great time together! Now, I’d like to share the story [dance] with you. As we face the uncertain times ahead, may it provide you with a sense of calm and comfort, and bring you passion, love and emotion that was put into every phrase [note]’.¹

This dissertation is dedicated to: first to my whole family, especially our late parents, Mxoli Hamilton, who did not like rugby and sports generally but LOVE IT and Nomathiyase Nofezile Nongogo, who always BELIEVED IN MY ABILITIES, and to my daughter and my all time INSPIRATION: Smangaliso ‘Smagh’ Esona Lutho, who was conceived and born while I was tirelessly working on this study.

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¹Dav Koz, ‘The Dance’, EMI –Just Koz Entertainment, Inc (CDST: WFL-1188), September 1999.

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PREFACE

Introduction: Manhood and Rugby in East London Locations

‘It was just not possible for a young man at East Bank Location (EBL) not to have played rugby. As a matter of fact, it could have been just utter madness in the true sense of the word “madness”. It couldn’t have been possible! Rugby culture in the area was highly rooted. Every man in the area just had to play rugby. Rugby was the major sport in the area.’² Almost every informant who was born and bred in the East London locations, EBL and West Bank Location (WBL) concurred with this statement. Many of my informants appeared fascinated to welcome a young man of my age, who at least in as far as they were concerned, unlike many others, had an interest in studying accounts of their rugby’s origins and development. Many, however wanted to trace the source of this strange but welcome interest. Constant enquiry about my family background became the order of the day. I had to unwearyingly give each of them this same information.

This work is an attempt to bridge the gap in the literature on the topic at hand, and the death of my father Mxoli Hamilton Nongogo, who was a staunch rugby supporter, in May 1998 before I could complete my first degree that he patiently waited for, almost compelled me to honour him through one of his best interests.³ I had to channel all my energies into this project to properly bid farewell and respect him in place of the “dignified attire” (i.e., academic regalia, as he used to say) that he would have otherwise have humbly seen me wearing on my first graduation.

Having secured this ironic inspiration from my late father, the major challenge was how to get the project underway. My motivation was so high that I even pondered doing part of this project in partial fulfilment of my honours degree. Ironically, the same motivation brought me to my senses, realising the importance and magnitude of this work, at least to myself. To cut a long story short, it all began at Nxarhuni Village (St. Lukes), opposite Mdantsane’s Native Unit (NU) number nine,

²Interview Vukile Magqabi (in this interview, Magqabi was with Fikile Dunga), 303 NU 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001, (Henceforth: Magqabi & Dunga).

³He died at 81 years old and I prayed that the All mighty keeps him till he sees me graduate at least one degree, but unfortunately, this was never going to be!

in March 2000, while attending the funeral of a fellow graduate who had passed away tragically two weeks after he obtained his Bachelor of Social Science degree from Fort Hare University.⁴ May his soul rest in peace! The Presbyterian Church elder, ZG Mahambehhlala, “a man of God in snow white blazer”, who, for some reason, while preaching, mentioned that he ‘remembers ... when he went to Cape Town as one of the Border-South African Rugby Union (SARU) delegates...’.⁵ At that moment I selfishly brushed aside mourning for a dead colleague, and looked for something with which to write. I whispered for the name of the preacher to the annoyance of my fellow-mourners. Probably because of grief, I had forgotten what he said when he introduced himself earlier, and he was not listed in the programme. As soon as the service ended and while my colleagues were awaiting refreshments, I followed the trail. Having met, we talked a little about rugby, gave each other contact information and arranged a follow up session for a few days later at his work place at M & K Centre at Highway, Mdantsane.

The meeting with ZG Mahambehhlala set the trend for future contacts. This meeting taught me many things and bore unanticipated fruits. Part of what I now understood was the necessity for a pilot study to better understand the questions to ask, the nature of the population that I was to deal with and the kind of sample to draw from it. Mahambehhlala proved invaluable, as he was also able to map out a wonderful network of potential informants from which to draw. What I learnt from him, and from the rest of the early East London rugby enthusiasts, was that they know each other very well, irrespective of which section within the location they resided in, the schools they attended or club affiliations. In fact, I learned that they had long maintained these relationships, some since school days.

After greetings, I outlined the reason for wanting to talk to him. Mahambehhlala quickly asked who is my father, where is my home, and whether my father, I and or any of my family members, ever played rugby? It seems obvious that this string of questions was prompted by my special mention of the intention to study

⁴I had never seen nor heard of Zukile Nete, probably because of the magnitude of the campus, his reserved personality. His death touched me greatly, but because of my academic commitments, I initially ruled out attending his funeral. His personality and attitude to life, as described by his close colleague and classmate, who also happened to be my close friend, Thembisa Dlanga, dug deep into my conscience, persisting that I attend, which I eventually succumbed.

⁵ZG Mahambehhlala, a former Winter Rose player, administrator and SARU delegate.

early East London black rugby. When I mentioned that this project is an honour of my late father, he bombarded me with questions, giving me no chance to respond to any: ‘Which club did he belong to? When did he play? Where did he reside here in East London? ...’. He started narrating many stories about *early* East London clubs: which ones emerged first, and how these clubs were formed. Probably because I was thrilled by this information, I forgot to take down notes. Mahambehhlala almost commanded me that to get something to write with so that I could jot down what he was saying. I got down to business as instructed. Interestingly, because I told him that my father came to work in East London in the mid 1930s from Keiskammahoek, Mahambehhlala quickly – and correctly – said, ‘surely he must have been a Black Lion’. Indeed, my father was associated with Black Lion RFC, “*Amagqunukhwebe*” or a club for people originating from Alice, Middledrift, Keiskammahoek and the surrounding areas. Mahambehhlala cited the fact that clubs were organised according to places of origins and were thus composed of specific families or *amakhaya* from these places. I found it interesting that he not only failed to notice that I did not answer all his questions, but failed to note, though I told him, that my father never actually played rugby. He assumed that he did as ‘every man’ played rugby at East Bank.⁶ I observed a similar assumption consistently when I met other informants. Probably through instinct and perhaps through naivete, I did manage to say, to Mahambehhlala’s bewilderment, that ‘my father never played rugby’. He quickly said, ‘It couldn’t have been possible. Every man played rugby at East Bank! ...’. He did not give me a chance to say that my father suffered an awful accident during childhood, and thus could neither walk nor run properly. I learnt later that, even if I’d had the chance to come to my father’s defence, EBL men would not have found my story convincing as even relatively crippled men like my father did not escape the influence of the EBL rugby’s “contagious cultural plague”.⁷

What came out of my talk with Mahambehhlala was a clear interview plan. He gave a long list of names to me to contact, not to mention taking me to some of these places with his own car! The most noticeable destination was Lewis Stores in Oxford Street in East London’s city centre, where Pulle Twaku works. By the end of the day

⁶Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

⁷Interview Magqabi & Dunga; interview Mgijima Theophilus Sam & Khumbulele Wotshela, Mgwali Village of Stutterhiem, 9 March 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Sam & Wotshela).

on 28 May 2000, we had met at least five potential informants. Twaku, like Mahambehhlala, took the trouble of writing down an additional list of potential informants; in fact he went as far as arranging appointments on my behalf. His influence as a member of the East Bank Location Land Restitution Committee inevitably kept him in constant contact with almost all the former EBL residents who resided across the greater East London area.⁸ The invaluable contacts from these two men further reinforced the list that I had compiled for myself earlier. However, although the former contacts were an invaluable source of direction, I had to carefully choose my sample according to the needs of this study.

The combined lists of contacts complemented each other well and things were made easier by the fact that both Twaku and Mahambehhlala, not only gave me their respective contacts, but appeared to fully comprehend the nature of the impending research. They gave me names coupled with the individuals' rugby credentials. However, these two and of course all the informants that I met, though they suggested that I meet others, never forced any potential informant down my throat nor did they manipulate me into interviewing anybody. I do not think they had any ulterior motives, unless they achieved them without me noticing it. I observed with interest that my informants across clubs not only gave information relating to their respective clubs, but openly narrated stories on a wide range of issues. For instance, when I asked Twaku and Mahambehhlala about the oldest club in the area, though they are Winter Rose members, they, on separate occasions, enthusiastically revealed that, 'the first black club here in East London is Swallows, the club for the town people... *Abantwana belokishi, abantwana be vetkoek... amaNdlambe...*'⁹.

⁸The East London locations were demolished in the early 1960s and its residents forcefully removed to Parkside, Buffalo Flats and Mdantsane Township.

⁹Pulle Twaku, Lewis Stores, 54 Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000; ZG Mahambehhlala also shared this information with the author albeit informally, on the way from Mdantsane to East London in his car on 28 May 2000. The interviewees indicated that *vetkoek* or *amagwinya* or *amagxadi* (loosely translated to mean "fat cakes", are baked out of a relatively soft dough in boiling cooking oil) were a staple food characteristic of people in the East London black urban areas. Almost all the interviewees that have lived in East London stated that, (although many could not explain this trend) the people who were born and bred in the area referred to themselves as *amaNdlambe*. For more information on this history see Luvuyo Wotshela, 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society: A Political, Economic and Social History of African Communities in the District of Stutterheim (Eastern Cape), c1870 – 1910', Rhodes University: MA dissertation, 1994, pp.2-3.

When I was constructing the questionnaire for this study I had to consider all these background issues in order to ask relevant and appropriate questions. Here the pilot study helped greatly. I welcomed suggestions and contacts from the East London rugby enthusiasts, but I had to take full grip of the process of selecting those to be interviewed. I sometimes felt strongly that this study could not really do without certain people, as long as they are still alive. I was almost compelled to interview them to get specific information that I dearly needed from them. Their testimonies were invaluable given the specific events they were involved in and the roles they played in their rugby careers generally. Wotshela is helpful here: ‘The experience I have acquired makes me conclude that oral tradition is sharper where people were directly engaged in a particular event than when they are at the periphery of the events’.¹⁰ Selecting clubs was also another issue that needed careful consideration. With the pilot study this was made easier.

On the basis of this pilot study I was able to reorganise my questions and in fact formulate them in a semi-structured manner to meet the objectives of the impending research. Since the topic at hand is relatively “untapped terrain”, gathering detailed information was paramount. A semi-structured questionnaire was therefore necessary. Another issue that had to be taken into account was the reality that a study of this nature had to be completed within a limited time frame. Having said this, there are many variables influencing testimonies and this whole process.

Oral evidence was gathered in formal and sometimes informal settings. In the former situation, interviews were prearranged and information was tape-recorded and sometimes also written. However, in light of the fact that people hold various views about the socio-political dynamics of the day, there was reluctance to answer some questions relating to specific events and to specific individual’s roles. For example, some informants felt uneasy mentioning all the details concerning the 1958 Border rugby split. On many occasions, when a question to solicit details about the individuals who were involved was asked, especially of the group that was found to be the culprits, many informants say: ‘its not easy mentioning the names of these

¹⁰Wotshela, ‘Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.12.

people’.¹¹ ‘I would not like to mention any names. You wouldn’t know what people could do’.¹² However, I assured the informants of the confidential treatment of their testimonies and reminded them of their right to withhold information they deemed dangerous while on the other hand motivating them to reveal this important information.

In an informal situation, talk on aspects pertaining to the history of black rugby was casually started and sometimes would develop into in-depth discussions. Both techniques worked effectively, but in an informal setting there was obvious relaxation and on some occasion informal talk led to formal interviews. When I first talked to Pulle Twaku about my research he quickly said: ‘Our rugby has a very long history indeed, and there are many people who are still alive who could give you lots of information on these issues. In fact, rugby is myself ...’. As we were still talking, Author Willard, his Winter Rose colleague joined us. Before long, we were in an in-depth discussion. One of the highlights of this conversation was when Willard revealed that he had kept a team list of Gomo Rugby Football Union team of the early 1960s, which comprised amongst others, Vukile Tshwete. I continued to ask more questions, emphasising that the only name reflected in the list was Vukile instead of Steven or both.¹³



University of Port Harcourt
Together in Excellence

This work studies the origins of black rugby, how it developed over many decades and its response to the South African sport unification process. To gather this sort of information, it inevitably called for a particular kind of population. The population of people able to offer information about the early black people’s involvement in rugby inevitably meant drawing a sample from a largely aged population. Human life is one thing that is beyond our control and prediction, thus this effectively meant I could not secure everyone that I otherwise would have wanted to interview. This was a fact that I had to accept and live with. In Twaku’s list, the

¹¹Interview Ntandazo “Jujuju” Mabija, 669 NU 10 Mdantsane, 30 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mabija); Louis Leo Mtshizana, 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana); Lappley “Swarie” Sontshi, 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 16 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Sontshi).

¹²Interview Ben “Ta-Ben” Tengimfene, 19 Nahum Road, Albrow Gardens, Milnerton, Cape Town: Western Cape, 6 February 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tengimfene).

¹³This is an important piece of information because I also learnt that the name Steve(n), for some reason was mainly preferred in Tshwete’s political career at the expense of Vukile.

first person was his father, Waka Twaku. The latter passed away one day before our prearranged interview and I was left attending his funeral, which in fact helped me a lot in as far as locating many people in my long list of potential informants. My sadness over the death of this man, and many others, was exacerbated by the fact that, as they continued “to wave us good bye”, I had already, as in the case of Waka Twaku, drawn up my schedule with appointments arranged and confirmed. There is little doubt that people like AS Magalela, Mhani Kotobe, J Dweni, W Rigala, Zachariah C Futshane, Sydney Stuurman, Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana (the founding fathers of Swallows RFC), Joe Mqikana, Pat Cossie, DM Jongilanga, WSM Bashe, Fanti Gaqa, Grant Kgomo, Eric Majola, Sipho Siwisa, Victor Siwisa, Sipho Gordon Qumza, TW Gqibithole and many early East London rugby folk who passed away decades ago could have offered valuable insight for this work. Ben ‘Ta-Ben’ Tengimfene, Vukile Steven Tshwete, Louis Leo Mtshizana have since died as well. May their souls rest in everlasting peace!



A Brief Overview of the Early Organised Sport in South Africa and its Subsequent Developments over the Years

University of Fort Hare

Together in Excellence

In the literature, which describes life in the early Dutch colony, sport was hardly mentioned. What there was, was of a generally informal nature.¹⁴ The arrival of the British in 1795 initiated a new era in sport in South Africa. They brought with them a capitalist system and formal military organisation. It was around this period that organised sport in South Africa began to show signs of developing.¹⁵ At the beginning of the nineteenth century the first formal cricket match was recorded between the officers of the Artillery and the Officers of the Colony.¹⁶ On 23 August 1862, the first recorded rugby match, between the military and the civilians, took

¹⁴See Marquard, L, *The people and politics of South Africa*, Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1952, p.63; Leonard, FE and Affleck, GB, *The History of Physical Education*, Lea and Febiger, Philadelphia, 1947, p.423, in PG Anderson, ‘An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport (1970-1979)’, University of Stellenbosch: D. Phil, 1979, p.35

¹⁵See Leck, N, *South African Sport*, Cape Town, MacDonald, 1977, p.4, in Anderson, ‘An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport, 1979, p.35.

¹⁶For the detail of the early South African cricket see Anderson, ‘An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport’, 1979, p.35 and A Odendaal. *Cricket in Isolation. The Politics of Race and Cricket in South Africa*, Cape Town, Andre Odendaal, 1977.

place at Green Point Common in Cape Town.¹⁷ The beginnings of black people's sport, which is explored in detail as the main theme of this work, were obscure but certainly informal.¹⁸

Although in the nineteenth century, racism in sport in South Africa was not entrenched by legislation, it was nonetheless firmly rooted. With the coming to power of the National Party (NP) government in 1948 the lines became more finely drawn. On one side, the Afrikaners nationalists' government, with great determination, set about structuring apartheid society and thus, apartheid sport, while in opposition were "non-racialists" who envisaged a society where sport was egalitarian.¹⁹ Proper understanding of these issues therefore, should contribute to a greater appreciation of present sports developments in the country. However, literature specifically in the area of black people's rugby is scanty.

In terms of formal organisation, one challenge that black sportsmen have had to contend with over the years is that sport has, until recently, been administered under a dichotomous system. From its inception, there was an establishment (white) side and a non-establishment (black) side within their respective umbrella bodies, i.e. national federations affiliated to "an all-purpose" organisation.²⁰ However, as one of the building blocks in achieving a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society in South Africa, in the 1990s, racially divided national sport bodies unified under single non-racial structures. The unity, for instance, of South African rugby football's racially segregated structures became paramount. Sport was believed to have potential to either unite or further divide the country at the time. South African rugby

¹⁷See Leck, *South African Sport*, 1977, p.4, in Anderson, 'An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport', p.35.

¹⁸See Anderson, 'An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport, 1979', p.35.

¹⁹See Anderson, 'An investigation into the effect of race and politics on the development of South African sport', 1979, p.35.

²⁰See Goslin, A, 'Human resource management as a fundamental aspect of a sport development strategy in South African communities', *Journal of Sport Management*. 10: 1996: 207-217.

unity, with specific focus on the East London rugby unification process, is another key theme explored in this work.

The Role of History: Persistent White Peoples' Beliefs about Black Sportsmen

A Guide to South African Sport claims that the policy of separate development that the NP government put into practice more than five decades ago was not new. It asserts that it

...can be traced back to the days when Jan van Riebeeck as commander of the refreshment station at the Cape planted the seeds for a hedge of wild almond trees to form the boundary between Hottentots (sic) [coloureds] and whites. Thus, sports clubs through most of South Africa's history have been inevitably uniraical. Whites and blacks simply did not mix socially, and thus would not mix on the country's sports fields. This was the legacy of history for which the founder members of the first sports clubs, provincial and unions and national bodies cannot be held responsible. By the time it dawned upon sports men and women that in the eyes of God all are created equal, mixed clubs were out of the question owing to the historical separation which had now become government policy...²¹

White perceptions of black abilities in sport have taken and are still taking time to alter. For instance, until very recently many white South Africans explained that inequality in South African sports facilities and achievement was because black South Africans had started playing modern sports late compared to whites and therefore had a lot of ground to make up. This assumption reflected whites' ignorance of black society, history, and culture.²²

In fact, sports practices such as running, wrestling, stick-fighting, spear-throwing, dancing, and even some ball-games, had been an integral part of black societies in South Africa for many centuries before the arrival of Europeans. In the late nineteenth century, British sports came to South Africa with the expansion of British colonialism, and soon thereafter blacks began to adopt soccer in a number of places. However, in the Eastern and the Western Cape, rugby and cricket came to be played by many African [especially Xhosa] and coloured people.²³ As the country

²¹See Nedbank Group, *A Guide to South African Sport*, 1987, p. 164.

²²See Correspondence from Peter Alegi, 08 October 2001:to H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU, 'SANN to ANC', Peter Alegi, Eastern Kentucky University: Peter.Alegi@eku.edu.

²³See Correspondence from Peter Alegi, 08 October 2001:to H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU, 'SANN to ANC', Peter Alegi, Eastern Kentucky University: Peter.Alegi@eku.edu.

transformed itself from a predominantly agricultural to an industrial capitalist society in a single generation, sport became a significant part of urban black society and culture. '[Sport]...encapsulated the radical social changes brought about by rapid industrialization, land dispossession, and economic subordination in modern South Africa'.²⁴ However, an example from 1977, *The Official South African Year Book* claims that

...it is only comparatively recently that the Black peoples have shown a marked increase in what may be called modern sporting activities. For centuries they found their recreation in traditional activities, such as hunting and tribal dances. It was the White nation, with its European background and tradition, which participated in the recognised sports...²⁵

Many former Springbok captains echoed this apartheid thinking. In 1971 Hannes Marais, later a convenor of the South African selection panel, suggested that, 'The Coloured population does not seem very interested in sport. They do not play much rugby and cricket'.²⁶ In 1980, another Springbok captain, Dawie de Villiers, later a cabinet minister in Nelson Mandela's government of national unity, declared: 'Don't forget that Blacks have really known western sports [only] for the last ten years. [Therefore] they have naturally not yet reached the same standards'.²⁷ Mathemba Ngconde Balfour, the present Minister of Sport told delegates about an episode at one press briefing that he attended early in 2000, where a Springbok team was to be named. A certain former captain, whom he declined to name, listed his suggested squad, which excluded any Black players. Sensing uneasiness, he remarked, 'You must be wondering why I have no Blacks in my team, the answer is simple, Blacks are untrainable'.²⁸

²⁴See Correspondence from Peter Alegi, 08 October 2001:to H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU, 'SANNC to ANC', Peter Alegi, Eastern Kentucky University: Peter.Alegi@eku.edu.

²⁵See Archer, R and Boullion, A, *The South African game*, London, pp. 8-9, 1982; see also Paul Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, South African Rugby Board: 'Federation', Cape Town, Wim Reinders & Assoc, South Africa, 1989, p. 167.

²⁶See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p. 167.

²⁷See Archer & Boullion, *The South African game*, 1982, p.8.

²⁸See Ngconde Mathemba Balfour, 'Address by Minister of Sport', p.8, in South African Rugby Football Union (SARFU), 'Conference against racism, prejudice and discrimination in South African Rugby: The Emergence of the SA Rugby Chapter 2000', 30 - 31 May 2000.

The former South African hooker Uli Schmidt was famous for his dynamic and surprise tries throughout the rugby-playing world. However, off the field he appeared to be trapped in old apartheid beliefs. In 1994 he declared that 'rugby was not a natural game for blacks to play. It is not in their culture. They should play soccer'.²⁹ It is apparent that Schmidt was echoing what many white South African rugby people have come to accept as truth. And although they try to cloak this fact in new-South Africa-speak, their views are grounded in old-style apartheid principles, which implicitly explain racial domination and discrimination as 'natural'.³⁰

Now, this study, through the oral testimonies of black sport people and existing documents, is aimed at disproving the illusion that present inequalities in rugby evolved naturally, existing because black South Africans were apathetic to rugby and or 'were not suited to it, culturally, psychologically, emotionally, and physically'.³¹ Odendaal argues that this underlying assumption, which still directly and indirectly permeates rugby despite 'unity' and the country's democratic system, is due to the 'muddled arrogance' and unhappiness that have characterised South African rugby in recent years.³² That it is still expressed with such aggressiveness is indicative of a deep-seated and enduring racism in South African sport and society. For the future of the game, racism in its overt as well as hidden forms needs to be addressed and eradicated at the highest levels by rugby administrations, writes Odendaal.³³ South Africa's black rugby players and the wider sport playing community are underdeveloped as a direct result of the country's adverse past history.

²⁹See Cape Times, 'SA Blacks not made to play rugby, says Uli Schmidt', *Cape times*, 26, October 1994, in Grundlingh, A, Odendaal, A and Spies, B, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society - The Untold Story of Black Rugby in South Africa*, 1995, p.24.

³⁰See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.24.

³¹See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.24.

³²See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.24.

³³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.24.

The South African black population has a long rugby and sports history, writes Vukile Steven Tshwete.³⁴ This study attempts to locate black rugby in its historical and sociological contexts, identifies the main aspects of its development and analyses internal problems and contradictions, while also providing some details of general interest for rugby enthusiasts.

Literature Review

The writer has drawn from a number of sources including in-depth interviews with East London rugby enthusiasts, miscellaneous newspaper articles mostly in the vernacular, and English articles and other related non-academic sources. The current work builds on a number of important earlier works. However, oral sources form the heart of this study on the origins and development of black rugby in East London. This therefore distinguishes this work from earlier works on this topic. While other researchers chose to confine their work to written sources others for some reason tapped very thinly on the massively large population of potential informants. Part of the major challenge is the actual writing about black rugby. There is reasonable consensus that the historiography on this topic is apparently remarkably underdeveloped.³⁵ On one level, a body of material generated by rugby enthusiasts has been consulted. A good example is the 'Swallows Rugby Football Club's 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Brochure', by Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, a former Swallows player and club administrator, Mdantsane Rugby Union (MDARU) and Border. In this brochure, Ngqondela compiled all earlier Swallows brochures from the club's 25th anniversary to its 75th in 1986, blending it with earlier local newspaper sources. Academic material such as the *Xhosa in Town* series has been consulted. Phillip Mayer and Iona Mayers's *Townsmen or Tribesmen* (1961) followed by BA Pauw's *The Second Generation*, with other studies by MW Hunter, H

³⁴Sport in this case solely refers to the South Africa's rugby football game. Vukile Steven Tshwete, 'Challenges Facing Non-racial Sport', p. 20. This paper was delivered as a keynote address at the national launch of the National Olympic Sports Congress (NOSC) in June 1990, and was published in Cheryl Robert, *Challenges facing South African Sports*, Township Publishing Co-operative Editions, Cape Town, South Africa, 1990.

³⁵See Peires, JB, "'Facta non verba": Towards a history of black rugby', paper presented at the History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, 1981. A version of this paper also appeared in *Work in Progress*, April 1981. For more information on black rugby's historiography, see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995; Abduraman Booley, *The Forgotten Heroes: History of black rugby - 1882-1992*, Manie Booley Publications, 1998.

Reader, KPT Tankard, Cook, G and Opland, J, EL Nel, G Minkley, L Maqasho and others who pioneered academic research on urban Africans in East London have been useful. The abovementioned works lay a foundation in understanding the social structures of the early East London black society. There are some texts that do not necessarily deal with the East London social structures that have been consulted and indeed they do cast some light to this topic. For instance, Elaine Unterhalter's *Forced Removal* (1987), do cast some light on how vicious the apartheid regime was in handling people and the whole process of removals. This book is useful in many ways for this study.

The first chapter of the present work is an attempt to look at the latter issue within the context of understanding the social dynamics that underpinned the establishment and organisation of the early rugby clubs in the area. There are some other academic works that focussed mainly on black rugby such as "Facta-non-Verba": Towards the history of Black rugby in Eastern Cape' by Jeff Peires in 1981. Peires's article initiated the exploration of the history of African rugby in the Eastern Cape and helped bring the importance of sport in understanding South African history to the notice of academic researchers. It can be safely argued that Peires's work is the first on this topic and in fact the first to appear in this angle in the South African historiography. The fact that the early rugby clubs were formed in the Eastern Province, especially Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown, almost compelled Peires to focus his discussion mainly in these areas. In as much as this approach has left the dynamics of this development in regions such as Border, Midlands, South and North Eastern Districts, Transvaal, Western Cape and other areas, as demarcated by the South African Coloured Rugby Football Board (SACRFB), South African Bantu Rugby Football Board (SABRFB) and South African African Rugby Football Board (SAARFB) untapped, Peires's work contributes a great deal to understanding the early developments of the rugby game in black communities. This work is an extremely useful basis to build up any contemporary work on this topic as it eloquently covers black rugby at the time it was written. The history of black rugby outlived the confines and delimitations of research projects such as Peires', thus making the present study more significant.

Further, Cheryl Roberts's edited books, *Sport and Transformation* (1989) and *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, (1990) also form a solid foundation in understanding sports and society, and sport as a discipline. Roberts's editions put South African sports in the level where it probably never reached before in this country. Roberts' two edited books are a collection of papers by academics, sports administrators, politicians, trade unionists, journalists and other individuals that keenly contributed in the issues pertaining to an apparently "new" and "less illustrious" discipline, the "sport sociology", amongst citizens of this country.

The chapters on black rugby in Paul Dobson's (1989) *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, are also significant. Dobson is a former official historian of the establishment South African Rugby Board (SARB) and he contributed a chapter about the history of South African Rugby Association (SARA) and South African Rugby Football Federation (SARFF) respectively. These were the rugby bodies of some sections of African and coloured populations that affiliated to the SARB between 1973 till 1989, the era that shaped the new face of South African rugby. In as much as Dobson's work is useful in the South African sports historiography, it is not more than a mere record book that chronologically outlines events as believed to have occurred about the history in question. It lists events though impressively and sometimes in detail, it has rather abandoned the role of analysing and conceptualising it within the context of this dynamic history.

The book entitled *Beyond the Tryline*, edited by Albert Grundlingh, Andre Odendaal and Burrridge Spies (1995) is also helpful, especially the first two chapters by Grundlingh and Odendaal entitled 'The new politics of rugby' and 'The thing that is not round: The untold story of black rugby in South Africa', respectively. The latter work is pertinent in understanding the issues that are raised in this topic, however, like many others it could not accommodate every aspect of this longstanding history. It can be said though that it is probably the most comprehensively researched work on this topic, especially considering the period covered. The present study draws significantly from *Beyond the Tryline*, but this is done in the context of not only bridging the obvious gaps, it critically looks at some of the sources used, and more importantly, puts the untapped Border and East London rugby's origins and development into perspective.

Abduraman Manie Booley's *The Forgotten Heroes: History of Black Rugby - 1882-1992*, published in 1998 is to a certain degree consulted. In as much as this served as one of the useful sources in its own right, it falls short of several basic features of a credible text. To many who have some understanding of this topic, this book, is rather more elaborate on one section of black rugby and this is probably understandable to some, given the nature of work covered, sources consulted, the angle of presentation, the tone the researcher and the researcher's background and maybe the complexity and divergence in meaning of the appellation "black" to many people. This work however, outlines the rugby history in an interestingly demarcated block of chapters.

There are other works on South African sport that have been consulted. These are crucial in putting this topic into perspective. For instance John Nauright's *Sport, Cultures, and Identities in South Africa*, (1998); Chris De Broglio's *South African Sport: Racism in Sport* (1970) and Sam Ramsamy's *Apartheid – The Real Hurdle: Sport in South Africa & the International Boycott* (1996), are useful in uncovering the complicating and sometimes hidden dimensions of South African sport history. The latter two deal with the non-racial sports movement and how it operated outside the country following the repressive actions of the apartheid regime, and also demonstrate the ills of the apartheid ideology.

Constructing the East London Black Rugby History from Oral Sources

Since oral sources are a backbone of this study, the substantial body of literature available on oral history must be mentioned. In *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, Kennedy and Davis show how oral histories can be used to construct a social history.³⁶ Their book provides an example of an academic study based entirely on oral sources.

Despite the fact there was reluctance in responding to questions that some informants deem sensitive, controversial, the voices of the previous and contemporary

³⁶Kennedy, EL and Davis, MD, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*, 1994.

East London rugby people cannot be dismissed. Luvuyo Wotshela argues although oral tradition has its problems, written documents are not faultless.³⁷ As orthodox black rugby historical writing has until recently been dominated by settler perceptions that hinge on written white official sources and private publications like newspapers, black oral tradition has been denied relevance. Although this is changing, oral evidence is still frequently ignored.³⁸ This is not a call to substitute written sources by oral evidence; rather it is a call for openness. Dismissal of oral sources may imply a number of fallacies. Wotshela is helpful here, mentioning at least two of these:

Firstly, it can imply that since some black communities' activities have not been documented, they have no history. Secondly, it can imply that the uneducated within the black population in the locations and townships have no idea of their history, and therefore we (historians) need to write it for them.³⁹ This is not the case. Knowledge and opinions are not only stored in written sources. Sometimes they are registered in people's minds.⁴⁰

The story of the two Border teams that attended the interprovincial tournament in Cape Town in 1958 is vividly remembered by both these different parties that were directly involved in this quagmire. Wotshela argues that the study of the past has always been dismissed as either a waste of time or packed with lies but a systematic study of human behaviour in society necessitates analysis of social, economical and political action over a prolonged period. The present hinges on the past and the two cannot be divorced.⁴¹

It is appropriate to clarify my stance concerning significant issues in historical writing such as fact, interpretation and accuracy. This study seeks to present a history of black rugby in East London, but not in the sense that it tells the true and whole story of the period under investigation. Besides the fact that it has been limited to specific chosen sample and issues, it also cannot obtain full historical accuracy.

³⁷Wotshela in 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.13.

³⁸Wotshela in 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994 listed the following sources that have relied on oral tradition: Peires, *House of Phalo and Dead Will Arise*; Stapleton, 'Maqoma'; A Westaway, 'The formulation of modern power configurations in the Ciskei district of Keiskammahoek, from 1948 to the present', Rhodes University: MA dissertation, 1993. The works by Jeff Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981; Daniel Massey, *The History of Fort Hare and its student Activities, 1933 – 1973*, Fort Hare University: MA dissertation (unpublished), 2001, also relies heavily on oral testimonies.

³⁹Wotshela, 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.13.

⁴⁰Wotshela, 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.13.

⁴¹Wotshela, 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.14.

Wotshela is helpful here: 'Oral and written sources are impressionistic as they originate with people'.⁴²

Moreover, the writer's interpretations, opinions and sometimes emotions might have influenced this writing, though every attempt has been made to avoid the adverse effects of the latter. Thus it would be deceptive to suggest that this is a wholly true history of the nineteenth and twentieth century East London black rugby. Although use of evidence is one aspect of acceptable methodology in historical writing, objective use of historical facts is impossible. EH Carr is helpful here: 'The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate'.⁴³ Further, though the written sources are always useful in any form of research, Tonkin asserts that written accounts can be full of prejudices, false inhibitions, and myopias.⁴⁴ Portelli points out that oftentimes written documents are only the uncontrolled transmission of unidentified oral sources.⁴⁵ As it has been briefly shown above and as it will be further illustrated below, the South African society has been extremely segregated, with whites accorded special status at the expense of the black majority. The white folk had been in control and were the most influential in the lives of the latter population, using every oppressive agent in their possession. Thus, it becomes apparent that the literature available on black sportsmen invariably shows little objectivity. Portelli writes that oral sources give us information about social groups whose written history is either missing or distorted.⁴⁶ The history of black sportsmen, where documented, is largely misrepresented.

Oral history therefore becomes a valuable technique for recording the experiences of those people Ralph Ellison refers to as the invisible.⁴⁷ To a certain extent, black sportsmen, rugby players in this case fall into this Ellison's category. Documents on the history of black sports from black sportsmen perspective are scanty and the limited availability is difficult to access. The written material available is often authored by "outsiders", sometimes falls short of scientific and or academic writing

⁴²Wotshela, 'Transformation in Late Colonial Ngqika Society, 1994, p.14.

⁴³Carr, EH, *What is History?* 1962, p.6.

⁴⁴Tonkin, E, *In narrating Our Past*, 1992.

⁴⁵Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different,' 1998, p.68.

⁴⁶Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different,' 1998, p.68.

⁴⁷Massey, 'History of Fort Hare', 1996, p.27.

ethics and nature, and its authenticity is questionable, thus using it to understand the origins and the dynamics in the development of black rugby is inherently problematic. For example, the apartheid's South African sport authorities had a publications such as *The Official South African Year Book; A Guide to South African Sport*, sponsored by Nedbank Group; *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, sponsored by all white's SARB.⁴⁸ To Massey, these sources inevitable fall into Ellison's category of 'those lies his keepers keep their power by.'⁴⁹ Portelli writes that the

Critical effect of oral history is to allow evidence from a new direction. The historian can juxtapose the statement of the government or the trade union headquarters with the voice of the rank and file. There can be no doubt that this should make for a more realistic reconstruction of the past.⁵⁰

To Massey, oral attempts to provide answers to Ellison's admonition in *Invisible Man* that people are forced to live outside of history.⁵¹ *Invisible Man* asks, 'We who write no novels, histories or other books. What about us?'⁵² By trying to make the unknown known, and attempting to give a voice to the traditionally unheard, oral history expands the realm of history to include previously unrecorded lives and events.⁵³ Portelli writes that the

recounting of a strike through the words and memories of workers rather than those of the police and the (often unfriendly) press obviously helps (though not automatic) to balance a distortion implicit in those sources. Oral sources are a necessary (not a sufficient) condition for a history of the nonhegemonic classes, who have had control over writing and leave behind a much more abundant writing record.⁵⁴

However, oral sources do more than just unmask straight history. Unlike letters, personal papers or other documents, oral history 'paves the way for a new social history which asks questions not about what happened, but about the historical process of complex societies.'⁵⁵ In *Boot of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, the authors use oral history to show how a working class and less lesbian consciousness emerged in Buffalo. In 'Oral History and the Presentation of Class Consciousness: *The New York*

⁴⁸ See *The Official South African Year Book*, 1977; also see Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.24; Nedbank Group, *A Guide to South African Sport*, 1987, p. 164; Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989.

⁴⁹ Massey, 'History of Fort Hare', 1996, p.28.

⁵⁰ Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different,' 1998, p.68.

⁵¹ Massey, 'History of Fort Hare', 1996, p.28.

⁵² Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.68.

⁵³ Massey, 'History of Fort Hare', 1996, p.28.

⁵⁴ Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different,' 1998, p.68.

⁵⁵ Grele, R, ed., *Envelops of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony*, 1975, p.3.

Times v. The Buffalo Unemployed,’ Frisch’s point is not the unpleasantness of life for the unemployed in Buffalo. Rather, what he is trying to depict is a consciousness amongst narrators that attempted to understand while it transcended the hardship of everyday life.⁵⁶

Though my interviews with the East London rugby enthusiasts revealed unknown events or unknown aspects of known events, oral history is less about exact events and more about their meaning in a broader sense. While written sources tell us that SAARFB’s rugby enthusiasts fervently supported the call to boycott the celebrations of the “Union of South Africa” in 1960 by their president, Luis Leo Mtshizana, oral accounts relate just how that boycott thrust many of those involved on a course of political insurgence from which they perhaps might not have participated in if the political situation was different. Oral histories do not only enable us to trace the *earliest* relationship between rugby and politics and level of political development amongst rugby enthusiasts of the day, but also reveal their level of commitment to this development. They do not only tell us about the bold call by Mtshizana to change the name of the African’s national rugby body, SABRFB to SAARFB in 1961, but what that change meant to those involved. Portelli writes that oral sources are unique because they

Tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they now think they did. Oral sources may not add much to what we know, for instance, of the material cost of a strike to the workers involved; but they tell us a good deal about its psychological costs.⁵⁷

In the case of the study of East London black rugby, oral sources do add to our knowledge of specific events. More importantly, however, they help us gain an overall picture of how specific events and people worked to create a distinguishable popular culture though there were challenges such as poor resources and the broader country’s social conditions that it faced. In his article entitled ‘What is Social in Oral History’, Samuel Schraner applauds this transcendent feature of oral history. He notes that ‘experience comes to make sense by being connected with others’

⁵⁶Frisch, M, ‘Oral History and the Presentation of Class Consciousness: *The New York Times v. The Buffalo Unemployed*’, in Michael Frisch, ed., *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* Albany, State University of New York Press, 1990, pp.59-80.

⁵⁷Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, 1998, p.67.

experiences'.⁵⁸ In his work Schranger interviewed immigrants to Idaho and recalls that 'every person I have recorded could tell how their family came to Idaho'. Much like Schranger's informants telling of how they arrived in Idaho, each East London rugby enthusiast that I interviewed vividly revealed how, by whom and why rugby clubs were formed in their locations. When put together, these individual accounts provide a historical record of the manner in which rugby originated and developed in the area over a hundred years and help to illuminate the nature and character of this black society. Finding commonality in seemingly disparate informants' accounts links together fundamental matters of personal, family and community identity.⁵⁹

Schranger writes, 'the single account belongs to an entire narrative environment. It is only by recognising its resemblance to related accounts that we can begin to locate its traditionality (sic). Heard in the context of other narratives rather than in isolation, stories are full of resonances' (sic).⁶⁰ In the case of the East London rugby enthusiasts the piecing together of narratives does indeed allow us to construct a social history of black rugby in the area. Specifically, it allows us at least attempt to find answers as to why rugby was predominantly played in the black urban areas compared to the rural parts of the country and the intimate relationship between rugby, school and politics within these communities and perhaps in South Africa generally. Through interviews, the passion for rugby amongst blacks in this area becomes obvious. By looking into individuals' background and then locating what Schranger calls their traditionality, themes of rugby origins and development, rugby as popular culture in East London locations, relationships between rugby and schooling, rugby and politics emerged. For example, many rugby enthusiasts born in East London first played rugby in *mbambo* teams then in primary schools and later in their respective "family clubs", while most of those born outside East London indicated that they first played rugby when they arrived in East London. Many such as Theophilus Mgijima Sam state that they first time they got to know about rugby football was when they "relocated" to East London. It was at Welsh School that they first experienced playing the game and outside school, Swallows-Union regular encounters ignited the interest in many young stars like Sam. 'Xa kudlala ezi team

⁵⁸Schranger, S, 'What is Social in Oral History', (this was originally from Roberts Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., *Oral History Reader*, Routledge, London, 1998, p.288).

⁵⁹Schranger, 'What is Social in Oral History', 1998, p.288.

⁶⁰Schranger, 'What is Social in Oral History', 1998, p.288.

zimbini ayakuqiniseka mpel'ukuba ngenene kudlala abantu abayaziyo lento bayidlalayo! [Whenever these two teams meet, you will learn that their players indeed know this game!]. When examined as a whole, the path of rugby origins and development in East London black areas included some or all of the following: parental, or familial and or home (*amakhaya*) influences; the local mission primary schools' and or Welsh high school's influences; individual "rugby-mad" teachers and students; specific personal contacts with the elder rugby enthusiastic population within the community and the socio-cultural nature of the community itself.

In all, I collected stories from twenty eight people associated with East London rugby, beginning with Lapple "Swarie" Sontshi, who arrived in East London in the early 1930s and ending with people such as Patsa Joe Matyeshana, Dumisani Mhani, Thobile Mtya, Mahlubandile Puzi and Justice Mbadamana, who played and retired in the late 1980s, the era just before rugby unity. Since this study relies both on written and oral evidence, though largely on the latter, I was able to start as far back as the late 1880s because that is as far back as written sources and living rugby enthusiasts' memories reach. I believe, more so, that the 1880s are an appropriate place to begin examining the origins and developments of black rugby in East London and of course in any rugby playing area amongst black communities. This decade witnessed the emergence and metamorphosis of rugby within missionary schools and communities alike. For example, this was the era that the SACRFB, the rugby body for coloured and African people, was formed. Similarly, the late 1990s are appropriate to end this study. The era of unity negotiations from 1991 to 1992 saw many former black rugby players and administrators assuming active political, business roles while others either formed the core of administration of the newly formed sports federations or stopped participating in sport activities at all. To appropriately cover this period, specific people were interviewed in view of their special roles in rugby in the area, though they were neither born nor were previous residents of East London.

I do not claim to be writing the definitive history of black rugby. Noting that it is impossible to exhaust the entire memory of a single informant as Portelli suggests, that historical work using oral sources will always be unfinished due to the

nature of the sources.⁶¹ Additionally, in order to go through all the possible sources for the East London black rugby history, one would have to interview a multitude of rugby enthusiasts multiple times. As Portelli suggests, any sample would only be as reliable as the sampling methods used, and could never guarantee against leaving out exceptional narrators whose testimonies alone might be worth ten of these statistically selected.⁶²

With the assistance of ZG Mahambehala and Pulle Twaku, I set about identifying East London *early* rugby clubs and individual enthusiasts who played specific, significant and credible roles in the development of rugby in the area over the years. Though my initial parameter for identifying prospective informants was their age, level of rugby involvement as players and administrators within the specific chosen clubs, after a brief pilot study, and as I delved deeper into this study, I met more rugby enthusiasts and read more papers. Consequently, I was not only able to identify informants outside the initially chosen sample (i.e., selected clubs), but their testimonies were essential towards gaining a more adequate understating of the origins and development of a segregated rugby history of the area and its subsequent trajectories towards an ultimately unified and transforming game in the late 1990s. Owing to the nature of this project and in order for me to be able to adequately respond to the questions I am posing here, I was compelled into looking at the broad rugby history of this area, though only for the purpose of analysing the precisely chosen themes pertaining to this study that selected clubs formed the key focus. Massey reasons that in choosing their potential informants, oral historians introduce their own judgements about the historical process:⁶³ ‘Why men rather than women? Strike leaders rather than followers? Strikers rather than strikebreakers?’⁶⁴

I did not limit myself when selecting informants. My initial list of potential informants was composed mostly of the people who were born and bred and or longstanding East London residents who are at the present time either still residing in East London and those that have since relocated. The latter group include people who came to study or work in East London as individuals and or to join their families

⁶¹Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, 1998, p.71.

⁶²Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, 1998, p.71.

⁶³Massey, ‘History of Fort Hare’, 1996, p.32.

⁶⁴Grele, *Envelops of Sound*, 1975, p.5.

during their youth, and thus, subsequently got involved in rugby. These groups were of little convenience in that they were easy to identify, locate and actually reach. While some were born and bred in East London location, others came either as individual labourers in search for employment or as young lads to join their respective fathers and or families to pursue their secondary education at Welsh High School as many regions with the Border area did not have learning institutions of this magnitude. Though most were mature folk, way over their seventieth and eightieth birthdays, there was a handful of middle-aged informants. This age-range complemented the possible void as a result of the fact that this project naturally covers a vast period. For instance, it was not uncommon for the most mature informants to either claim not to know anything concerning the contemporary accounts because they are 'no longer involved in rugby' and or entirely decline commenting on the recent rugby transformation processes, especially the era beyond the 1980s.

On the other level of the earlier mentioned informants' diversity, while some were notable rugby players at various levels, others were distinguished administrators in their own right during their respective eras. However, more often, I learnt that many East London rugby enthusiasts that I interviewed assumed both aforementioned roles. During their youth, many played rugby and when they grew older developed to be administrators or both. When I began, before the pilot study, I assumed that I would limit my study only to players. However, the player-come-administrator group and sole administrators taught me a great deal about the origins and development black rugby historiography in East London as well. I learnt of the importance rugby had in the socio-cultural development of the people in the area.

To a certain extent, some of my contacts were as a result of luck. Though I carefully constructed a list of potential informants, sometimes the successful arrangement of an interview depended upon the specific informants schedules, as most of them were still involved in other things outside of rugby such as church and community service. Another thing that I learnt not to under estimate was of course their health status as most of them were of an aged population. While Pulle Twaku made every effort not only to direct me to crucial potential informants, he facilitated many of my meetings with them. Ironically, he could not do anything to save his own fathers' "escaping" our prearranged meeting who passed away a day before we could

meet. Many crucial East London rugby enthusiasts that could have made a difference in this project bid farewell before I could even conceive and commence my work. The likes of W Gqibithole, Siphso Gordon Qumza, Mpilo WB Rubusana, M Kotobe, J Mngqikana, Mhana Mqala, Fanti Gaqa, TB Lujiza, Victor Siwisa, Leander Fikile Siyo, Kholisile Tanana, George Mnyute, Gill Ntoni, WSM Bashe, DM Jongilanga and many others passed away a few decades before I thought of this project. I must say that luck was almost on my side. After I met ZG Mahambehlala and Pulle Twaku, the ball just rolled. When talking over a phone I noticed an unprecedented interest in almost all the prospective informants that I contacted and this was actually translated into reality when I finally met them. When I got Stutterheim, Mgijima Theophilus Sam had already written a six-page long rugby history of his club, Winter Rose and invariably, the East London's and his own experiences as his proactive contribution to this study. Ndimhle Ngqondela availed the Swallows Rugby Football Club's "much conserved" brochure. A similar enthusiasm was observed from Johannes "Oomdu" Temmers, Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo, Lapple "Swarie" Sontshi and Gemijikile Ndikho Mnyute, who proactively gathered for me their own collection of photos and written material that served as reminiscences to their past experiences.

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Though far from scientific, in the final analysis, I believe my method of selecting informants was productive. Though I unfortunately did not have the opportunity to meet a reasonable number of coloured rugby enthusiasts, I otherwise feel that I interviewed a cross section of the East London rugby population. This was somewhat compensated for by the fact that, according to many East London rugby enthusiasts, EBL and WBL residents, Africans and coloureds lived together, played rugby together and shared similar experiences. In as much as the coloured population had its own separate rugby clubs, many played within black clubs.

Yet despite the varied origins of my informants, there are inescapably homogeneous aspects to these groups. Many started their rugby 'careers' at *mbambo* teams during formative years, spent some time in East London and most studied in the various mission primary schools in East London and other areas within the Border region. These young men progressed to the Welsh High School at EBL or heading to Healdtown at Fort Beaufort, or Lovedale and or Fort Hare in Alice, and with some getting involved in politics. It is apparent that a reasonable number of these

informants was part of a relatively elite, educated sector of society, and possessed an understanding of socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political dynamics of the South African society and its controversial sport transformation. This rendered them aware of the quasi-political nature of their narrative. Thus, though diverse when viewed holistically, all the informants had common broader social experiences and rugby and education backgrounds that must be taken into account when analysing the interviews. It is difficult to say precisely what effects this has had on the project, but it must be noted.

After deciding, or having it decided for me by logistics who my informants were going to be, my focus shifted to the structure of the interview sessions. I adhered to the advice Alessandro Portelli offers when he writes, 'accept the informant and give priority to what she or he wishes to tell, rather than what the researcher wants to hear'.⁶⁵ At the same time, knowing that I was primarily interested in writing about the origins and development of black rugby in East London through the informants' individual and or group roles and contributions, I had to be sure that informants gave me comparable information relating to the growth and transformation of black rugby over the years. Therefore, I attempted to ask questions to informants without interrupting their control over the flow of the interview. To achieve this, I predominantly designed short, open-ended questions, beginning with asking the informant to tell me how rugby originated and developed over the years in East London in relation to how he fits into this whole picture. This invariably meant that they all told me something about their family backgrounds. Notably, this would often be enough to elicit the interest of the narrator and he would begin to elaborate without much further encouragement from me. The questions that I was intending to ask after this such as whether their parents were active rugby players and or administrators and what they did for living, were never actually asked because informants would almost instinctively answered them. I made a conscious effort to avoid putting too many words in the mouth of the informants, hoping that they share their most profound experiences with me. I interjected questions only when I needed clarification and or it was obvious that the narrator had finished what he was saying.

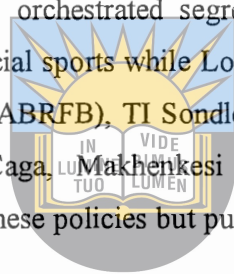
⁶⁵Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.70.

Beyond the non-structured questionnaire as my interview research tool, I did not construct a fixed interview format. As I conducted more interviews I began to notice a discernible difference between the way rugby enthusiasts who were active players and or administrators prior the 1970s and those that participated beyond the later era perceived the fight for and transformation towards non-racialism, ultimate unity of the racially segregated rugby bodies, and the era beyond it. In subsequent interviews I tried to find out as much as I could about these different perceptions of this transformation in an attempt to further understand them. This was helpful in understanding the reluctance to some in responding to contemporary transformation issues such as rugby unity, development programmes, team-representation and structural and or organisational transformation within the sporting codes. When questions on the latter were asked, most aged informants often say “I was no longer involved in rugby at the time”. In fact, Ntandazo “Juju” Mabija does not mince his words saying ‘ask that to Bishop Mgwebi...’⁶⁶ Mgwebi is the current Bush Buck administrator and is also actively participating in a number of the post-unity Border Rugby Union programmes. The tendency to “refer” as shown by Mabija could have threatened writing the second part of the topic of this project that deals with black rugby unity and its response to it. However, this was complemented by the fact that not only some of the mature rugby enthusiasts offered meaning information to the questions posed about the latter, the relatively younger generation of this population that was hands on in these issues such as Dumisani Mhani, Thobile Mtya, Patsa Matyeshana, Mahlubandile Puzi, Justice Mbadamana, Pulle Twaku Christian Ndondo offered invaluable narrative. In an effort to stimulate the memory of informants, I often asked them to compare the present day rugby standards within the black communities and how was it during their era and beyond. Mention of Lappley Sontshi, Eric Majola, Simo Mjo, Sdondi Ceko, P Maneli and Sobhizana Mggikana triggered many informants’ memories into responding with salient recollections of the type and calibre of backline players that black rugby produced over the years.

Similarly, I tried to arrive at the interviews armed with as much specific information as possible about the events surrounding the development of East London black rugby. Often, mention of a specific event or person would spur the informants’

⁶⁶Interview Mabija.

memory, resulting in the uncovering of new detail. As I was looking at the origins and development of black rugby and its response to the unity process, I generally did not limit the interviews only into discussing the informants' rugby careers and experiences but also about the broad transformation of the game. These individual narratives illuminated many things about the lives of the informants, their experiences, and how they view the present day rugby transformation. The informants' rugby and their life experiences certainly affected and or influenced their belief systems, political orientation and response to the changing society. I thus had to carefully look into these pertinent issues. For instance, was there anything in Sipho Tanana, MD Jongilanga, Gecelo Mdyesha, Cuthbeth Loriston, WSM Bashe, Robin Dyers, Grant Kgomo, Isaiah Lindi and his colleagues to continue supporting the Nationalist Party governments' orchestrated segregationist sports policies such as multinational sport and multiracial sports while Louis Leo Mtshizana (as early as the 1958 when he took reigns as SABRFB), TI Sondlo, Abdul Abass, Ben Tengimfene, Ebrahim Patel, Mzwandile Caga, Makhenkesi Stofile and many non-racialist proponents did not only reject these policies but put their lives on the line fighting for change of the status quo.



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Hoffin writes that the interview is a

king of social transition in which each party has direct, though perhaps indeterminate, effect upon each other. The whole array of stimuli emitted by the interviewer – his age, appearances, his manner of speech, his reactions, his preparations, his credentials – will determine how he is perceived by the person being interviewed. And the way he is perceived will in certain measure determine the content, style, and quality of the response he elicits.⁶⁷

Indeed, the information gleaned from oral history is the result of a relationship between the informant and the researcher. Portelli calls it 'a shared project in which both the interviewer and the interviewee are involved together. ...Researchers often introduce specific distortions: informants tell them what they believe they want to be told and thus reveal who they think the researcher is'.⁶⁸ In the case of my East London rugby interviews, I had to be particularly aware of the importance of the relationship between informant and researcher and the effect that this relationship can have on the resulting historical information.

⁶⁷Hoffman, A, 'Reliable and Validity in Oral History', 1984.

⁶⁸Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.71.

Fortunately, almost all my informants warmly accepted me especially after I demonstrated genuine and rare interest in studying black rugby. Often, when I introduced myself to my individual informants, they would ask whether I am playing rugby and if my father and or any of my siblings ever played rugby? My appreciation and comprehension of the game and its dynamic transformation made things easier. I achieved this by doing prior readings about black rugby in early newspapers such as *Imvo Zabantsundu*, *Indaba* and in few books on this topic.

More often than not, I would be interviewed before I did the interviewing. Many of the informants were curious as to how a young man of my age could be interested in rugby in the era where rugby seems to be overtaken by other sporting codes like soccer. Interestingly, this never amounted to any form of tension but a positive and trustworthy relationship between the interviewer and informants was achieved easily. Though almost all my informants were open, easy to communicate with and relaxed, I could not avoid noticing Christian Ndondos' vigilant approach in handling our interview. However, by referring him to his club's (Winter Rose) earlier and present day experiences, I managed to establish myself as someone in serious purpose who he could trust with his recollections.

The very existence of oral history depends on the intervention of an interviewer who collects and presents a version of the stories gathered. As Daphne Patai notes, informants' stories do not exist 'pristine and unchanging in some sphere outside the vicissitudes of human interaction'. Despite my best efforts to refrain from interjecting my own views into the interview sessions, the resulting tapes must be seen, as Patai notes, 'as a point of intersection between two subjectivities – theirs and mine, their cultural assumptions and mine, their memories and my questions, their sense of self and my own, their hesitation and my encouraging words or gestures... and ... more'.⁶⁹ Importantly, although the interviewer asks the questions, this does not mean that he or she plays the defining role in the interview. It is the speaker, the bearer of the memories, who has ultimate control over his or her own stories.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988, p.2.

⁷⁰Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, 1988, p.2.

The memories that the informants shared with me were lively, informative and imbued with a sense of participation in significance and with even heroic events. However, my purpose was not to merely collect individual stories from my informants. I wanted to be able to use those histories as a major source for constructing the history of black rugby in East London and to show how it has transformed over the years, and specifically how it responded to the country's sport unification process. I wanted to use the oral sources to build a collective history of black rugby in East London and to trace the almost forgotten dimensions of this section of population and the range of influences that shaped the world in which black people played and organised rugby. In looking at interviews as a whole I examined them for any patterns that might emerge. Many rugby enthusiasts in East London found it unavoidable playing rugby and Vukile Magqabi's words are helpful here: 'It was just not possible for a man in East Bank Location not to have played rugby... it could have been madness, madness, madness...' ⁷¹ Though the manner in which East London rugby enthusiasts got initiated into rugby football varies given their backgrounds.

Indeed, after having met people who grew to have prominent rugby careers such as Lapple Sontshi, Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo, Louis Leo Mtshizana and those who were not so famous, like Pulle Twaku, Fikile Dunga, Christian Nondo, I discovered that people arrive at rugby world through different paths. With the exception of the East London "borners" who claim to have started their rugby careers at *mbambo* teams, with the local mission primary schools playing a pivotal role in shaping their rugby skills. Many of the informants who were born outside East London such as Ntandazo Mabija and Mgijima Sam, say it was only when they got to East London that they first watched and played their first rugby games. However, to Lapple Sontshi, a former Thembu United RFC player and who was born and bred at Burgersdorp, just as his *earlier* club mate, Simanga Joe Mgqikana, their early rugby experiences are different from those of the other outside East London born lads. Sontshi says he was first initiated into the rugby football back at his birthplace, and that also, rugby was played in schools at Burgersdorp. However, though their individual *early* rugby initiation is different, my informants narrated remarkably

⁷¹Interview Magqabi.

similar histories of the origins and the development of black in East London, and say their stay in the area had a profound influence on their individual rugby career development. Despite the divergent paths that people took and the varied routes that led people to those paths, it is impossible to ignore the fact that for so many, the journey towards the rugby world included assuming multi-facets roles such as being students at the various local mission primary schools, Welsh High School, Lovedale, Healdtown and or Fort Hare; rugby playing and to many, subsequently rugby administration, community leadership, and a degree of involvement in local ANC politics, or Bantustan and or South African politics in general.

Constructing a social history through oral sources does present problems. Individuals are bound to experience history as a life story. However, my role, as Trevor Lummis suggests, was to move beyond the individual accounts to a social interpretation.⁷² Though my informants in the narration of the story of how black rugby originated and developed in East London, through speaking of their individual (and of course of others') roles, in events and transformation of the black rugby world, my task was to examine how their rugby and social experiences and others' experiences contribute to revealing the role East London played in producing a "rugby-mad" society.⁷³ As Lummis writes, if interviews 'cannot be used to contribute to historical understanding, there is no reason for historians to interview people'.⁷⁴

Asking people to discuss their rugby experiences inescapably lends itself to a certain amount of romanticising of the past. This is especially problematic with black rugby as told by the mature folk. Many black rugby enthusiasts have elevated this section of rugby to myth-like proportions. When I arrived in Stutterheim at Mgwali Village, I found Mgijima Sam eagerly awaiting me, with a small book, where in a few pages, a brief history of his club, Winter Rose, was written. Lappley Sontshi had all his rugby blazers, badges, photos and newspapers cuttings he could gather at his reach. A solid four decades removed from active rugby playing experience, his longstanding favourite game inspired him to organise himself such for the interview. Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo welcomed me with the similar enthusiasm. It should be

⁷²Lummis, 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence', in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, ed., London: Routledge, 1998, pp.273-283.

⁷³Interview Magqabi.

⁷⁴Lummis, 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence,' 1998, p.277.

understandable to a certain degree that given the role that East London black rugby played in producing provincial and national sporting and political leaders such as Vukile Steven Tshwete, Sobhizana Mqikana, Ndikho Mnyute, Ben “Ta-Ben” Tengimfene, Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo, Ryan Manuel, Mzwandile Caga, Zola Duniwa leads to the myth-like stature of the popular culture. Mtshizana’s statement is helpful here: ‘... Eric Majola was the best flyhalf that South Africa has ever produced... *u-Majola weye ngu –A* [Majola was an A class player]’.⁷⁵ Sam says

...abantu abantsundu banembal'endu yerabi. Abantu abanyama bayidlale kakhul'irabi kwelilizwe, unjalonje bedlal'irabi ephucukileyo nesemgangathwen'ophuzulu kakhulu. Irab'ekumgangath'ophezulu lee kweyamabhulu. Irab'ebukelekayo nenomtsalane. Amabhulu aphelele kulento yawo yokugilana, irabi yamandla. Abantu abantsundu banesakhono sokuzivulela amathuba xa bedlal'umboxo. Umzekelo, ubhut' Milton Nomgqokwana, andizange ndambon'umntu o-side-steps njengalomntu! ... [Black people have a long rugby playing history. They have played rugby a lot of rugby, and indeed an exciting and of very high standard and quality. While boers have always favoured “a driven power game”, black people’s rugby is characterised by flair, sidestepping and gap-creation. For instance, the old Milton Nomgqokwana: I’ve never seen a person who can sidestep like him...].⁷⁶

I frequently had to steer informants away from general comments about the origins and development of black rugby but into discussing its importance as a popular culture within this population and how it has transformed over the segregationist experiences in the years gone by, and ultimately, its response to rugby unity in the early 1990s and beyond.

In analysing the interviews, I was aware of the potential for romantic narratives. Simultaneously I was inundated by inability to determine how much of the testimony I heard was the result of the myth of this section of rugby and how much could be attributed to legitimate historical recollection. I was comforted by Ronald Grele’s belief that myth and history can operate on the same plane. Grele writes, ‘the historical vision of the past does not replace a mythical vision; rather, in historical societies they exist in dialectical tension with one another and by combination and interaction, they produce a variety of historical visions.’⁷⁷ Similarly, Thomson writes that oral history can help us to understand how and why national mythologies work

⁷⁵Interview Mtshizana.

⁷⁶Interview Sam.

⁷⁷Grele, *Envelops of Sound*, 1975, p.46.

for individuals and societies in general.⁷⁸ Indeed, black rugby' myth-like stature does not render rugby enthusiasts' recollections useless. The mythic vision of the East London black rugby is part of its history.

Similarly, people often turn their own stories into myths by telling what they want you to know about themselves. Grele writes, 'they feel as though they ought to be a certain kind of way or to believe certain kinds of things about themselves and they are reluctant to reveal themselves as not being that way or not feeling those things'.⁷⁹ Patai writes, 'the act of telling one's life story involves a rationalisation of the past as it is projected and leads into an inevitable present. ... A particular version of one's life story may become an essential component in one's sense of identity at a given time'.⁸⁰ In the case of the rugby enthusiasts that I interviewed, this may involve some informants claiming to have played central roles in specific events within the transformation of black rugby.

Without mentioning specific names, one must acknowledge that people are inevitably going to portray history as revolving around their lives. In truth, there is little doubt that people such as former SAARFB president, who in fact transformed it into SAARFB, Louis Leo Mtshizana, Lapple Sontshi, Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo, Bunga Price Richard Ncunyana, Sipho Tanana, John Madodana Ncinane, Patsa Joe Matyeshana and Thobile Mtya, are remarkable figures of black rugby. In the case of these aforementioned rugby enthusiasts, I learned a great deal of the breath and intensity of their contribution to the development of black rugby in the newspapers and other published sources as well as my own personal experiences. As Grele suggests, where written sources are available, they should be used as background as well as corroboration. This highlights an important point about oral history. Oral sources do not replace written ones. Where written sources are available, oral testimonies complements. In my research, I attempted to establish the reliability of my interviews, as Lummis suggests, through use of 'maximum triangulation with other sources'.⁸¹ These additional sources were often newspapers accounts, club

⁷⁸Thomson, 'Anzac Memories: putting popular memory into practice in Australia', in *The Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds., 1998, p.310.

⁷⁹Grele, *Envelopes of Sounds*, 1975, p.69.

⁸⁰Patai, *Brazilian Women Speak*, 1988, p.8.

⁸¹Lummis, 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence', 1998, p.274.

brochures, books, journal articles and sport magazines on rugby issues. By using various sources, interviews are strengthened. To a certain extent, it allows the researcher to distinguish between what the narrators want him to think about them and what they really feel about themselves.⁸²

A frequent criticism of oral sources is that they are distant from events and therefore undergo the distortion of faulty memory.⁸³ Indeed, I interviewed people whom some of them had for many years stopped participating in active rugby, thus with a big gap between their practical rugby experiences and their present day testimonies. Clearly, as Grele suggests, oral history is 'someone's memory of an event, not an exact portrayal of the event'.⁸⁴ Portelli writes that 'changes which may have subsequently taken place in the narrators' personal subjective consciousness or in their socio-economic standing, may affect, if not the actual recounting of prior events, at least the valuation and the "colouring" of the story'.⁸⁵ He talks of informants he encountered who were reserved when it came to describing illegal forms of struggle, such as sabotage. Portelli writes:

This does not mean that they do not remember them clearly, but that there has been a change in their political, opinions, personal circumstances, or in their party's line. ... In these cases, the most precious information may lie in what the informants *hide*, and in the fact that they *do* hide it, rather than what they *tell*.⁸⁶

Some Swallows rugby enthusiasts that I interviewed did not mention the 1958 Gompo and Border rugby split and even when probed to do so, had little to say. Does this tendency throw any light in the fact that Swallows RFC, Spring Rose, Black Lion and some individuals from Bush Buck RFC were central to the turmoil that led to the dramatic change in the leadership of the entire SABRFB?

Justine Willis professes that the "dissonances" of oral history can be useful to historians. Contesting accounts of the past offered by different people force the oral historian to try to understand what causes them. The dissonances reveal varying ideas of the past and suggest why these exist and what their historical significance may

⁸²Grele, *Envelopes of Sounds*, 1975, p.69.

⁸³Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.68.

⁸⁴Grele, *Envelopes of Sounds*, 1975, p.69.

⁸⁵Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.68.

⁸⁶Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', 1998, p.69.

be.⁸⁷ Louis Leo Mtshizana, Ntandazo Mabija, Vukile Magqabi and Fikile Dunga say that Swallows RFC and its 'all-time allies', Spring Rose and Black, together with a few Bush Bucks members such as Sipho Tanana were mingling with them, in the centre of Gompo and Border rugby turmoil of 1958.⁸⁸ However, when I asked Tanana about the 1958 dramatic Border rugby split, he presents himself as a loyal Bush Buck member who supported the legitimate Border Rugby Board which was being toppled by the newly formed rebellious Border Rugby Union, led by the likes of Fikile Siyo and S Xiniwe, with the support of the SABRFB's president Sipho Siwisa. Why Tanana now disowns his rebellious group is some of interest to speculate about.

Trevor Lummis writes that contemporary values clearly shape informants' interpretation of their own past, and impose the subconscious historical structure of the narrative. He notes that people may rationalise an account of the past to harmonise with present viewpoints, writing, 'since people frequently become less radical as they grow older, oral evidence probably has an inherent tendency to under-report conflict, and history as individual experience seems likely to strengthen that trend'.⁸⁹ Many former black rugby players and administrators often meet in a number of social gatherings, in community events and ceremonies and some work together and with relatively changed or added roles may come new renderings of the past. Ndimhle Ngqondela, a former Swallows player and administrator and Mzwandile Caga, a former Winter Rose RFC player and its current president, and the president of unified Border Rugby Union, are colleagues in the East London Education District office. Having been fierce rivals in the playing field and boardrooms, Ngqondela says they are good colleagues at work. However, he does not leave out the fact that though they are seasoned East London rugby enthusiasts, they never talk about rugby at work and in fact anywhere, 'because these things have a potential to sour relations these days'.⁹⁰ One wonders what causes this and when will this *silence* end?

In writing this collective history of black rugby, I intertwine the narrators' voices with both my own and various documentary sources. Though I sought out

⁸⁷WillisJ, 'Two Lives of Mpamizo: Understanding Dissonance in Oral History', *History in Africa*, vol.23, 1996, pp.320.

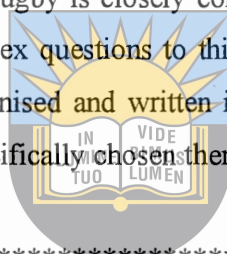
⁸⁸Interview Mtshizana; Mabija; Magqabi & Dunga.

⁸⁹Lummis, 'Structure and Validity in Oral Evidence', 1998, p.274.

⁹⁰Interview Ngqondela.

written evidence where available, the subject matter lends itself to focusing on what the narrators have to say. The voices of the narrators, unedited when possible, are therefore given a paramount role in the narrative. As a whole, these memories place the historical significance of black rugby in an appropriate perspective. They show the powerful role that time and their involvement in rugby growth and transformation played in the development of this section of rugby. As is standard with oral histories, I set the voices of the narrators in the present tense, i.e., Sam says 'black people played an exciting brand of rugby...'.⁹¹ As Kennedy and Davis suggest, this method serves to remind the reader that the narrative is 'built from oral histories, that is, from narrators' contemporary memories about the past'.⁹²

As the history of black rugby is closely connected with that of the country's troubled political history, complex questions to this effect are posed. The nature of this study compels it to be organised and written in a chronological manner, and of course within the context of specifically chosen themes.



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Against this background the current study attempts to explore a range of questions about sport and society in the context of racial division, and about the difficulties of uniting rugby in contemporary South Africa. This work begins by outlining and analysing how black rugby originated and developed in East London and later Mdantsane through the twentieth century. Questions include, how rugby has interacted with the society and economy of these areas? When, where, why and by whom were the clubs formed? What were the major influences towards the clubs' establishment in these areas? How did blacks live and entertain themselves in these areas and what was their level of interest in these activities, particularly rugby? What was the role of the early educational institutions and their students in the development of rugby in the region? What were the challenges facing early black rugby and how did it respond to them? What was the role of the rugby bodies in the area in relation to what was happening throughout the country? How did these clubs respond to changes in residential, educational and transport patterns in these areas? What were

⁹¹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁹²Kennedy, and Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, 1994, p.25.

the clubs' relationships to political formations in these areas? What was their attitude towards non-racialism? What were the clubs' pre-unification performances, organisational and administrative standards compared to post-unification? What did "unity" bring to the game of rugby in the area? What role did rugby "development programmes" play in these areas and in the clubs? There may not be definitive answers to all or any of these questions, but attempts to gather as much information as possible are made in order to understand the origins of rugby and its development in these areas and its dynamics and complexities before and after unification.

Introduction of Chapters

Except for this section (preface) and conclusion (chapter seven), the chapter divisions of this dissertation have been arranged according to specific related themes, which have also been divided into three parts. The themes are arranged chronologically, but chapters vary from period to period.

There are seven chapters in three different parts. Part one comprises chapter one and two. Here this study begins with a brief outline of the geographic or physical location, with the analysis of the socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural history of the community from which black rugby emerged in East London more than a century ago. Following this, a general background of the early origins and development of African rugby in the broader South African society is discussed. The almost forgotten beginnings and growth of black rugby in the East London and Border region are also analysed briefly. The roles and responses of non-establishment sports development, and the enduring political, social and cultural significance of the game in black societies is therefore analysed. In short the issues that are dealt with specifically relate to the birth of East London, the early mention of the indigenous black society and the early black people's contact to, their initiation to rugby football, the Englishman's game and its growth since 1886 to 1911. This section serves as an invaluable background into understanding the later developments of the game in the area. One of the major analogies raised here is that sport in any society mirrors the broader socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural nature of that society.

Part two consists of chapter three and four. This is constitutes the crux of the dissertation. The crucial questions here relate to how “organised” black club rugby emerged in East London and its rugby growth since 1911 to the early 1930s. This section discusses the origins, growth, transformation and radical institutionalisation of black rugby and its new overt espousal of the country’s political dynamics. This transformation is discussed in the context of the broader country’s political development. This study is never intended to list the chronology of events but analyses the chosen themes as they unfolded over the years in an attempt to locate black rugby history into the proper socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural development of this historiography.

Part three consists of chapter five and six. This is the climax of this study as it deals with crucial questions that relate to the intense conflict between non-racial forces and establishment structures which culminates to a possibility of an entirely new political order in the country’s socio-economic and socio-cultural development. Here black rugby’s response to South Africa’s obtrusive political pressures is discussed. Black rugby’s social ills are turned into lasting gains as for example rugby splits are used as a springboard to the long hard fought goal of non-racial rugby. This development leads to radical shift in political goalposts and towards a united, democratic, non-racial South African society. The questions related to how black rugby responded to the challenges of unity as the country’s politics transformation, with issues such as rugby development, transformation and national team representation become topical and high on the agenda of the country’s sport. This section covers the period between the late 1950s to the first millennium.

In chapter seven, the conclusion and a summary of findings are provided as well as a comment on South African historiography.

In short, the chapters from three to six black rugby’s transformation in the East London area is discussed in the context of the country’s political development. This is done under broad defined sections. The initial part comprises chapter three and

four and marks the beginnings of rugby in the area from the late nineteenth century until the early 1920s. The time the seed began to bear fruit in some parts of the region is explored. This phase stretches to a point where rugby became a vital vehicle of popular culture and an activity embedded within the cultural system of the colonised, segregated and impoverished black communities. This section also marks the period of moderately assertive nationalism until the early 1930s, where more clubs emerged and competition intensified. Early evidence of non-racial sports by rugby enthusiasts is uncovered. This section also indicates the accelerated growth of black rugby in East London and throughout the country from 1935 to the late 1940s. This section starts by discussing the process of establishing the SABRFB in 1935 and an attempt is made to outline its role in the development of the game till the beginning of the interprovincial tournament in 1936. This period also marks further formation of rugby clubs in the East London locations and throughout the Eastern Cape in the 1930s and the 1940s. This is the time that black rugby had to contend with many challenges such as: bad playing conditions, maintaining and sustaining the newly formed clubs; personal differences and numerous other socio-economic difficulties.

This section further saw the national development of the game with the commencement of the “Bantu-Coloured test matches” in 1950. Overt politics in rugby from the late 1950s to the emergence of the non-racial movement in the 1960s and 1970s are examined. The era of major splits and dramatic changes in black rugby, with many other socio-political and socio-economic challenges (such as forced removals, adjusting and surviving in the new destinations), that rugby enthusiasts had to contend with are discussed. This was the period of intense conflict between the non-racial movement, and the white establishment and its black allies, with the balance of power shifting to the majority and non-racial sport getting stronger from the mid-1970s till the late 1980s.

The subsequent sections comprise chapters five and six. The period covered from the late 1980s to first millennium, marking the beginnings of the negotiated settlement and the accomplishment of rugby unity in 1992. This begins with the first four years of democracy under Mandela with the emphasis on reconciliation, national unity and nation building. Then, the Mbeki years, with the emphasis on delivery, radical transformation and the real challenge underlying change within the sporting

structures in South Africa. It is learnt from these phases that sport, like other social aspects is not an “island” but operates within a broad framework of social order and transformation.

To some readers, references to groups like blacks, whites, *boere* and English, Africans, coloureds and Indians can be viewed as politically incorrect, re-igniting South Africa’s apartheid experience. However, while sensitive, historically these terms have a certain cohesion, which cannot be summarily wished away. Conflating them in the name of politeness or in the quest for political correctness could be *ahistorical* and that poses a danger in the development of this section of South African historiography. Black in this study is used to refer to all the rugby enthusiasts who would have been classified as “nonwhite” under apartheid. However, the term non-racial rather than black rugby became mostly preferred in the later years, but conflating these terms would undoubtedly be historically inaccurate and problematic especially when dealing with a more than a century long rugby history. It should be noted that although non-racialism was a goal from the start amongst progressive forces within the South African rugby enthusiasts, there were periods in which black rugby people did not practise non-racialism. This was observed even when non-racialism was assertively promoted from the 1950s and beyond many black rugby people continued to support racial and “multinational” sport.

It should be out rightly stated that the main themes are about rugby as played by blacks, with “specific bias” towards Africans, specifically, the Xhosa speaking population, and or combination of Africans and coloured people. Thus, in some parts of this study, the term “black” will be used to refer to Indians, Africans and coloured people, as is the standard appellation in the country presently. The two latter groups resided together and some times close to each other in East London, thus, there was often interaction in sports. However, there are specifically defined instances where the term black will be used solely to refer to Africans. There are also certain instances where Africans are referred to as “Natives” and or “Bantus” because they themselves chose to or they named their organisations, associations and or clubs in this manner, though these terms have now turned derogatory in the present day South

African society. However, the segregationist white imperialists' contribution into developing the latter cannot be undermined in promoting this pattern of thought. This is discussed in detail later in this work.

This is a longer thesis than is normal for a master's degree. My justification is that this story is one that has not been told before, and that it is of absorbing interest to the rugby community of Border and East London. It must be told in detail so that this community can have a record of its own history and can avoid it dying with the elderly people in whom it is embodied.



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PART 1
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CHAPTER I

Historical Perspectives on the Social Structure of the Early East London Black Locations: East Bank Location and West Bank Location, 1840s-1960s

Introduction

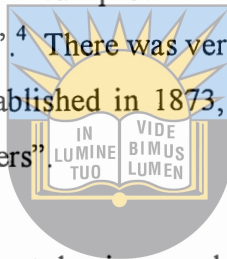
This section outlines the history of the once vibrant African locations, which existed in East London on the east and west banks of the Buffalo River for more than a century, and their eventual destruction. Approximately 60 000 former residents of the then East Bank Location (EBL), popularly known as “*eSkom*” and West Bank Location (WBL), also known as “*eZinkqayini*”, were forcibly removed to *Ziphunzana*, Duncan Village Extension and, some time later to Mdantsane township in the 1960s.¹ This section describes life before demolition and its interaction with rugby development in the East London locations. The specific social, cultural, economic and political circumstances that led to de-proclamation of these locations will be described. However, in order to understand rugby’s earlier developments, an attempt is also made to reconstruct the social history of the place, from oral and documentary sources. A profile of the East Bank community in the years preceding demolition is therefore briefly drawn. It is believed that this exercise of historical reconstruction is essential in order to understand the significance and importance of rugby football for those who were involved then and for those who are still participating in the game. The EBL is extensively studied in this chapter, as it was the largest location, where most people resided and which was the centre of black life. It was also where all the prominent African rugby clubs were established, with the exception of the West Bank Wallabies, established in 1956.²

¹The name ‘*eSkom*’ (EBL) generally denotes township life and location people, while WBL was referred to as ‘*eZinkqayini*’ because the roofs of the huts in the African location there resembled shaven heads, ‘*iinkqayi*’ in Xhosa.

²Interview Ben “Ta-Ben” Tenginfene, 19 Nahum Road, Albrow Gardens, Milnerton, Cape Town, 6 February 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tengimfene); Mahlubandile Puzi, Langa Rugby Grounds, Langa, Cape Town, 1 October 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Puzi).

East London - A Divided Town: "The River Between" East Bank Location and West Bank Location

The City of East London was founded as a colonial outpost in 1847 to serve the British and colonial troops during the War of the Axe. Its administration was in the hands of the army until 1857, which meant that 'the governors of the town had little knowledge of civil law and were not trained in the art of democracy.'³ By 1853, the civilian population was a mere 124 and a decade later had risen to only 366. The lack of a democratic local government negatively affected the growth and development of the town, economically and socially, for the first twenty-five years of its existence. Appalling and deteriorating living conditions prompted the District Surgeon to remark that 'East London was protected from a major epidemic solely by the presence of the constant coastal breeze'.⁴ There was very little change in the living conditions of people until the municipality was established in 1873, though what improvements there were benefited only whites or "East Londoners".



The term "East Londoners" was at the time used solely to refer to white inhabitants. East London was, from its inception, a segregated town marked by disunity at two levels. Firstly, it was a town divided by the Buffalo River into the East Bank and West Bank villages. Initially, West Bank was the original village of East London and, up until the mid 1870s, remained the centre of the municipality as it housed the municipal offices and was the venue for all council meetings.⁵ During this period, its population exceeded that of East Bank village. On the other hand, East Bank was the "heart of the mercantile industry". In its early stages, the entire village was referred to as Panmure. For quite some time, there was rivalry and enmity between these two villages as East Bank residents felt that they were being inconvenienced by having to cross the Buffalo River to the other side to conduct their legal and municipal business.

³See Landiswa Maqasho, 'East London Land Restitution Claim (EBLRC): Social History Report', on behalf of Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER): Rhodes University, 2000.p.2.

⁴See Tankard, KPT, 'The development of East London through four decades of municipal control, 1873-1914': Rhodes University, PhD, 1990, p. 65.

⁵See Tankard, 'The Development of East London', 1990, p.65.

However, this state of affairs altered radically with the building of the Queenstown railway after it was decided to construct the terminus at Panmure to save on the cost of having to bridge the Buffalo River to reach West Bank. This decision was to have a major impact on the economic development of the town as merchants began moving their businesses from West Bank to Panmure. Soon there was a strong realisation by both communities that there had to be some kind of cooperation for the benefit of the town as a whole. The construction of a bridge across the river provided a lasting solution as better relations and closer unity prevailed thereafter.

Secondly, and most sensitively and importantly, East London was divided in terms of racial groupings. This racial segregation had been evident from the very beginning. However, until some years after the establishment of the first Municipal Board, no authority mentioned the existence of any black community in East London. Even the first municipal regulations and by-laws excluded Blacks. The reason for this had deep roots in colonial times. As Reader says, 'there was engraved indelibly in the frontiersman's mind the notion of the Bantu as a preponderant out-group, hostile, cruel, murderous and barbaric, from whose evil potentialities his family and neighbours could never feel secure'.⁶ This was coupled with the idea of the temporary presence of urban Blacks. Effectively, they did not form an integral part of the community. Thus, race relations in the town had always been unequal and the council made little attempt to improve the standards of living of the Blacks who were considered not only as temporary sojourners in the city, but also as an inferior race that could be subjected to stricter and stricter control to suit the needs of the white settlement. Therefore, the establishment of the municipality meant nothing to the black urban dwellers as it benefited only the white community.

To the white East London community, as with the broader white community throughout the country at the time, the locations were conceived of as racially distinct 'urban spaces'.⁷ More importantly, they were viewed as 'a blot on our landscape', and understood as overcrowded, full of filth and an unquestionable breeding ground for disease and crime. Officials therefore, saw

⁶See Reader, H, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.10; also for more on forced removals in South Africa, see Unterhalter, E, *Forced Removal*, 1987.

⁷See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.10.

them as merely irredeemable slums that were the physical expression of the moral degradation of the inhabitants. The continued existence of such slums was regarded as a threat not only to the residents but also to the nearby white city. Hence there were frequent complaints of resistance by the city's white citizens to the establishment of locations 'on our door step'. The perceived threat and fear of contamination led to increasing concern for the 'native space' to be more tightly defined, circumscribed and controlled. The Thornton Commission echoed this general feeling when it remarked that East Bank was perhaps the worst location in the Union and that it was a shame that such a place existed. The negative image of this early location helped to widen the disparities between black and white in the city, and made the administration and development of the location complicated and cumbersome. It made the location a soft target for control and interventions throughout its existence. The early generation of black rugby enthusiasts in East London locations had to contend with these sorts of conditions and challenges.

Early housing development in East London locations is worth exploring. In the early 20th century, the EBL comprised a number of African locations that had existed unofficially at the very beginning of the city's history. On both sides of the river, huts were scattered. In the early 1870s, a number of factors, including poverty, pushed many Africans away from the rural areas into the urban centres. This led to a growing realisation of the need for urban control. In 1872, for the first time, the white inhabitants of the Cape Colony were given authority to control what was known as "Native Affairs". Later, in July 1876, the municipal regulations were updated to include responsibility for the locations through the Native Locations Act No 6 of 1876.

The Act defined a "Native Location" as any number of huts or dwellings exceeding five in number within an area of one square mile occupied by any of the native races. It provided for a number of regulations, from the registration of the population, animals and stock within each location to the complete control of movement between locations.⁸ The Act placed East London's locations under municipal control and, as such, the first official location on the east bank of the Buffalo River was established in 1877. This became known as the Seaside Location and was in the area today known as the Eastern Beach (then Panmure Beach). This location, previously

⁸See Tankard, 'The development of East London', 1990, p.67.

known as the *Mfengu* or *Fingo* Location, and there is belief that it was removed from its earlier site, where it had existed unofficially, when the official location was established in 1877.

From that first removal, all the locations in East London existed in an insecure state as the municipality freely removed and resettled the black inhabitants, in most cases forcefully, when the welfare of the white community was deemed to be at stake. The general principle, or more accurately pretext, under which removal of a location was undertaken was 'at least temporarily to clean it up'.⁹ From the passing of the Native Locations Act, the municipality's main concern was the restriction of the movement of the African community through curfew regulations and various kinds of passes that they had to carry at all times. It was only after 1892, with the formation of the East Bank Native Vigilance Association that the state of affairs in EBL came to be challenged by Africans themselves. The association was founded by the Reverend Dr Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana to fight for improvement in location conditions.¹⁰ However, until 1895, its work was restricted to improvements in living conditions and it did not directly tackle political issues.

Studies indicate that it was the early 1920s that East London locations witnessed the highly contested system of Black representatives with some limited "power", in the form of the Advisory Board, the Vigilance Association and later, ward headmen.¹¹ However, by the mid-1950s it was yet to exercise them effectively as they were initially merely consultative. East London established its Location Advisory Board in 1921, and was thus one of the first South African towns to do so. One of its leading members, RH Godlo, a Swallows member, was prominent in the National Congress of Advisory Boards.¹² The Board consisted of a nominated chairman and secretary and nine non-white members (three being Council nominees and six elected). Its role however was to cooperate with the white authorities in a purely consultative

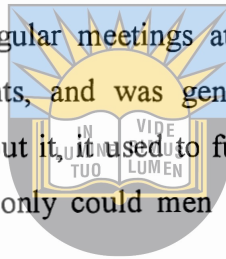
⁹See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.11.

¹⁰See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.p.4.

¹¹See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52.

¹²See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25, compiled by NL Ngqondela; also see, Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52.

capacity. There was a long-standing feeling in the locations that it ought to be given more real power, as indicated by Hunter in 1932.¹³ Nevertheless it provided scope for democratic participation, in which the migrants too could participate. Though they did not partake in large numbers, they at least showed spirit. The public was allowed to attend its Board's monthly meetings at the Peacock Hall, and every year there were elections of the six members, at which anyone with a lodger's permit was entitled to vote. These elections were often fought in a lively manner. Conservative candidates, candidates representing ICU policies, and those representing the African National Congress (ANC) or its Youth League (ANCYL), made their bids for the voters at various times. However, the structure that actually played a greater part in location political life was the non-statutory Vigilance Association, known in Xhosa as *Iliso Lomzi*, 'the eye of the community'. A migrant with a lodger's permit could join and vote for the executive committee. The Association held regular meetings at the Peacock Hall, which used to be crowded with hundreds of participants, and was generally recognised as representing 'the people's views'. As one respondent put it, it used to function 'exactly like an *inkundla* in the country, with the difference that not only could men attend, but the old and young of both sexes'.¹⁴



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Mayer argues that the Vigilance Association worked in 'loose conjunction' with the Advisory Board, in that the six elected Board members reported back to the Association, and received a sort of mandate from it to put the people's views at the next Board meeting.¹⁵ Shortly after the war, both these institutions went into a phase of dramatic decline, from which they struggled to recover for many years. In the 1960s the radical local branch of the ANC together with the ANCYL began to divert the attention of politically minded people from the 'futile palavers with the Municipality', which never seemed to bring about any real improvement of conditions. By 1952, public support of the Vigilance Association had declined to the point where some observers described it as dead.¹⁶

¹³See Hunter, MW, *Reaction to Conquest: The Effects of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, 1936, p.469.

¹⁴See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52. *Inkundla* was a traditional court comprised of only men.

¹⁵See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52.

¹⁶See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52.

After the 1952 riots the ANC and ANCYL suffered the paralysis affecting the location's political institutions generally, but the Youth League had recovered enough by 1955 to be able to turn its attention to the local political bodies, which it now quickly 'conquered' (For a long time the leading spirits in both of them had been older and rather conservative location residents).¹⁷ What made this clean sweep possible was not public unanimity so much as public apathy. The movement had been relatively weak in East London. The unopposed stands of six ANC supporters at the Advisory Board election of 1955 could have been an opportunity for a big gesture of public support, but the total poll was only 287, that is around one or two percent of the electorate. The Board as such, too, had lost its interest for most location people.¹⁸

The new leadership accelerated the demise of the Vigilance Association. Older and influential men withdrew from the Association complaining that the new men were far too inexperienced. Accusations against 'these young stars elected only by young stars' were violent and often grotesque. 'Each of them has rendered pregnant no fewer than three girls. Who can accept such men as leaders and representatives of the people?'¹⁹

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However, since there was a lack of housing and infrastructural development in the locations, an association of this kind was long overdue. Instead of providing proper housing and sanitation for the city's growing African population, the white municipal council chose to focus on the development needs of its white citizens. Notions of Africans as tribal and primitive led the administrators to believe that round wattle-and-daub structures were best for urban Africans. As such, when EBL was established round huts (rondavels) and spaces of forty feet by forty were allotted to accommodate six people per hut, according to Minkley.²⁰ This situation prevailed for many years with the rondavels accommodating up to 15 adults at a time. With

¹⁷These are briefly described in Reader, *The Black Man's Portion*, 1961; also see Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.53.

¹⁸See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.53.

¹⁹See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.53.

²⁰See Minkley, G, 'Class and Culture in the Workplace: East London, Industrialisation and Conflict Over Work, 1945-1957', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18:4, 1999, p.240.

rapid urbanisation, the council had to reconsider housing provision. Following a suggestion made by location superintendent Charles Lloyd, square shacks of wood-and-iron gradually replaced the traditional Xhosa hut.²¹ The reason for this change was partly to reduce the susceptibility to collapse of the round mud huts during the rainy season and partly because of the difficulty of finding material in town for their repair.

By 1900, the East Bank population of more than 5 000 was accommodated in 270 round huts, square buildings and two municipal lodging houses.²² While the population peaked at 12 111 in 1905, housing construction lagged at a mere 1070 units during the same period.²³ During the protracted period of apathy on the part of both the government and the municipality towards the well-being of the town's black population, this community continued to grow to the point of overflowing into informal housing in the nearby bushes.²⁴

Living conditions in the East London locations was aggravated by 'the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war which increased "landlessness" in the rural hinterland of the area'.²⁵ Also, the growth of the urban economy led to a sustained influx of Africans into the city from the surrounding countryside. Living conditions deteriorated because of the resulting overcrowding. Thus, from 1912, the municipality, as mentioned, permitted the construction of wood-and-iron rectangular structures. This development, which Lloyd later acknowledged as a 'regrettable error', made it possible for several families to live on a single site.²⁶ A sum of two pounds per month per site was payable to cover sanitary and water rates. Lodgers could be accommodated at an additional four pounds per month. The regulation laid down that the house had to be built

²¹Charles Lloyd was location superintendent in East Bank for some 30 years beginning in 1901. He became very popular in the location as our life historians revealed. As such the administrative offices in East Bank were named after him. People talked about kwa-Lloyd (at Lloyds).

²²See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.15

²³See Nel, EL, 'The Spatial Planning of Racial Residential Segregation in East London', 1948-1973. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, unpublished thesis, 1990, p.52.

²⁴See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.120.

²⁵See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.7.

²⁶See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.7.

to certain specifications and of good material. This was practically impossible, as only a person of means was capable of meeting these requirements. The rest had to seek lodgings, severely aggravating the already critical housing shortage.²⁷ By the 1930s, it was common for homeowners to build onto their houses to accommodate rent-paying tenants:

...Legally, an individual may only be granted one building site. In practice, some own a number of houses, securing additional sites in the name of a friend or relative. Often, a house of one or two rooms is built first, then added to until the whole 50 square yards is covered with a warren of rooms...²⁸

By the 1930s the East Bank African population could be divided into three broad categories, which were recognised by both white and black observers²⁹. Firstly, there were those who lived permanently in the town and knew no other milieu than the city locations, some referring to themselves as native East London dwellers. For instance, they indicate that, 'we are indigenous residents of East London. We were here from inception, even before the establishment of the town itself. We didn't come from anywhere'.³⁰ It was from this population of permanent location people that the Swallows rugby football club drew its community of players, administrators and spectators. Secondly, there were those who regarded themselves as rural dwellers and were in the city on a strictly migratory basis. These were people who usually took up residence as tenants in the locations. They often lived alone or as groups of *abakhaya* (home mates or home boys) from their original rural areas. Again, people interviewed in the quest for life histories of former rugby players from the EBL confirmed that there was a significant proportion of people of this category in EBL. In fact, organising rugby clubs in terms of regional background, which will be discussed in detail later, was encouraged by this influx of migrants. Thirdly, there was a growing class of urban 'marginals' whose decreasing access to rural livelihoods of any sort was compelling them firmly, if reluctantly, into the status of permanent urban proletarians. These individuals generally lacked the resources to build their

²⁷Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990, n.p.

²⁸See Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest*, 1936, p.44.

²⁹Beinart, W & Bundy, C, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape*, 1988, p 272.

³⁰See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.8.

own homes and were thus forced into the status of permanent urbanites. In this situation, rack-renting was good business.³¹ The majority of such entrepreneurs in the location were women.

The accommodation issue became a major problem to the black East London population. The major factor that the East London municipality had to contend with was the escalating number of blacks in the city with Africans having increased by forty-one percent between 1919 and 1928. However, the white municipality was resolutely indifferent to location living conditions, unless they threatened to affect the health of white East Londoners, or pose law and order contraventions, or demand municipal expenditure.³² Throughout this period, the city authorities did not make any major investments in housing or infrastructure in the locations and the deteriorating living conditions accelerated, reflecting, apparently, in the rise in infant mortality rate. In 1929, in a thousand births in the location, 543 infants were declared dead and for the entire decade up to then, an average of 333 deaths per thousand was reported. Thus, the Thornton Commission was appointed in 1937 to investigate conditions in the locations and it highlighted, the deliberate neglect of black residential development in the city. The key recommendation of the commission was that the East London city council should begin to take responsibility for the deteriorating health and housing conditions of its locations.³³

The council responded to the Thornton Commission by announcing that it intended to build 3192 small houses on land adjacent to the EBL. Construction of these homes began in 1938, but was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. By the end of the war in 1945, the council had completed only 600 houses. Building costs rose sharply during the war, and the City Council immediately scaled back this housing project. However, in 1940, slight progress was noted (despite opposition from Amalinda residents) and in August 1941, the new housing estate was opened and came to be known as Duncan Village after Governor-General, Sir Patrick Duncan. A decade later, the Welsh Commission castigated the council for failing to follow through with its housing projects. This Commission noted that parts of the location had

³¹“Rack-renting” here refers to the situation where “permanent” urban residents made business out of letting one or some of their rooms within households to the migrants and or those visiting East London for short periods.

³²See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.7.

³³See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.8.

become so degraded that they deserved to be knocked down and rebuilt. Ironically, this recommendation was ignored for decades only to be taken up later, enthusiastically and passionately, by the proponents of apartheid following the passing of the Group Areas Act (GAA). However, there was a sort of addendum attached, that the locations would not just be knocked down and rebuilt, but be demolished altogether and its people newly relocated in places way out of the city. The Welsh Commission suggested that new urgency should be given to solving the problems of poverty, disease and inadequate housing in the locations. It further felt that there was a need for a satellite location for 'better-off urban families' to whom transport costs would not be much of a burden.³⁴

In the case of EBL, the complexity of residential accommodation was a function of at least two factors. On the one hand, East London's urban population was predominantly migratory. Migrants coming into the city regarded their stay in East London as only temporary because their 'homes' were located in the rural areas. As a result room renting became the most favoured option. These migrants returned to the city year in and year out to take up rental accommodation. In some ways this accelerated the rate of overcrowding as migratory tenants resorted to subletting in order to share the exorbitant rents asked by the owners. Reader in his 1955 survey of East London noted this. He indicated that it was not uncommon for more than 40 people to live in one site consisting of 8 to 15 rooms. Of the 185 plots he surveyed, 54 had between 9 and 15 rooms. The rising room occupancy rates were thus directly connected to the increasing size of the migrant population in the city.

A 1955 socio-economic survey indicated that there were 62 260 people in the city's three locations, namely, East Bank, West Bank and Cambridge³⁵. Of this total, 55 020 or 88% lived at EBL (see table 1). It should be recalled that the GAA was passed in 1950 and all cities were required to plan in accordance with the Act. Thus, the 1950s were a period of intense racial re-zoning throughout the country. Thus, provision of accommodation for the city's growing African population came to a complete standstill, with the last batch of municipal houses being

³⁴See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.8.

³⁵See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p. 26.

built in 1945³⁶. This led to the escalation of the housing crisis, which in turn led to overcrowding and slum formation. The following table gives a breakdown of the population of EBL by sex and type of dwelling:

Figure 1: A table showing Gross Population of East Bank by Sex and Type of Housing, 1955 (supplied by the Institute of Social and Economic Research of Rhodes University).³⁷

Type and number of houses	Male	Female
Wood-and-iron structured houses	22 930	21 800
Municipality houses	4 980	5 310
Total	27 910	27 110

This table reveals that more females than males were accommodated in municipal houses. The point already made above, that a significant number of East Bank residents were migrants who looked upon the city as a place where they could earn money to send home, explains this large number of males in the shack area. All they wanted was a room or even a corner of a room to sleep in during their working period in town.

Oral evidence reveals that EBL was highly differentiated in terms of its economic profile. There was sizeably educated elite made up of lawyers, teachers, education inspectors, priests, nurses, social workers and doctors alongside a relatively large working class. Despite this obvious class stratification, former East Bank rugby people believe that communities, especially in the EBL, lived as 'one big happy family'.³⁸ The educated elite, such as Reverend Dr Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana, Clement Kadalie, Skei Gwentshe and others took it as their

³⁶See Reader, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p. 26.

³⁷See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.8.

³⁸Interview Johannes 'Oomdu' Temmers, 54 Port Rex Street Buffalo Flats, East London in 12 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Temmers); Pulle Twaku, Lewis Stores, Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Twaku); Bunga Richard Price Ncunyana, 3607 NU 8 Mdantsane, Holiday Inn, Bunkers Hill, East London, 19 November 2000 & 19 December 2000 (Henceforth: Interview, Ncunyana); see also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.10.

responsibility to improve the socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects of their community.³⁹ This diversity was further manifested by such categories as *amaqaba* (“red” or illiterate) alongside *amagqobhoka* (schooled and often Christian people), and *amagoduka* (the migrants) and the townspeople. Amongst *amagoduka*, there was a further subdivision of *abakhaya*, meaning those who came from the same village or region. This led to the organisation of the earlier rugby clubs, as with other social groupings like burial societies and *umgalelo* or “*stokvels*”, on the basis of *abakhaya* (home-mates or home-boys) and or regionalism⁴⁰. *Stokvels* were the investment groups in the locations, often formed by migrant men in order to save money to send home or to go home with, to make sure that children and wives are fed, and to ensure that they, as men, were buried back home with dignity.

Despite the considerable social and economic differentiation in these East London locations, a high level of tolerance prevailed. Even today, long after they have been removed, East Bank location residents know and remember each other very well and keep in touch, as became apparent during the research for this study.

A number of factories provided employment. These included Wilson Rowntree (now Nestlé), Consolidated Textiles (later the Frame Group and now Waverley Blankets, currently relocating to Botswana) and, later, a fish company, Irvin & Jones (I&J) at the West Bank. There were also shops and offices that employed mainly Section 10-A people, that is, people born in East London. Most migrants were employed at the harbour, the railway and the quarry. Initially, the above firms offered limited employment opportunities, as they were mostly small-scale operations in the late 1930s through to the late 1950s. Administrative offices also employed

³⁹See Ngqongqo, SJ, ‘Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910: ‘The making of the new African Elite in the Eastern Cape’, Fort Hare: MA, 1996, pp.35-36; Pauw, BA, *The Second Generation: A study of the family among the urbanised Bantu in East London*, 1972, pp.44-47; Mayer, P, *Tribesmen or Townsmen: A study of Bantu family in East London*, 1968, p.46. A number of former EBL rugby enthusiasts such as Patsa Matyeshana, 1920 NU 17 Mdantsane, 19 November 2000 (Henceforth: Matyeshana); Mgijima Theophilus Sam and Khumbulele Wotshela at Mgwali, Stutterheim, 9 March 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Sam & Wotshela), also gave this information.

⁴⁰*Stokvels* were the investment groups in the locations, often formed by migrant men in order to save money to be sent home or to go home to their villages with and to make sure that their children and wives were fed and they as men were buried back home and with dignity. This was also indicated in Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, 46 Duton Road, Cambridge West, East London, 20 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mnyute); ZG Mahambehhlala, M&K Centre, corner of Shai-Qumza Highway Roads, High Way, Mdantsane, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Mahambehhlala); Sam & Wotshela; see also Mayer’s *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.141.

Africans as clerks. However, restrictions on work seekers complicated the search for employment. For example, one had to get permission to be in the city and then permission to seek work. However, obtaining such permit(s) did not automatically free a person from persecution when getting into East London, not to mention even being afforded the slightest opportunity to seek employment in the area.

Thus, it is no surprise that during the same period, the unemployment rate was recorded at about forty percent.⁴¹ To the unemployed, self-employment of any kind was the only means of survival. Unlike in West Bank, which was a relatively small location, a number of informal earning opportunities abounded in East Bank location. These ranged from liquor (including *umqombothi*) and meat sales to second hand clothing sales. In fact, people sold anything that they could lay their hands on. It is said that location people had a way of 'tricking cattle into the houses to be slaughtered and sold'.⁴² The greater part of this informal and mainly black market was in what was known as Camp Street in the Makeni/New Brighton area where women were the main participants. Informal trading was under the watchful eye of the municipal police officers who frequently raided the location. Thus, participants were always devising ways and means of beating the law in order to make a living. Besides work, East Bank location had a vibrant social profile.

The Life "eMont'eSkom": Where it all Began

The EBL, "*eSkom*", as it is affectionately referred to by its former residents and inhabitants of other East London locations, differed in many respects from what they were believed to be by the 'city fathers' of colonial and apartheid times.⁴³ To the authorities, EBL was no more than a slum. In 1952 the old location was described by an official as 'the worst in the Union, full of filth and squalor'. Another declared it to be 'shabby, decrepit and overpopulated, a poverty-stricken tin town, a chaos of wood-and-iron structures jostling at

⁴¹See Minkley, 'I shall die married to beer, Kronos, 23, 1996, p.54.

⁴²See Minkley, 'I shall die married to beer, Kronos, 23, 1996, p.54.

⁴³See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.13, quoting municipal documents dated June 1942 to December 1968.

irregular intervals and angles with nothing to conceal their ugliness'.⁴⁴ For the white city council, the EBL of the 1950s was a nightmare, overcrowded, politically volatile and difficult to control. Attempts to enforce the pass laws, control population influx and shut down shebeens were often compounded by early warning calls of '*kubomvu, kubomvu*', 'it's red'. This alerted people to impending danger from the authorities or police, reverberating up and down the streets as soon as police or municipal officials were seen.

To 60 000 odd people who lived in neighbourhoods such as *Tsolo*, *Mekeni*, *New Brighton*, *Moriva*, *Gomoro*, *Maxambeni*, *Ngcabanga*, *Thulandivile*, and other small sections of the EBL, it was home (see the EBL map below). It is neither poverty nor hardship, crime nor violence that they remember, but the old churches that lined Church Street (later named Mission street) and administered primary school education; the Welsh High School; Rubusana Park and rugby football; cultural centres such as the Social Centre, Peacock and Clement Kadalie hall, where they listened to music, danced and jived, and the whole diversity and spirit of the people.

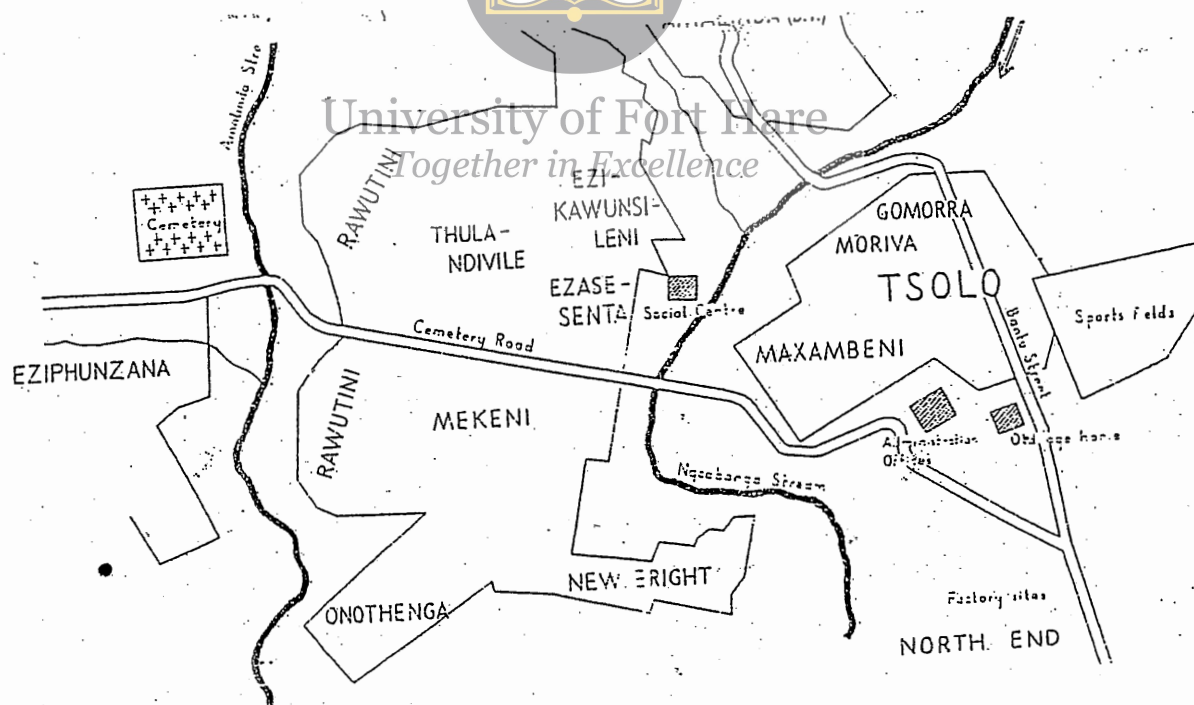


Figure 2: The map showing the East London black location⁴⁵

⁴⁴See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.13.

⁴⁵This map is taken from Pauw, *The Second Generation*, 1972.

Influenced by the missionaries, the people of EBL took pride in the education of their children. Education, particularly at primary level, was in most cases linked to the churches and to rugby. It was where the rugby skills of most young location boys were nurtured and where they graduated from the informal “naked rugby”, *Oombambo* team. At this elementary stage of rugby participation boys would play entirely nude.⁴⁶ Each of the four churches ran its own school, each accommodating a particular denomination. The management of the schools was in the hands of the minister in charge of these particular churches. Welsh High School was the only school offering higher education in the region and it also produced prominent rugby players.

In the midst of squalor, a number of middle to upper class families emerged. They were made up of lawyers such as Vukile Magqabi and others; schoolteachers and inspectors such as Lappley Sontshi, Ntandazo “Jujuju” Mabija, Mgijima Theophilus Sam, Mzwandile Caga, Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela; priests; numerous nurses, and social workers such as the late Eric Nomvete. They did not live separately but intermingled with the rest of the people. Even in ethnic terms, the streets of East Bank were a mixture of backgrounds with coloured and African families living together in unison. Two articles from *Indaba* sum up the atmosphere:

...The houses were made of corrugated iron and wood, but were nicely built. Some had many rooms. In each building, there were tenants and there was hardly a short[age] of accommodation as there is today. The location was divided into sections and there was a section called eDankeni, meaning Duncan - municipal-built houses. There were other sections, such as Meken, Thulandivile, New Brighton, Tsolo and Gomoro ...On Sunday afternoon, people would walk up down Camp Street wearing their best. *AmaTaliyane* (Italians) were the best-known guys, because they dressed in an Italian style. Vikings were also there - a group of criminals. But they soon vanished, because the community fought against them. Each section had its famous street, such as Ndende at Thulandivile, Bantu and Church Street at Tsolo Section. Church Street was the most famous, because of its string of churches like the Methodist church, Saint Phillips Presbyterian Church, Order of Ethiopia and Bantu Presbyterian Church at the corner of the Bantu and Church Streets...Rubusana Park was the only sports ground, where rugby matches were played on Saturday afternoons. In those days sport was only played on Saturdays. On Sundays young and old

⁴⁶The phrase “Naked Rugby” instead of the popular Xhosa phrase, ‘*Oombambo* team (literarily bear or ‘rib-teams’) was first mentioned in an interview with Temmers. Many other respondents such Ncunyana; Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Old Mutual Building, Green Acres, Port Elizabeth, 4 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mjo); Ntandazo Rufus Jujuju Mabija, at 669 NU 10 Mdantsane, 30 November, 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mabija); Matyeshana; Mnyute; Twaku; Bishop Mgwebi, Border Rugby Football Union’s Waverley Park grounds, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mgwebi), used the Xhosa phrase: *Oombambo* team.

attended their churches...On Sunday afternoons we would go to the get-together shows at Clement Kadalie Hall or the Social Centre, where we jived to music played by African Quavers under Mr Eric Nomvete. In the 1960s, people were moved from Duncan Village to Mdantsane. Everyone cried for his or her beloved location. It was then that we lost each other. *Hayi ke bethu izinto zomhlaba*”, those were the days of our lives...⁴⁷

...Legends in their own time, (and afterwards!), were: Mannie De Wet (rugby, soccer, cricket), Gilindado Ntoni (rugby), Mannie Kotobe (cricket), George Forster (of rugby fame), Albert Schoeman (rugby), ‘Doel’ Gamiet (rugby) who once kicked a rugby ball to pieces ...Colourful characters were: Lujiza - caretaker of Peacock Hall, Tom Paremore - staunch member of Rising Stars Football club, Manci - the chief of municipal police who was forever ‘catching’ people who had no lodgers’ permits...⁴⁸

However, the predominant official tone was that there was nothing positive about the location. The location was a ‘classical breeding ground for dissension and violence’.⁴⁹ Former EBL residents acknowledged that, like many societies, ‘there was of course crime and violence in East Bank...of course, we were not all angels... Yes, there was violence but it was never an issue. Never! More often than not, crime and violence go hand in hand with poverty’.⁵⁰ These were the kinds of comments that respondents uttered when the issue of crime was raised. Respondents rarely mentioned crime during interviews and had to be probed to reveal this side of the EBL, though when encouraged they did not do so reluctantly but rather talked passionately about it. By and large, they believed that crime and violence were not disproportionately high. To others, violence was only confined to that section of the location known as Gomoro, where people even drank dangerous home-brewed alcohol such as *inkumpa*.⁵¹ Violence was generally related to drunken brawls.

⁴⁷See *Indaba*, December 1992, also quoted by Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.14. *Indaba* was a supplement to the *Daily Dispatch* (and *Frontier Advertiser*).

⁴⁸⁴⁸See *Indaba*, December 1992, (these articles are also quoted by Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.14). In 1992, *Indaba* hosted a competition where stories about life in the old East London locations, the East Bank and West Bank, were to be told by former residents of these location, in an attempt, to possibly encourage these people to positively offer a rather “controlled” nostalgic reminiscence of their former “home” experiences, let’s we forget, and to tell their children of the kind of life they lived, why and how they ended up where they are today. The outstanding stories published and some winning prizes, and the above two articles were one of them.

⁴⁹See *Indaba*, December 1992.

⁵⁰Interview Temmers; Twaku; Ncunyana. This is also reported in Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.16.

⁵¹*Inkumpa* is the home-brewed alcohol, which is often considered to be dangerous because of its short cut fermentation process and the type of ingredients used to brew it.

Others pointed to faction fights between boys from Tsolo and Mekeni. These were considered normal in the process of growing up. Pulle Twaku recalled how older boys supervised and refereed those fights, which were similar to stick fighting.⁵² However, there was also violence by hooligans and *tsotsis* whose activities were mainly directed against migrants new to the location. In fact, most respondents attributed crime and violence to those people who were not “borners”, as Caga referred to people born in East London. He added that, ‘...during the December holidays, when all have gone home, it was quiet and peaceful in the location’.⁵³

Johannes Temmers points to another important perspective.⁵⁴ He believes that an analysis of crime should take account of the legal apparatus of the time. He remarked that ‘in many ways, the East London city council laws and that of the whole country actually forced people to become criminals’.⁵⁵ He recalled that it was a crime for which you should be fined or jailed to leave your house without your lodger’s permit. The consumption of liquor within the city and the locations was regulated. At the time only coloureds (and those Africans with at least a standard six certificate) were allowed to buy liquor. No person was allowed to take liquor into the location. There were no decent bars where location residents could relax and drink and it was also a crime to drink on the streets. Under these circumstances, people were forced to resort to undignified consumption patterns to try and beat the law, and were subjected to degradation in the senseless attempts to create a law-abiding urban citizenry. Thus the purported high rate of crime was itself one of the consequences of apartheid ideology. It was a product of the authorities’ own making, one that they, however, failed to acknowledge’.⁵⁶

The forced removals of the 1960s, the brainchild of the central government supported and supervised by the East London city council, marked a dramatic change in community life. Rugby did not escape this disaster. Much as they were aware of the unhealthy conditions and

⁵²Interview Twaku.

⁵³See also Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, quoting Mzwandile Caga.

⁵⁴Interview Temmers; see also Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

⁵⁵Interview Temmers; see also Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

⁵⁶Interview Temmers; see also Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

degradation under which they lived, this community did not expect to be removed. 'If the location was a slum as they called it, then they should have upgraded it, simple! My feeling is that the rationale for the demolition was that East Bank was situated in the centre of land owned by Whites'.⁵⁷ A number of respondents recall that there was no way that one could enter or leave the location without passing through white land, be it a farm or a residence. Hence the white authorities decided to demolish their community and push Africans to the outskirts of East London, in the process destroying the rugby community built up over the years. Respondents were fully conscious of the obvious ills within their rugby community, which manifested themselves in splits and club-breakaways. However they faced poverty and lack of proper sporting facilities and equipment, neglect by the authorities and racial prejudices and other forms of discrimination. Forced removals also played their part in retarding the growth of sport in the area.



Social Life at EBL: Sports and other Social Activities

As indicated earlier, at weekends almost everybody at the old EBL would flock to Rubusana Park to watch rugby. Some participated in other sports such as tennis (there was Alma Tennis Club), golf, bodybuilding and boxing, which were often held in the afternoons, and soccer, though the latter was never a force in the area at the time. In summer, cricket players and spectators would assemble at Rubusana Park. The most famous early cricket team was Gaika Cricket Club. Often, the same people who played rugby during the rugby season would also play cricket⁵⁸. Some individuals from EBL played many roles⁵⁹. In the research for this study, respondents indicated that they assumed two or more responsibilities in their rugby careers. It was not uncommon to find a man who excelled in rugby and other sports both playing and administering, while also being politician, musician and actor. East Bank people were flexible

⁵⁷See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, interviewing Columbus Mgojo; Lapple Sontshi, 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, EL, 16 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Sontshi), gave a similar information; also Twaku and a number of other respondents felt strongly about the removals and some were evidently traumatised by them.

⁵⁸Interview Ncunyana; Twaku; Temmers.

⁵⁹Interview Twaku; Mabija; Mnyute; Mjo.

and assumed many roles.⁶⁰ Most of them also participated in and enjoyed music at Peacock Hall, which was the hub of cultural and musical life on Sunday afternoons.⁶¹ In the early 1950s and late 1960s, local musical talent was honed in the dozens of church choirs and especially in the Boy Scout band, which had high quality instruments and spawned musicians such as Sax Manuel and Eric Nomvete. These men played in jazz bands such as the African Quavers, Havanas, Hotshots, Broadways, East London Casinos and The Caramias of the 1950s and early 1960s. EBL produced musicians of international status, amongst them Pinise Saul, Beulah Hashe, Johnny Dyani and Sobhizana Mngqikana.⁶²

There were other kinds of entertainment in which some sections of the locations engaged, especially the migrants. Mgijima Sam describes how his home people used to enjoy themselves when not at work or on the rugby field. 'East London people those days would get together in the activities such as sports and there were boys activities called "iindeko zamakhwenkwe" (boys' stick-fighting contests) as well at the time'.⁶³ These would occur near the Ngcabanga River that divided Tsolo and Meken. It is said that men who were "drinkers" would also embark on such activities, "challenging" each other.

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Sam remembers a man he calls *bhut* Makheni Daka, from Mgwali, his village, whom he reckons was a 'good stick fighter'. It is said that this man bullied many until another acclaimed stick fighter arrived in the city from *emaGqunukhwebeni*. At the time men arranged these fights in a 'very interesting but provocative manner especially directed towards the "target"'.⁶⁴ The stick fight was promoted by strongly stressing the regional allegiances of the two prospective contestants. Sam describes this particular fight. 'The two men were first provided some "drink" to kill the shyness (*iintloni*) and avoid facing the irresponsibility of mature men's fight in the name of the game. When justifying their irresponsible actions, these men often argued that 'it is

⁶⁰Interview Twaku; Mabija; Mnyute; Mjo.

⁶¹See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

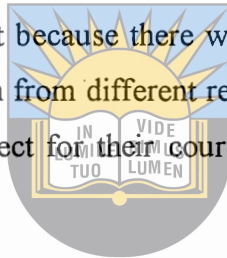
⁶²See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁶³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁶⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela.

not proper to have two bulls [bossy men] in one kraal'. Fuelling the fight among prospective fighters, spectators said to the man from *emaGqunukhwebeni*, “*nanko lamqhagana*’ [there comes that small cock] who has been crowing here, go shut its big mouth, man. He doesn’t even have skills in this game. He is very slow on hands too. He is just pretending to be a champ”.⁶⁵

Unlike boys, when men fight, they use one stick for hitting, without the second one for shielding, using their jackets for that purpose. The fight between the two was arranged on a particular day and it became a fierce battle of the drunk and insensitive men. Sam remembers that they had to be separated in the first day because they did not want to give up the fight. Though it was clear that the hard-hitting Daka was on the receiving end, his opponent was as fast as lightning in front him. These two fought for several sessions but Eventually they stopped the bloody and unnecessary “tribal” fight because there was no fundamental conflict prompting it. Besides, they were one people though from different regions and villages. They were honoured by the people and earned some respect for their courage and became good friends and drank together.



Location Personalities and Community Building

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Life in the location compelled people to play many roles. Clements Kadalie of the ICU, was a prominent trade unionist, rugby club and church founder; Skei Gwentshe, Joel Lengesi and JJ Matoti were involved in politics and social activism; Lujiza, Fanti Gaqa, Gilman Ntoni, Joe Mtyeku, Louis Leo Mtshizana and others were prominent rugby personalities and leaders who contributed to the development of EBL in many ways. Dr Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana played a major part in uplifting the socio-economic standards of the East London region. Many of these people assumed these roles as a moral obligation that they had to honour as relatively privileged members in their communities. It was evident that many engaged in these activities because of sheer love of such activities. However, some no doubt merely wished for personal status and power.

⁶⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

Ngqongqo argues that early western educated Africans such as Rubusana and those before him were caught between their heritage and this newly acquired western education.⁶⁶ The problem that they faced, however, was that the majority of the African community had not undergone a similar change. Addressing the Commission on Education in 1908, Rubusana said, '...You will agree that the school native is working in the interest of the red native. He is even more enlightened than his heathen brother and is trying to lead him to light...'⁶⁷ Despite its patronising tone, this statement shows that Rubusana, like others of the emerging African elite, 'was tied by blood to the traditional African society from which he had originated, notwithstanding the fact that he had adopted the dominant western ways of life'.⁶⁸ Many educated people within the East London location, especially those at the EBL, maintained this moral obligation to their communities long after Rubusana's death. Sport was a crucial part of this routine of service and obligation.



East Bank Location and Politics

EBL was politically active. In the 1950s, it was already a centre of the political struggle against the apartheid state. Regular meetings were held at Bantu Square where the leadership of the ANC gathered to discuss the progress of the national 'defiance campaign'. Many recall the way in which the youth moved through the location mobilising support as they sang '*Mayibuye iAfrica*'. The political leaders of East Bank that remain in the popular memory include Clement Kadalie, the internationally renowned political leader and trade unionist of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union.⁶⁹ There were also people such as Skei Gwentshe, Joel Lengesi and JJ Matoti.

⁶⁶See Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana 1848-1910', 1996, p. 35, 1996.

⁶⁷A.1-1908, 'Cape of Good Hope report of the select committee on education', par.11797, p.261, as quoted by Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana 1848-1910', 1996, 1996. See also Odendaal, A, 'African Political Mobilisation in the Eastern Cape, 1880-1901', University of Cambridge: PhD, 1983, p.187.

⁶⁸See Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana 1848-1910, 1996', p. 35, 1996.

⁶⁹See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000; see also Phil Mthimkulu, 'Mass Movement of the 70's and 80's and the Liberation struggle', a paper published in the *Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS)*, edited by Sipho Buthelezi in journal issue entitled: 'The role of mass movement in SA liberation struggle – 1990-1994', 1995, p.97.

established a rugby football club that was known as the 'Independents' though it later disbanded for reasons to be dealt with later. 'As if that was not enough, Kadalie also founded a church known as the ICU, which he and his wife led. Something that was strange about his church was that it drew its membership mainly from *amaxhegokazi*, old women'.⁷⁰

Following the political upheavals of the late 1960s, Gwentshe, Lengesi and Louis Mtshizana were banned and later 'removed' from East London because of their political activities, under Section 5 of Act 38 of 1927.⁷¹ Following his three-year spell at Robben Island where he was detained for political activism and allegedly leaving the country illegally in 1963, Louis Leo Mtshizana was officially 'confined into the district of East London, Mdantsane Township, where he was deported'.⁷² This lasted until 1985 when Wongama Lennox L Sebe, the then President of the Republic of Ciskei, decided to banish him from Mdantsane Township and he was ostracized to the remote town of Sterkspruit where, in fact, he is still living today.⁷³ Once again, the diversity of involvement is notable: for example, Gwentshe was the leader of the Hotshots band, which was actively involved in promoting music talent in the location. '...His charisma and dedication to the struggle attracted hundreds of location residents to participate in politics, especially during the Defiance Campaign in 1952, in which East London featured prominently'.⁷⁴

The Forced Removals: East London to Umdazani

Throughout the country, the 1950s and 1960s marked the intensification of the Group Areas Planning as evidenced by the passage of the GAA of 1950. Central to this legislation was

⁷⁰Interview Fikile Dunga & Vukile Magqabi, 303 Zone 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Dunga & Magqabi); Sam & Wotshela; see also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁷¹See the extract from the report of the Town clerk dated 2 November 1956, as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000; interview Mabija.

⁷²Interview Louis Leo Mtshizana, Number 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana).

⁷³Interview Mtshizana.

⁷⁴See Mager, AK, *Gender and the Making of a Bantustan: A Social History of Ciskei, 1945-1959*, 1999.

the plan to have separate residential areas for each of the race groups. Thus, throughout the 1950s, the management of East London City Council's locations had to be in accordance with this act. At the time, housing related problems such as overcrowding had reached alarming proportions in the city's locations, particularly EBL. The city council that had plans to expand the location and the central government's plans to enforce apartheid laws created confusion. Attempts to obtain land for this purpose were thwarted by the government's strategy, rejecting any further expansion of the location. For example, in 1955, Amalinda was zoned a white "group area" by the Land and Tenure Board, which adversely affected what seemed to be the inevitable expansion of Duncan Village. According to Proclamation 345, the first GAA proclamation issued for the city in 1967, Parkside, Parkridge and Buffalo Flats were delimited for coloured residents. The rest of East London including west of Nahoon River, excluding African locations, was allocated for white residence as per Proclamation 346. Blacks were designated for total removal to the newly created homeland of Ciskei.⁷⁵ Duncan Village, and thus, EBL, was to be re-planned and redeveloped for Indian, coloured and Chinese people according to their "group area".



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In 1952, four years after the Welsh Commission had proposed a satellite township to remedy African social ills, the government pressured the council to investigate a suitable site. Many sites proposed for relocating Africans were rejected by the government but eventually, the present site of Mdantsane was chosen by Verwoerd himself on the basis of its distance from white East London. It was later integrated into the Homeland policy and was alienated from the city and incorporated in the Ciskei "reserve". To allay the council's and the broader white community's fears, a government minister stressed that, 'the new township will not be an urban Bantu residential area in a white area; but will be developed as a Bantu township in a Bantu homeland'.⁷⁶ Like other African townships in other urban centres, Mdantsane was situated kilometres [25 km] away from East London city centre.

⁷⁵Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990.

⁷⁶M de Wet Nel, 'Minister of Bantu Affairs and Development', February 1962, quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.21.

The Welsh Commission of 1948/9 first mentioned a satellite township. At that time it was never the intention of the city council to entirely remove Africans from East London. The new location was going to be for 'wealthier Africans who would be least affected by the burden of transport'.⁷⁷ In 1951, the *Umdazani* site was first mentioned in official documents as suitable. It was clear at this stage that the Council's pleas for an extension to Duncan Village would be ignored. The Mdantsane site was approved by the government in 1957 and by Council in 1958. Its planning, started in August 1962, was a joint venture between the city and government engineers and planners. The Council accepted initial plans for the new location on 24 February 1959. From 1963 onwards, it became apparent that this was irreversible as the Mdantsane project was formalised through Proclamation No 240. In the same year and in accordance with the border industries policy, the Cyril Lord factory started operations and as a result the first batch of houses were built and occupied by the end of that year.⁷⁸

Parkside had already been set aside for the coloured residence. In 1967 Parkside, Parkridge and Buffalo Flats were proclaimed as only for the coloured people. Although residential segregation was in place long before apartheid, it had not been strictly enforced amongst the coloured people who resided freely amongst whites, as in North End, and Africans, at EBL and WBL.⁷⁹ Indications of the first attempt to segregate coloured people from other communities surfaced as early as 1927 with the establishment of Parkside for exclusive coloured occupation. The scheme started with municipal housing and later the home ownership scheme was applied. From the 1940s, the City Council pursued a policy of encouraging coloured families residing at East Bank Location to move to Parkside. This was done by declaring it illegal for coloureds migrating from EBL to Parkside to transfer their property to another coloured person or family. This was aimed at reducing this population at the EBL, hoping eventually to achieve their total removal from the area. In 1950, the City Council built several hundred houses in Parkside following the increasing demand for housing subsequent to EBL "strategic emigrations".

⁷⁷ Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990:120

⁷⁸ Cook, G & Opland, J, 'Mdantsane: Transitional City, Grahamstown', *ISER Occasional Publication Series*, 1980.

⁷⁹ See Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990

The apartheid city plan required all Africans to move out of urban areas and this meant the destruction of their locations. This plan also affected WBL, forced to give way for large-scale industrial development. Justifying EBL's destruction, government asserted that the move was intended to 'ease the enormous physical, social and political pressure that was building up in Duncan Village'.⁸⁰ Thus the removal of thousands of East Bank residents from their homes began in June 1964.⁸¹

It is obvious that forced removals were a traumatic experience. Some families were removed from their original homes only to await relocation yet again. A large number of other families, mostly coloureds, faced a similar fate. By the 1940s, overcrowding had reached alarming proportions in the shack area despite recommendations of two Commissions that were earlier set up to investigate the social conditions of the East London locations, especially the EBL. It was only in 1940 that the council seriously considered building more houses. A new municipal housing section known as the "Training School" section of Duncan Village was erected at the time. These houses were for letting. The city council promised tenants that after a period of twenty years of uninterrupted occupation, the houses would be handed over to occupants. This created a demand for these houses among those families who could afford the higher rentals. Therefore, the first occupants of these houses were not forcibly removed from their previous homes or residences in the East Bank to this new area. However, after 1964 when the removals began, African occupants of these houses were moved to Mdantsane. The houses were not demolished immediately but were used to temporarily accommodate coloured people removed from East Bank who could not be housed in the designated coloured area of Parkside. Some of these families stayed there for up to ten years before being moved to their "own group area" which now included the newly established Buffalo Flats.

Further attempts to reduce overcrowding led the city council to explore alternative means of providing housing. Due to the size of the Mdantsane project, it was decided that a relatively

⁸⁰See Cook & Opland, 'Mdantsane', 1980, p.65.

⁸¹See Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990, p.80

small emergency housing project be run parallel to it. Consequently, some 3500 one-roomed houses were built in 1961, in the area that came to be known as C-section, to temporarily house the 'surplus' African population of EBL.⁸² Pulle Twaku, a former EBL resident recalls that a number of these families were forcibly removed from eMaxambeni to make way for the construction of a road leading to Mekeni section of the EBL. All of these people were to be gradually removed to Mdantsane when houses became available.

It was a painful process that lasted almost two decades and eventually resulted in the relocation of some 88 000 people, some 50 000 of them initially lodgers. Despite a government proclamation that it was not forcing African people to leave the towns, there is no doubt that the removals were carried out against the residents' will.⁸³ This was confirmed by a former Bantu Affairs official in a paper to the conference of the Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs, where he stressed the need for the utmost tact in dealing with the people concerned, reminding the audience that, 'in nearly every case, the Africans were against being resettled'.⁸⁴

In the case of East Bank, there were at least two factors that might have stimulated resistance. Firstly, government started by putting most if not all leaders behind bars. This led to a lack of proper structures to mobilise people, and there was thus no overt resistance except women shouting and swearing at the municipal officials as the trucks and bulldozers entered and left the locations.⁸⁵ Secondly, removals were central to the apartheid ideology. Thus, it became apparent that no amount of resistance would have stopped the government from achieving the dream of "urban purity". 'A black person was expected to do as told by his or her superiors or any white person within the country'.⁸⁶

⁸²See Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990

⁸³See *Daily Dispatch*, 15 September 1964.

⁸⁴See SA, SA Rogers's comments in the East London's *Daily Dispatch*, 1 September 1965.

⁸⁵Interview Twaku. Many former EBL residents provided similar information. See also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁸⁶See Mahombi's response to the question, '...was there any resistance by the community...?', as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000. A number of respondents including Sontshi gave similar information to this.

Newspaper reports covering the early stages of the process of removals indicate that the first group of people moved “voluntarily”. They welcomed the purported improvements of their living conditions. The Manager of Native Administration informed the Locations Board that his office was inundated by ‘families who had volunteered to go there, despite the fact that they had been told by the superintendents and the assistant manager about the increased rentals which they would have to pay and other matters.’ He estimated about 1900 to 2000 families were in this category.⁸⁷ However, this “willingness to move” should be viewed within the context of broader processes underway.

The Mdantsane project had already been approved and finalised by the apartheid government. Accordingly, all blacks from East London were inevitably sooner or later destined for forced removal to the new township if they failed to respond voluntarily to the municipality’s call. A notice issued by the council indicated that removals would be compulsory unless sufficient people volunteered.⁸⁸ Thus, ‘voluntarily’ in this sense had threatening undertones. According to Mzwandile Caga, people were being victimised and bullied into agreeing to go to Mdantsane for fear of being endorsed out of East London into the homelands.⁸⁹ Further, the total neglect of Duncan Village with resultant deteriorating living standards compounded by the glamorous picture of Mdantsane as painted by the local authorities. Under these circumstances, people were unlikely to have been able to make informed decisions on this issue.

Due to the GAA, the once united East Bank community was now bound for different destinations. Unlike the West Bank removals that took only a couple of months, East Bank’s stretched over years. The process was stressful. Oral evidence indicates considerable emotional trauma suffered as a result of the evictions. People are still bitter about the process itself and even more so about the manner in which the municipal authorities conducted themselves. ‘They

⁸⁷See the ‘minutes of ordinary meeting of the Joint Location Advisory Board, held on 18 May 1964’, as quoted by Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

⁸⁸See Nel, ‘The Spatial Planning’, 1990

⁸⁹See the ‘minutes of an ordinary meeting of the Joint Location Advisory Board (JLAB) that was held on 18 January 1965’, as quoted by Maqasho in ‘ELRC’, 2000.

treated us like dirt. They never cared for our belongings or us and seemed to get joy in demolishing our homes'.⁹⁰

Oral evidence indicates that forced removals meant different things to different people in East London. A large number of families who had been lodging for years in EBL were naturally delighted at the opportunity to “own” houses for the first time, though others had mixed feelings about their new and unknown destinations. However, it soon dawned on everyone that the picture was not as rosy as the authorities claimed. Former East Bank residents were resettled in separate units within the new township, thus, their experience of life after the removals differed in many respects.⁹¹ It was generally believed that life in Mdantsane was a burden, this being a manifestation of one of the contradictions inherent in apartheid policies. For example, there was the question of social and cultural segregation whilst at the same time striving for economic integration. That is, although Black people were not physically part of East London, their labour was. The tearing apart of a community that had lived harmoniously side by side for over half a century was one of the most devastating consequences of apartheid. By opting for relocation rather than upgrading, the “city fathers” not only sowed the seeds of parochialism and racial hatred, they cut East London off from its own history of multi-cultural creativity, thus denying the city an alternative vision of the future.⁹²

Life in the New Settlements: Adversities and Adaptation

The Mdantsane project was enormous, and had to be carried out in phases with people accommodated as houses became available. Mdantsane township, like any other, was created to serve the broader needs of apartheid, and had to comply with the stipulations of homeland policy. This therefore meant that residence in the township would not be exclusively for those removed from Duncan Village and/or EBL but for all those who claimed or were considered to be Ciskeians. As such, occupation of the houses was not carried out in any specific order and

⁹⁰See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

⁹¹Interview Sontshi; Ncunyana.

⁹²Interview Temmers.

consequently, people had to live alongside relative “strangers”. In accordance with the industrial policy of the time, factories relocated to the Wilsonia industrial area. The first of these was Cyril Lord, now known as Da Gama Textiles. Its management demanded accommodation for its employees. One respondent recalled that when they arrived at Mdantsane, houses were already occupied, “even boys owned houses there”.⁹³

People were provided with four-roomed brick houses with asbestos roofs. In Unit 1 most houses had outside toilets. The yards were big enough to allow some degree of gardening and the streets were tarred. The days of shanties, overcrowding, communal sanitation and filthy streets were past. Ironically, this positive change in living conditions does not seem prominent to former East London location residents when recalling life in this new township. It is the suffering and hardship to which they were subjected following relocation that preoccupies them. Removals apparently caused more sadness and unhappiness than joy, overshadowing the improvements at their new destination. They created further devastation in the lives of people who were already disadvantaged in many ways. The rise of self-government and later the independence of the Ciskei homeland, created more bitterness and an environment that became increasingly more difficult to change, not to mention challenge. These outrageous experiences took many forms.

Emotional Suffering

The time within which removals were carried out in the East Bank was long enough to expose people to severe emotional trauma. The first group of people was removed from East Bank in 1964, yet there were others who waited up to ten years for their turn. What aggravated the situation was that they were aware of their fate, as a decision to demolish the whole location had been irrevocably made long previously. They had to wait and suffer while the authorities were struggling with the realities of the new township project. There was nothing that they could do except watch their homes being ruthlessly destroyed, one by one.⁹⁴ To many of these people,

⁹³See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

⁹⁴See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000.

East London locations were their only homes: 'we worried a lot about this new location because no one knew where it was or how it looked. All that we heard was that it was far away'.⁹⁵

Lack of proper representation led to feelings of insecurity, as residents could not negotiate the crucial issue that was to change their lives dramatically. Black citizens had to be content with what Gxasheka referred to as 'pseudo-democracy'.⁹⁶ The local council often bullied the token Joint Location Advisory Board (JLAB). As far back as 1948, people had passed a vote of no confidence in it.⁹⁷ Its input was required only as far as it was relevant to keeping order in the locations. Most of the time, its role was rendered useless by the councils' repeated failure to consult. Evidence to this is the conspicuous lack of black representation in council meetings especially that held on 13 March 1962.⁹⁸ At this important meeting Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, MC Botha, came to address the Council specifically on the issue of resettlement to Mdantsane. Instead of considering the rights and concerns of the imminent victims, the Deputy Minister focused on outlining the advantages for the city council should the Mdantsane project become a reality. A deputation sent to Cape Town by the City Council also confirmed the same ignoring of the black population. Not a single JLAB member was invited.⁹⁹



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Death of Humility

Africans and coloureds had lived together in relative harmony in EBL. This might be attributed to the fact that before the passage of the GAA, coloureds lived freely among both Africans and Whites and seemed content to be part of these communities. They worshipped and

⁹⁵See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁹⁶See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁹⁷See the letter to the Town Clerk handed in by a deputation representing the East London branch of the Joint Council of Europeans and Africans on 9 March 1948, as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁹⁸See the notes on proceedings of meetings with the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development regarding the proposed development of Mdantsane, as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁹⁹See the extract from the minutes of a meeting of a Native Affairs Committee held on 5 March 1962, as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

socialised together.¹⁰⁰ Some coloured families confirm having attended and enjoyed rituals performed by African families: ‘we were a united community. This spirit of togetherness was most evident when death struck. We would all come together and spend time with the bereaved family.’¹⁰¹ People within this community respected each other’s culture and in the process learnt a lot about themselves. It is worth noting that when former EBL residents talk to each other, and in fact this is true of some respondents during interviews, some often switch in-between Xhosa and Afrikaans. Most coloureds and Africans understood at least three languages relatively well. It seems that the EBL community had the ability to ignore its racial and ethnic differences and live together in peace and harmony.

The sense of “belongingness” built over many years was destroyed as people were scattered in different neighbourhoods far apart. The community also lost its colourful recreational culture. Sports activities at Rubusana Park and other “weekend-get-togethers” were, for many people, ‘no more’.¹⁰² Distance and cost disrupted many sports lovers. Making new friends and setting up new clubs was difficult because the Mdantsane environment was in many ways hostile. For one reason or another, people in this new settlement were violent. There was generally no respect in this new township. Children did as they pleased and no adult dared question them, something not known at EBL. Boys owned houses at Mdantsane, seeing themselves as invincible. This state of social interaction was known as “*kwabambezakhe*”, literally meaning, “at-mind-your-own-business”. This is probably the origin of the popular Mdantsane saying, “*inkaw’ityiw’ilil’eMdantsane, imfen’isinda ngokugoloza*” (the ape is eaten alive and kicking at Mdantsane, but the baboon escapes the ordeal by sheer roaring). Mdantsane is a big area and relatives were scattered throughout the township. Establishing new networks posed a difficult challenge. However, the former EBL residents say that even in Mdantsane, ‘we knew each other well. Even as children, we were careful in conducting ourselves because every

¹⁰⁰Interview Temmers. For more on this issue see Robertson, Rob, *The Small Beginning: The Story of North End Presbyterian Church East London 1962-1970*, 1997; Ngqongqo, ‘Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910, 1996.

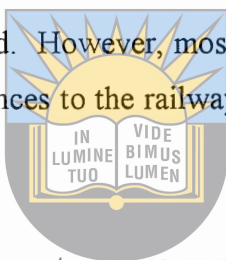
¹⁰¹Mavis Joubert, as quoted by Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000. The similar version of this information was given by a number of respondents interviewed for this project, especially Author Willard and Twaku, both former EBL residents and Winter Rose RFC.

¹⁰²Interview Temmers; Ngqondela; Mgwebi; Twaku.

adult person was your parent and had to be respected'.¹⁰³ It became clear during interviews that indeed former EBL residents knew each other very well and in fact still maintain contact.

Economic and Physical Hardship

Even after removal, most people from East London still depended on the city economy in many ways. Mdantsane was merely a “dormitory”. People had to travel to and from East London for almost all their day-to-day business, especially for employment. This daily commuting and its associated costs became a heavy economic and physical burden to former East Bank residents and dominated agendas of meetings held during the planning of the township. Proximity to the railway line was also a deciding factor in the choice of the site to house Africans that were to be removed. However, most respondents stated that the majority of Mdantsane residents walked long distances to the railway stations, waking at ungodly hours and coming home in the dark.



During these journeys to and from town many people fell victim to violent attacks and robbery. The bus service was inadequate both for Mdantsane and the coloured areas. This topic dominated the *Daily Dispatch* headlines for a long time following removals. Some of the complaints included the lack of properly coordinated timetable for buses, which waited until they were fully loaded.¹⁰⁴ Transport was problematic to employer and employee alike, meaning both production losses and loss of wages. Many workers in fact stayed in Duncan Village with friends during weekdays and returned to Mdantsane on Fridays. The severity of the problem was reflected in the 1983 bus boycotts that left many commuters dead.

Former East Bankers also had to pay rent for municipal houses. Mrs Tsenyego, who identified herself as one of the people who had run private boarding houses in Duncan Village, told the *Daily Dispatch* that, having lost her livelihood, she was now herself paying R38.00 for house rental at Mdantsane, double the amount one of her tenants would have paid her earlier at

¹⁰³Mzwandile Caga, as quoted by Maqasho. Caga, the former EBL resident and Winter Rose player and club and MDARU administrator, now the post unification BRFU President; interview Twaku; Temmers; Ngqondela.

¹⁰⁴See the letters to the editor, *Daily Dispatch*, 13 August 1965.

Duncan Village.¹⁰⁵ There were thus many rent defaulters. People were allowed only one-week's grace before facing immediate eviction. Many people were evicted without alternative accommodation. Consequently, many former "homeowners" ended up renting rooms from others, sometimes their former tenants. What aggravated the situation was the vague municipal system, prone to abuse by municipal officials, which was generally viewed as blatantly corrupt. What made matters worse was that children and family belongings were usually thrown out on Friday afternoons while parents were still at work. They returned to find themselves homeless and with the rent office already closed.

Social Adversities

There were other problems in relation to forced removals. The government seemed only concerned with the provision of houses, overlooking the importance of public facilities. Nel indicates that by 1967, only 11 schools and 6988 houses had been built in the first three units for 30 000 people.¹⁰⁶ Paramount to the community was the unavailability of higher primary and secondary schools. By September 1964, there was only one lower primary school leaving multitudes of children travelling to and from Duncan Village for schooling at 13 cents per child per day. Only in 1968 was the Mdantsane plan expanded to include shopping facilities, a large hospital and the stadium at Unit 1.¹⁰⁷ The biggest stadium in the area, Sisa Dukashe Stadium, was only built in 1973 in preparation for an international game between Leopards, a team representing a section of African rugby players under the banner of the South African Rugby Association (SARA) and the British Lions.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵Caga, as quoted by Maqasho: interview Twaku; also see the letters to the editor, *Daily Dispatch*, 13 August 1965; see also the 'African Edition', 22 September 1964, as quoted by Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

¹⁰⁶Nel, 'The Spatial Planning', 1990, p.265.

¹⁰⁷This hospital's name changed several times. At one time it was known as LF Siyo Hospital then under Lennox L Sebe's regime, the Minister of Health Siyo changed it and named it after him. Later on, Sebe changed it to Cecilia Makiwane in honour of the first black trained nurse in this region.

¹⁰⁸Interview Sipho Tanana, 16 Edge Road, Beacon Bay, EL, 9 May 2001 (Henceforth: interview Tanana).

The opposition Member of Parliament, Dr Moolman, confirmed that facilities were far from adequate for the growing population in 1969, during his visit to the township. He said that there were no phones, doctors, hospitals or chemists for the 40 000 people in the area. He described the place as 'a tragedy' and that the 'world would cry out if it knew' arguing that the 32 schools in the area were also inadequately staffed.¹⁰⁹ After his criticism of the resettlement policy, government announced sweeping improvements. These included the construction of a community centre, a post office, police station, crèche and a sewing centre. However, these improvements were effected some seven years after the first group of people were resettled at Mdantsane. Thus, to former East Bankers, the first ten years in the township's existence were a nightmare.

In the midst of the purported 'squalor' of East Bank, its former residents claim to have enjoyed a vibrant and fulfilling social life. Schools, churches, sport fields and community halls gave their lives purpose, direction and sense of unity, though in an uncertain 'white man's world'.¹¹⁰ For the coloured community, institutions such as the Independent Order of True Templars (IOTT), the Band of Hope, Boys Brigade and others were lost forever. These social groups were instrumental in the fight against 'strong drink' with the IOTT focussing on the older people and the Band of Hope on the youth.¹¹¹ The Boys Brigade was revived many years later but the commitment and spirit was never the same, probably because it was revived under different conditions. As in the case of Mdantsane, East Bank coloured people had to adjust and cope within an environment that was alien to them. They were dispersed all over the so-called coloured "group area" amongst strangers. Rebuilding the value system characteristic of their lives at East Bank became almost impossible.

It is obvious that it was difficult for these people to live without these important institutions and amenities for such a long time in the new settlements. Social life became dull and unpleasant. To Mdantsane people, the availability of these facilities did bring relief though

¹⁰⁹See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.29.

¹¹⁰See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, pp.29-30.

¹¹¹See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, pp.29-30.

the situation was destined never to be the same again. Almost everything that they had enjoyed in their community was lost. To many former East Bankers, new township schools ‘could never replace their old Welsh High School and John Biseker. Even the unit one and Sisa Dukashe stadiums could never bring back the joyful experiences, sense of community and “belongingness” that Rubusana Park had offered’.¹¹² Johannes Temmers says that ‘there was a marked decline in the standard of rugby since relocation and further decline since amalgamation with white rugby’.¹¹³ For the moment apartheid had won and East Bankers lost ‘everything that ever mattered to them and of utmost importance was a community bound together by the philosophy of *ubuntu*’.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

It has been shown that East London has a long history of social differentiation on a number of levels. However, its locations, especially the EBL and WBL, were in the memory of former residents a “big happy family” and full of vibrant social life. An apparent tranquillity and harmony existed in these locations especially in the EBL, as far as former residents recalled. Different early categories of location people that include the location “borners”, semi-permanent residents who however maintained their rural connection, and the true migrants, have been described. The complexities surrounding forced removals before and after they were carried out, the effects of that process and victims’ responses to this predicament have been outlined.

Understanding the early ways of life in the area is essential to grapple with the underlying social structures of the place. This was the background to the organisation of the early associations and rugby clubs. Issues such as people’s multi-faceted roles, togetherness in the location, and the vibrancy that was evident over the years should not be underestimated. As

¹¹²Interview Temmers; also see Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, pp.29-30.

¹¹³Interview Temmers, Mgwebi, Sontshi, Mjo, Ngqondela, Mabija, Twaku; Tanana; Christian Ndondo, Amatole District Municipal offices, EL. 9 November 2000 (Henceforth interview Ndondo). It is noted with interest that almost all the respondents interviewed for this study shared the same sentiments and thoughts, especially when it comes to the issue of removals, narrating their stories word to word as if they were grouped together at the time of interviews.

¹¹⁴Interview Temmers, Mgwebi, Sontshi, Mjo, Ngqondela, Mabija, Twaku; Tanana; Ndondo.

noted, the literate elite assumed the responsibility of uplifting the community, many playing roles within community circles.¹¹⁵ The community was not 'classless', but class differences were masked by the ideology of service of the elite, by the mixed nature of residence in the location, and by a common relationship, and sometimes resistance, to the white authorities.

The following section consists of a broad overview of the organisation of the rugby game. The focus is on the early origins and development of rugby within the African communities in the Eastern Province and Border, with specific focus on the formation and the operational framework of the national African rugby controlling body. These issues are discussed within the relevant theoretical framework.



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¹¹⁵ It should be noted that in the so-called 'African' locations, there were in fact several different ethnic and racial groups apart from Xhosas; there were Sothos, the coloured people and other ethnic and sub-ethnic groups such as Amabhaca, residing in the area. All these people lived together and even today, former EBL and WBL residents maintain contact.

CHAPTER II

Eastern Cape: An Important Cradle Of Black Rugby In South Africa since 1886

Introduction

The current socio-political issues that affect provinces and regions within South Africa do not manifest themselves in a vacuum but within a broader national framework. This makes it difficult to study one aspect of society without considering others. Changes in rugby in any part of the country tended to reflect broader national shifts over time. Therefore, the primary aim of this chapter is to locate East London rugby in a national perspective as a background to specific regional development over the past few decades. In the process, it is shown that the black population has a long rugby playing history. The former rugby administrator, Reverend Arnold Makhenkesi Stofile's rhetorical questions succinctly sum this up.¹ 'How many people know that blacks have been playing provincial rugby for more than 100 years in this country? How many know that the belief that more whites than blacks play rugby in South Africa is only a statistical myth, which was blown to pieces during the unity talks?'²

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Theoretical Background: Sport and Society in South Africa

Black rugby in South Africa has always been closely associated with the central concerns of its community. To the black population, more than simply recreation or entertainment, rugby was a vehicle of popular culture and was an outlet for personal achievement and ambition.³ Over the years, the Eastern Cape (EC), particularly East London locations, witnessed a vibrant social life through a range of social activities, with sport activities, especially rugby football, being a

¹Reverend Arnold Makhenkesi Stofile assumed a number of roles in the pre-democratic and post-democratic South Africa, and these include church, politics, education sports etc., see the appendices; see the *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', by Reverend Arnold Makhenkesi Stofile, 28 November 1992; also see Booley, AM, *The Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.11; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Who needs sport development!', Cornelius Thomas, 8 May 2000.

²See the *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', 28 November 1992, p.3.

³See Peires, JB, "'Facta non verba": Towards a History of Black Rugby in the Eastern Cape', paper presented at the History Workshop, Witwatersrand, 1981, p.1.

fundamental feature. Studies have shown that rugby was the main sport played by Africans in East London locations. Pauw found that rugby was second in significance only to church and church activities.⁴

The black population of South Africa is diverse in class, religious, ethnic, cultural and colour terms. Despite differences among black people, rugby served not only as a weekend pastime but was also responsible for establishing and strengthening socio-cultural bonds among disadvantaged communities at local and national levels. Weekend sports events served as family outings and places where social and political ideas could be initiated, discussed, tested and exchanged.⁵ Sport in society is a 'deep play' in which the innermost and often hidden values of a culture can be detected.⁶ It is not only a physical activity, 'it has heroic and mythical dimensions and can be viewed as a story we tell ourselves about ourselves'.⁷ When analysing sport in the South African context, this becomes paramount. In black South African society, sports events cushioned the effects of the socio-psychological onslaught of entrenched racism, discrimination and the toll of daily life under apartheid. As Steven Vukile Tshwete declares, 'sport and politics have always been linked in South Africa and as the political struggle experienced various trajectories so too did the sports struggle'.⁸ Given that the modern sport, including rugby, is one of the main components of popular culture⁹. Rugby is sufficiently meaningful to a large number of individuals for it to possess the potential to be manipulated as a medium for political socialisation, especially if individuals have strong identity with it.¹⁰

⁴See Pauw, BA, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among Urbanised Bantu in East London*, 1972, pp.43-45.

⁵See Pauw, *The Second Generation*, 1972, pp.43-45.

⁶See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p. i.

⁷See Holt, *Sport and the British*, 1983, p.3.

⁸Sport in this case solely refers to rugby football as played by all South Africans. Vukile Steven Tshwete, 'Challenges facing non-racial sport', p. 20, in Robert, C, ed., *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990. This paper was delivered as a keynote address at the national launch of the National Olympic Sports Congress (NOSC) in June 1990.

⁹See Hargreaves, J, *The State and Sport: Programmed and Non-programmed Intervention in Contemporary Britain*, in Allison, L, ed., *The Politics of Sport*, 1986, p.243.

¹⁰See Hargreaves, *The State and Sport*, 1986, p.243.

However, it is equally possible that this political manoeuvring can be orchestrated from different directions and for different objectives. The latter was typical of the South African society under apartheid, with the government using sport as a way to divide people whilst the non-racialists utilised it for self-assertion, liberation and freedom.

The association between sport and politics can be traced far back in the political history of the country. For example, Mayer indicated that the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) gained control of the Gomoa Rugby Football Union (GRFU) as early as 1953 before it turned its attention to the organs of local government of the time.¹¹ At the time sports unions received serious consideration from political bodies in East London, because they enabled large numbers of supporters to be brought together easily, quickly, and without incurring suspicion. Modern sport is sufficiently meaningful to a large number of individuals for it to possess the potential to be manipulated as a medium for political socialisation. This is especially possible if (as in South Africa), individuals have strong identity with it.¹² As Helmes says, 'South African society is often characterised as being sport mad'.¹³ Such intense involvement, directly or vicariously as spectators, transcends class and other boundaries. It facilitates social integration, enhancing communication among strangers and thus, has the potential to promote integration in societies. The significance of this lies in its potential for exploitation by interest groups, political or otherwise.¹⁴ This can involve utilisation of sport by government and other authorities. However it can also be utilised in the interests of communities and movements in a state of structural opposition to authority. This was the South African experience. Historian Andre Odendaal acknowledged that rugby was often used for political and social motives. He argues that monetary contributions made by the black elite to their clubs, as patrons, 'in many cases evidenced social and political motives. The black elite was determined to win for itself a greater role in colonial politics and society, and this was one of the ways in which alliances were formed

¹¹See Mayer, P, *Tribesmen or Townsman: A Study of Bantu Family in East London*, 1961, p.221.

¹²See Hargreaves, *The State and Sport*, 1986, p.243.

¹³Helmes, RC, *Ideology and Social Control in Canadian Sport: A Theoretical Review*, in Hart, M and Birell, S, ed., *Sport in the Socio-cultural*, 1972, p. 208.

¹⁴See Hendricks, D, 'The Nature of Sport in a Capitalist Society, 1989, p.5, in Roberts, C, ed., *Sport and Transformation*, 1989, PP.5-13.

in an effort to advance its members' interests'.¹⁵ Thus, black rugby from at least the late 1960s became one of the fundamental weapons for political liberation in South Africa.

Morton argues that an 'analysis of a nation at play reveals the stuff of its social fabric and value system'.¹⁶ Luschen argues that one of the functions of sport is its ability to integrate communities, not only the actual participants, but also the community as a whole. By studying sport in the South African context, much can be learned not only about South Africa's sport and sports persons, but also about her society and, possibly, the direction in which it is going.¹⁷

For many years, black South African rugby players faced infighting, splits, poverty and discrimination.¹⁸ Despite poor conditions and lack of resources, rugby became popular among black communities. Their commitment kept the sport alive and thriving against all odds. There were times of glory and difficulty in white rugby as well. In the 1950s and beyond, the full force of apartheid bore down on South African society, which became increasingly divided and separate. The outside world turned its wrath on the white Springbok team, which was seen as apartheid at play. This period and earlier was even more difficult for black rugby players. Not only were blacks concerned with the struggle for freedom, but also had to make do with poor quality fields, a minimum of equipment and forced removals.¹⁹ Rugby, however, grew in popularity and although the players lacked finance and recognition, they made up for this with passion and skill.²⁰ Many supporters and players acknowledge that they saw similar or even

¹⁵See, Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.40.

¹⁶ See Morton, HW, *Soviet Sport*, 1963, p.13.

¹⁷See Luschen, G, 'The Interdependence of Sport and Culture', paper presented, national meeting of *American Association of Health, Physical Education and Recreation*, Washington DC (USA), 1967, volume 3, p.11; see also Daniels, AS, *The Study of Sport as an Element of the Culture*, in *Sport Culture and Society*, in Loy, JW and Kenyon, AS, ed., 1969, p.19; Edwards, H, *Sociology of Sport*, 1973, p.91.

¹⁸See *Champs - Yesterday's Heroes: 'The Real History of South African Rugby'*, 2000, part 3.

¹⁹See Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.2.

²⁰See *Champs - Yesterday's Heroes*, 2000, p.28.

better talent among the disadvantaged as the advantaged groups.²¹ It was in this quagmire of inequalities, underdevelopment and “marginalisation” that black rugby players were bred.

The Early Organisational Structure of Black Rugby in South Africa

Rugby had already been played for more than five decades in black communities when the African national rugby body was established in the mid 1930s.²² The black population in South Africa, especially Xhosas and the coloured people, has known, played and enjoyed *umboxo*, the oval ball or rugby football (and other organised sporting codes) for over a century, argues, Stofile. Rugby in particular has for long played an important role in the lives of black people, particularly in the Border region and Eastern Province of what is now the Eastern Cape Province.²³



The history of black rugby in South Africa is a long one and disproves the belief that ‘blacks play soccer’.²⁴ Small boys’ “*mbambo* teams”, sometimes referred to as “naked rugby”, were witnessed in African communities for over a century. Adults were seen participating in ‘loosely organised rugby groups’ in East London locations before 1911.²⁵ At the time blacks were vociferously supporting and watching white clubs on which they modelled their own. This

²¹See Booley, *The Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.11.

²²Mzwandile Caga, as quoted by Landiswa Maqasho, ‘East Bank Land Restitution Claim (EBLRC): Social History Report’, on behalf of Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER): Rhodes University, April, 2000; interview Pulle Twaku, Lewis Stores, Oxford Street, East London in 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Twaku); see also the “Letters to the editor”, *Daily Dispatch- Indaba*, 13 August 1965; *African Edition*, 22 September 1964; *Champs! – Yesterdays’s Heroes*, 2000, pp. 28-29.

²³Cape in this case refers to the old Cape Colony that included both what are referred to as the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape following 1996 constitution and 1994 democratic demarcations. Border region therefore falls under this new Eastern Cape Province even though Sport-wise it is a Province on its own also incorporating the Transkei region.

²⁴See Dobson, P, *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, South African Rugby Board: ‘Association’, 1989, p.201.

²⁵Interview Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, Education Regional offices, Room 8, 2 Floor, East London, 11 April 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Ngqondela). The ‘Swallows 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Brochure’, compiled by Ngqondela, NL, 1986, p.23, also cites this information.

is how early community rugby clubs emerged in black communities, especially in East London, combined with the missionary role in introducing and developing the game.

That rugby in black communities has survived neglect by the privileged, scant resources and facilities, internal squabbles that led to numerous splits and the political pressures of over a century, is proof of 'Xhosa people's love for the game'.²⁶ Without apartheid policies of separate development such the Influx Control Act (ICA) and Group Areas Act (GAA) that limited numbers of blacks in towns and cities through forced removals and resettlements and other strict regulations, rugby would doubtless have flourished even more than it has. Though it has been largely undescribed and unrecorded, there is no doubting black people's enthusiasm for rugby.

Black Rugby Structural Development

Though the first African national rugby body, the South African Bantu Rugby Football Board (SABRFB) was founded in 1935, Africans already played rugby in 1887, when the first known African club, the Union Rugby Football Club (RFC) of Port Elizabeth (PE), was established.²⁷ This suggests that Africans knew the game long before that time. Africans were involved in the formation and became active participating members of the South African Coloured Rugby Board (SACRB), established in Kimberley in 1896. African players only broke away from the SACRB in 1936.²⁸ The founder unions within the SACRB included Griqualand West Colonial Rugby Union (GWCRU), Western Province (WP), Eastern Province (EP) and Transvaal. Among the founding members present at the first Board meeting were Makurua, an African rugby administrator and Isaiah Budlwana Mbelle, Sol Plaatjie's brother-in-law, who was the Transvaal honorary secretary. More than half of the 1896 Eastern Province team, which was affiliated to the SACRB, were Africans.²⁹ Odendaal notes that the players of the four clubs that played in the inauguration of the Rhodes Cup tournament of the SACRB in Kimberley from 20-

²⁶See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.201.

²⁷See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.201.

²⁸See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.43.

²⁹See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.13.

27 August 1898 reflected the non-white demographics of the various regions, from the coloured and/or Muslim composition of the WP and Transvaal squads, to the African names of the EP team and the fully mixed Griqualand XI.³⁰ The Eastern Province team included C Msimangu (sic) who played as a fullback, T Rune, G Mbilini, V Mbilini and G Dalaza as three-quarters, I Twebu and W Mgodlandlu (sic) as halfbacks, R N'kasa (sic), T Nogwina, J Mjelle (sic), J Vena, F Dalaza and J Sofisa as forwards with the coloured players A Ross and K John.³¹ Odendaal further argues that the aim of the SACRB was clearly to organise all those rugby players excluded from the exclusively white South African Rugby Football Board (SARFB). This was a significant achievement predating formal political cooperation along interracial lines by nearly a decade; for it was only in 1907 that the South African Native Congress (SANC) and the coloured African Political Organisation (APO) held their first formal joint conference.³²

The origins of organised African club rugby can be traced as far back as the period between 1897 and 1911. Most of the oldest black clubs in South Africa were established in the EC. With schooling in the black communities limited to primary schools, many black players attended the 'Kaffir Institution' that was established at St. Andrews College at Worcester Street, before it moved to Graham House.³³ St. Andrews College lays claim to be the oldest rugby playing school in South Africa, first playing the game in 1887. The old Xhosa rugby generation believe that it was the excellent foundation laid by the 'Kaffir Institutions' that were the genesis of their rugby in Grahamstown³⁴. White clergymen, especially the Reverend Mullins, were active in coaching in the townships. Thus, Reverend Whyte was the first president of the Winter Rose RFC, founded in Grahamstown in 1890 by men including Bush Manana, Walter Tsotsobe and others. Most Winter Rose players were old boys of St. Phillip's Mission School in Grahamstown, some of whom had played for Union in Port Elizabeth (PE).

³⁰See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.42.

³¹See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.11.

³²See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.42.

³³See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.201.

³⁴See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

Initially the Union's opponents were the coloured clubs. Later other African clubs emerged as the game gained popularity, like the Orientals formed in 1894. Confusingly, though its colour was dark green, it was called the 'Blues' after the racially white Olympic Club of Port Elizabeth. Union RFC versus Orientals RFC's encounters were modelled on the Crusaders-Olympic rivalry. At the time clubs competed for the Hunt Trophy, donated by a PE auctioneer of that name. Later the Wynne Cup succeeded.

Spring Rose, a club that was to cause a dramatic split in the South African African Rugby Board in the early 1970s was established in Port Elizabeth in 1907 by Willie Thube, who first named it Spring Grove because most of its players came from that place near Bedford. This regional arrangement of players into one club is similar to what has been observed in other parts of the country, including Cape Town (CT) and in the EL locations. This will be dealt with in detail later. The name 'Spring Grove' was changed to Spring Rose two years later, when it achieved league status.³⁵ Many of its players in the early days were domestic workers and they were scorned by opponents as being mere "kitchen boys", an image dispelled when they defeated Wanderers of Grahamstown and won the Wynne Cup on the Olympic ground. It was not uncommon to thus label some newly established and struggling rugby clubs within the African communities, though sometimes this was not done only to defame the club concerned but to refer to its peculiar features. East London clubs did not escape, and some if not all the early rugby clubs, were referred to, by specific nicknames, just as with Spring Rose's kitchen boys' stigma.

More clubs were established over the years in the Eastern Cape. For example, Tigers RFC of Somerset East was founded in 1895 and its opponents were the local white clubs throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century. 'In the early days of the club [Tigers], players would walk forty kilometres to and forty kilometres from Cookhouse and the surrounding areas to play a rugby match'.³⁶ Players started travelling by lorry to their matches in 1926. Dobson notes that Tigers acquired its first jerseys after the Anglo-Boer War and they

³⁵See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

³⁶See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

chose red, white and blue in honour of the victors.³⁷ Other clubs followed: Lilly Whites of Grahamstown which was also referred to as the 'Blues', Spring Rose and Hamilton of Uitenhage; Morning Stars, Walmer Wales, Easterns, St. Cyprians, Butcher Birds, FABS (for people from Fort Beaufort, Adelaide, Balfour and Seymour areas), and in EL, Swallows and Early Rose were among the clubs established around this period. The two latter clubs will be dealt with in following chapters.

Following these community clubs, educational institutions took centre stage in the development of African rugby. In the early years of the last century African rugby flourished in tertiary and secondary institutions such as South African Native College (later the University of Fort Hare) and Lovedale College in Alice; Healdtown at Fort Beaufort; St. Matthews and Fort Cox College in Keiskammahoek and high schools like the Welsh High School of East London; Newell and Cowan schools in Port Elizabeth; Langa High in Cape Town and Nyaluza of Grahamstown. Since 1936, most men that have been to these institutions participated in the SABRFB annual provincial tournaments, held biennially after 1954. Players from these institutions also subsequently went on to play for Border and EP teams. It could be argued that these students helped these provinces to be the strongest in African rugby. Certain men of note took a special interest in assisting in the development of players from these institutions, among them, Professor Dent and Professor Davis at Fort Hare.³⁸ Then in the 1940s, Oosthuizen coached and managed Fort Hare's senior team known as "Blues". There was Scott Benyon at Lovedale and a shopkeeper, Stewart, who was an enthusiastic sportsman and promoter of rugby at Healdtown.³⁹ The combined black student teams from Lovedale, Fort Cox and Healdtown competed against teams from all over the country, as they did with the touring Transvaal team in Alice in 1935. Players like Lapple, Sontshi, Eric Majola, PV Maneli, Sdondi Ceko and Simo Mjo featured. As with the combined teams of the southern universities of the Universities of

³⁷See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

³⁸See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

³⁹Interview Simo Mjo, Green Acres in Port Elizabeth, 04 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mjo).

Cape Town and Stellenbosch, these matches captured the imagination of rugby enthusiasts for many years.⁴⁰

The first inter-town tournament for the Wynne Cup was held in PE in 1904. Participants came from PE, Grahamstown and EL, with Midlands joining later. Following these inter-town tournaments, provincial unions were formed. The Eastern Province Native Rugby Board (EPNRB) was first to be established as early as in 1905. However, it took about a decade for other provinces to emerge across the country. In the early 1920s, Border Rugby Board and its affiliate sub-union, GRFU, were established in EL. Rugby gained popularity as “expatriate” Xhosas spread the game to other parts of the country, especially as they went north to work in the mines and to Cape Town. In EL, migrant labourers adopted the game and took it to rural villages where it had never been played except in places that had mission schools.⁴¹

The national African rugby body, the SABFRB was founded in 1935 in EL by, amongst others, JM Dippa, MR Masabalala, E Ntshinga, PP Mati, WB Ntshekisa, C Manana and TI Sondlo. This body was conceived in Port Elizabeth during the inter-town cricket tournament and was modelled on the SA Bantu Cricket Board (SABCB), established in 1933. The SABFRB held its first tournament a year later in Kimberley and its first committee comprised JM Dippa, President, Halley Plaatjie, Secretary, responsible for organising the board’s first tournament, Titus I Sondlo, Assistant Secretary, and J Molehe, Treasurer.

Following its establishment SABFRB initiated its first inter-provincial tournament. These became a cornerstone of black rugby, with EP and Border dominating other provinces. A few respondents in this study regarded EP as the best province in the country.⁴² In May 1936, the North Eastern Districts (NED) formed its provincial rugby body, its team taking part in the

⁴⁰See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.201; Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.42.

⁴¹Interview Sam and Wotshela, Mgwali Village of Stutterheim, 9 March 2001(Henceforth: Interview Sam & Wotshela).

⁴²Interview Ngqondela; Sam & Wotshela; Dunga & Magqabi, 303 NU 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Dunga & Magqabi). Many other respondents that were interviewed for this study in 2000 and 2001 also gave this information.

weeklong SABFRB inter-provincial tournament a month later. But strangely, Border, Natal, and the WP did not participate, though Border and Natal had earlier, in May the same year, played a match in EL witnessed by four thousand spectators, where Natal won 8-3.⁴³ In fact only EP, Transvaal, Griqualand West and the NED turned up for the first SABFRB inter-provincial tournament in 1936. SABFRB interprovincial tournaments were played in a league system on a rotational basis from one province to another, ending in a final for the Cup donated by the Chamber of Mines. The second cup for which the provinces competed was the Graham Remedies Trophy, commonly known as the Partons Cup. The Partons Cup outlasted the Native Recruitment Cooperation (NRC) Cup, which was abandoned in the early 1950s at the suggestion of Louis Leo Mtshizana on the grounds that the mines were exploiting black labour.⁴⁴ The Zonk Trophy, presented by AG Lee of Zonk Magazine at the inter-provincial tournament held in Johannesburg in 1955, then replaced the Partons Cup.



In the first SABFRB interprovincial in 1936 from 27th June to 4th July, EP played to a 0-0 draw with Transvaal in the final but the following year EP won in Cape Town though the cup did not arrive for presentation. They won it again in 1938 at their home ground though NED sprung a surprise the following year. East London hosted the 1940 tournament when Braber Ngozi scored 33 points for Border, which remained the tournament record.⁴⁵ The tournament was played in Queenstown in 1941. There was a lapse in tournament activity through the middle part of the war and it only emerged again in 1944. Again, there were no tournaments played in 1946, 1952 and 1954 and after that it was held biennially, though there were none in 1963 and 1964 due to inadequate finance. There were 28 tournaments over a period of 38 years.

The SABFRB played its inter-provincial tournaments until 1950 when it started to contemplate competing on a bigger stage. The year 1950 marked a dramatic change in African

⁴³Se Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.204.

⁴⁴Interview Louis Leo Mtshizana, 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana); this is also quoted in Dobson's *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

⁴⁵See Brabar Ngozi was a star Border Provincial rugby player in the 1930s and 1940s; also see this in Grundlingh et al's *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, pp.24-25 and also in pp.47-48, quoting B Ngozi's *History and the Development of non-white rugby in South Africa*: 'Bantu rugby tournament' (unpublished, n.d.), n.p; see also *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 1973.

rugby's attitude as SABFRB engaged in a series of tests against the SACRB. Both teams referred to their national teams as Bantu Springboks and Coloured Springboks respectively. The Bantu Springboks wore black jerseys with a badge showing a map of Africa and a Springbok.

The first test was played at Show Grounds in PE in 1950 with Bantus winning 14-3. It appeared though that the interactions between the Bantu and the Coloured Boards was more than just for the convenience of playing rugby matches. The possibility of forming a federation of the two bodies was considered with, among other goals, the intention of touring overseas or inviting a team from abroad. However, all these plans came to nothing. The domestic tests between these groups were to continue till 1984, though under different 'national' rugby structures. Following the 3-3 drawn test match in Kimberley in 1952, the Bantu Springboks undertook an internal tour. An overseas tour to Fiji was first postponed and ultimately cancelled despite the best efforts of AZ Lamani to make it a success.



Some of the African board administrators participated at club, union, provincial and national levels. Some also had long spells that overlapped from one African national board to another as they changed names with political changes in the country over the years. The first African body was the SABFRB, which changed in 1961 to the South African African Rugby Football Board (SAARFB) following a proposal by Louis Leo Mtshizana. At the time Mtshizana was an attorney and a staunch member of the Unity Movement (UM). He argued that more emphasis should be 'on the second "African" of SAARFB instead of Bantu'.⁴⁶ The word "Bantu" (meaning People) had been depersonalised, thus acquired derogatory connotations under the National Party (NP) government. This period was characterised by radical awakening in black politics as the government's apartheid policies intensified, with race thus necessarily playing an increasing role in black rugby.

Tensions increased in 1959 when a group of coloured rugby enthusiasts broke away from the SACRB to form SA Coloured Rugby Football Federation (SACRFF) that later joined Danie Craven's SARFB. Following this SACRB changed its name to South African Rugby Union

⁴⁶Interview Mtshizana; and for more on this see Dobson, *South African rugby*, 1989.

(SARU). Paramount in this move was its adoption of a non-racial mode of sport participation. This hampered the unification of rugby in South Africa. Despite several attempts to unite the disparate organisations that controlled black rugby, the question of unification with the white establishment's South African Rugby Board, favoured by some, kept the groups apart. However, 'unification' of a sort was achieved in 1977 following a major split, when, SAARFB's residue, the South African Rugby Association (SARA), joined the white (earlier known as SARFB), South African Rugby Board (SARB).⁴⁷

The early 1970s saw a wave of non-racial sport sweeping through the ranks of the SAARFB. This started in Port Elizabeth following a dramatic split by Spring Rose RFC, supported by eight out of ten clubs affiliated to the Port Elizabeth Rugby Board (PERB). This split occurred as a result of a debacle among the administrators of the board, and was not due to the influence and developed awareness of the non-racial sport principles that were to spread rapidly in the area during that period. Personal differences between rival rugby administrators of the Union RFC and Spring Rose RFC clubs were central to this split. These clubs established a new union called KwaZakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) and asked SAARFB, to no avail, for recognition as an independent sub-union within the EPRB. The SAARFB's constitution discouraged splits and 'mushrooming' of sub-unions within sub-unions, and they declined KWARU's request for recognition. KWARU sought and acquired its new "home" under the SARU, which was in fact predominantly coloured, though by aspiration, non-racial. This pattern spread rapidly throughout the country and a number of unions affiliated to the SAARFB 'joined' or allowed themselves to be assimilated by the predominantly coloured union, SARU, which claimed to be a true proponent of non-racial sports in the country.⁴⁸ A large number of SAARFB players and administrators defected to the SARU, while the residue of SAARFB affiliates drifted towards collaboration with the whites. These paradigm shifts were evident in EL rugby as well. This theme will be dealt with in detail later.

⁴⁷ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.205.

⁴⁸ The African's defection to SARU is here viewed as assimilatory rather than proper merger and/or alliance or partnership of these groups at board level. For instance, following the daring split of Spring Rose from the PE Board, the SAARFB affiliate. Having tried, in vain, to solve the problem through the SAARFB administration, the Spring Rose ended up finding a home within the SARU thus embracing the non-racial principle. Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela also gave this information during an interview in East London, 11 April 2001, and it should be indicated that Ngqondela was emphatic on this issue.

When dealing with this history, caution is required. For instance, some African board administrators survived through some or all of these phases. For example, early board administrators such as Sipho Siwisa, Pat Cossie, Alfred Dwesi, Chris Mxotho, Grant Kgomo, (a former Fort Hare who later became an African Springbok in rugby, tennis and soccer), WSM Bashe, Sipho Tanana, Sonwabiso Geleba, Chief Jongilanga, BB Myataza, Isaiah Lindi, Gecelo Curnick Mdyesha, and a host of others, clung to SARA until the end. They collaborated with the establishment and resisted change and the non-racial political pressures of the day, being branded by progressives as ‘sell-outs’.⁴⁹

Conclusion

The main aim of this section is to put black rugby into perspective. The black community converted, to a certain degree, the rigid and military type of game it inherited from the British into a strong socio-cultural tool. This has been demonstrated by the manner in which the game developed, grew and spread in several parts of the country over the years, with special roles assumed by different sections of the communities. This section has attempted to outline the adaptation of the game in the lives of the underprivileged, marginalized and colonised population, and to outline the organisations that developed to coordinate the game in the community.

⁴⁹Interview Ngqondela; Bishop Mgwebi, BRFU, Waverly Park Grounds, EL, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mgwebi); Justice Mbadamana, BRFU Game Development offices, Waverley Park, EL, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mbadamana); Mtshizana.



PART 2

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CHAPTER III

Origins and Development of Black Rugby in East London, 1911-1930s

Background

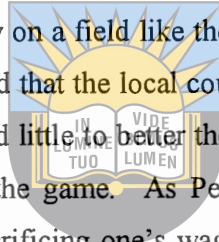
The first part of this chapter explores the origins of black rugby in the East London area. It focuses on the emergence of the game in black communities as they adopted it either from local whites or from black rugby playing communities outside East London. The influences surrounding the development of the game and the conditions in which it was played at the time are outlined. The second part of this chapter deals with the game as it was transformed from the informally organised individuals to formal club rugby. Thus, influences leading to the “institutionalising” and “formalising” of club rugby in the area are explored. Swallows rugby football club’s history is paramount, since it was the first formal club in the area. Further, how the early clubs were developed and organised and where the game was played will also be discussed. Lastly, the early relations between black rugby and political development are also discussed. However, it should be emphasised that this chapter is not a chronological record of events as they unfolded over the years, but rather, a detailed discussion and analysis of specifically chosen themes as they relate to early East London location rugby transformation.

The Birth of “Umboxo”, the Oval Ball in East London

This section explores the beginnings and development of *umboxo* (the oval ball or ‘the thing that is not round’), from the late nineteenth century to approximately 1910.¹ This was the era of rugby for rugby’s sake, without the game being consciously manipulated to challenge or defend the socio-political or socio-economic structures of the country, as was to occur later. At this time rugby became a vital vehicle of popular culture permeating the colonised, segregated and impoverished black communities.

¹See A Grundlingh, A Odendaal and B Spies, *Beyond the Tryline: ‘Rugby and South African Society - The untold story of black rugby in South Africa*, 1995, p.24; see also Paul Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, South African Rugby Board: ‘Association’, 1989, p.201.

Long before the popular East London rugby clubs came into existence, including the oldest, Swallows, there were already a number of 'loose rugby playing individual groups' in the East London locations.² They played under poor conditions without proper facilities, equipment and playing outfits, a condition that continued for decades. *Umteteli wa Bantu* newspaper, quoted by Odendaal, in 1940 described the condition of African rugby grounds as 'atrocious'.³ As Jeff Peires writes, 'the game itself was played under appalling conditions. Most fields were without grass, and many were riven by ditches, located on slopes or acting as public thoroughfares. Boots were considered a luxury and each team had, at most, a single set of jerseys.'⁴ Such circumstances bred selfless dedication. One Native Commissioner, DG Hartmann, quoted by Odendaal, recognised this when he said during the opening of the interprovincial tournament at Rubusana Park in 1940, 'I have heard the Bantu players are tough men. To play on a field like the one here they will have to be very tough'.⁵ White officials claimed that the local council 'had always had the welfare of the natives at heart', but this did little to better the situation.⁶ However, these factors did not deter participation in the game. As Peires says 'such circumstances bred dedication and selflessness: sacrificing one's wage to buy the team colours, walking all night to be at a match the following day...'⁷



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These playing conditions nearly made the adult game resemble the little boys' naked rugby. Typical 'naked rugby' or *Oombambo* team match is described in *Imvo Zabantsundu* newspaper, where a match between rural 'village school and township boys' was played at Pirie Village. The 'villagers are said to have played bare-bodied

²See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Brochure', compiled by NL Ngqondela, 1986, p.23; see also JB Peires, "Facta non verba": Towards a History of Black Rugby in the Eastern Cape', paper presented at the History Workshop, Witwatersrand, 1981, p.2.

³See, Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.48.

⁴See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p.2.

⁵See Brabar Ngozi, *History and the Development of non-white rugby in South Africa*: 'Bantu rugby tournament' (unpublished, n.d.), n.p., in Grundlingh, Odendaal and Spies, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.48.

⁶See Ngozi, *History and the Development of non-white rugby in South Africa* in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.48.

⁷See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p.2.

‘whilst town fellows wore jerseys’. In the match, urban boys complained to the referee that the village boys are ‘mpunyu-mpunyu’, like fish in the water, and they just cannot grab them because they are naked whilst the urban lads were wearing jerseys.⁸

While oral sources are not totally agreed on the question, there is reasonable consensus that Blacks modelled their rugby on white clubs in the area. Though the first organised club in East London, Swallows, was established in 1911, there were already a number of informal rugby playing groups that competed on open fields in East London, and the Cambridge and East Bank Location (EBL) and West Bank Location (WBL). At the time many Africans in these areas were enthusiastically watching and supporting white rugby teams. It was on these white clubs that Africans modelled their rugby. Dobson agrees, arguing that in the early days rugby ‘found favour among the Xhosa people of the Eastern Cape who emulated and adopted the games of the British settlers and the armies deployed to protect the settlers against the natives in the name of the empire’.⁹ Early African rugby enthusiasts in East London were staunch supporters of white clubs like Buffalos, Rovers, Hamiltons, Alberts, Pirates and Swifts. They keenly watched matches between teams, and ‘...gave vociferous support (sic) to their favourite teams. Those days, political consciousness as we know it today had not arrived. [Though] the thinking of the times must not always be viewed with hindsight’.¹⁰

However, Mgwebi has a different view. He argues that Blacks in the East London area established their first club, Swallows, encouraged by and emulating Grahamstown’s Winter Rose, established in 1886, one of the first black clubs in the Eastern Cape and in the country. A Grahamstown man, Bush Manana, was specially sent to East London to assist in forming a rugby club since there was an evident interest in the game in the area.¹¹ Among people who were involved in establishing

⁸See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, July 1959.

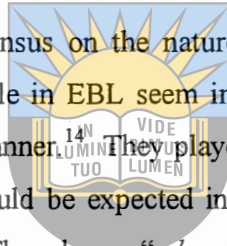
⁹See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.208.

¹⁰See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.23.

¹¹Interview Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, Education Regional offices, East London, March 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Ngqondela). L Xalabile cited this in his address at University of Fort Hare Sports Banquet, 19 October 2001.

the first formal East London rugby club is CZ Futshane who came from Grahamstown.¹² Mgwebi's argument may thus have merit. It is apparent though that black rugby history is long. As has been seen, Makhenkesi Stofile, a famous rugby administrator and anti-apartheid activist, argues that black rugby has a long history. He however, adds that 'not many people know that black South Africans had played provincial rugby for more than a hundred years', and that 'the beliefs that more whites than blacks played rugby; during pre-unification era of SA sport is no less than a 'statistical myth which was blown to pieces during the "unity talks"...'¹³. Thus, though there are differences in emphasis as to the origins of these clubs, they originated in the East London locations including Duncan Village Extension (earlier known as EBL), WBL, Cambridge East and Mdantsane, later.

However, there is consensus on the nature of early rugby playing groups. Africans and the coloured people in EBL seem initially to have played rugby in a rather loose and disorganised manner.¹⁴ They played rugby in "mbambo-teams", and were without much of what would be expected in organised clubs, such as jerseys, boots and other equipment. The phrase "mbambo-team" was originally used to denote young boys' informal rugby. However, as the game developed, it acquired another meaning, expanded to also denote adult teams that are not kitted-out properly. These "mbambo-teams", shown in an illustration below, should be acknowledged as one of the building blocks of black rugby.



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¹²Interview Ngqondela; see also 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21.

¹³See Reverend Arnold Makhenkesi Stofile's article in the *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', 28 November 1992, p.3.

¹⁴Interview Johannes "Oomdu" Temmers, at 54 Port Rex Street, Buffalo Flats, EL, 12 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Temmers); Pulle Twaku, 54 Lewis Stores, Oxford Street, EL, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Twaku).

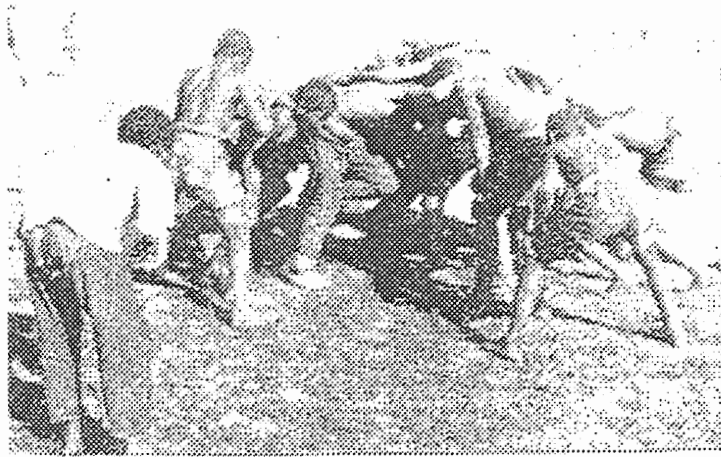


Figure 3: This *mbambo* team photo is popular amongst South African rugby enthusiasts. It has appeared in a number of publications in this country over the years.¹⁵

The obvious challenges to the rugby enthusiasts of the time were facilities such as playing fields, rugby equipment, and financial and other resources necessary for the development of the game. Also in question were the management and administrative capacities to further develop, nurture and sustain the new sport. It was only later that these informally organised individuals, and even the organised clubs, had their 'own playing paddocks, before the community sports ground was built'.¹⁶ Rugby matches were initially played at the present site of Clarendon Girls High School opposite the Guild Theatre until whites complained 'about natives presence near the neighbourhood'.¹⁷ Blacks were then moved to Rubusana Park at the old EBL. Such removals were not uncommon in East London at the time. This practice can be traced back to the 1870s, before the establishment of the first official East London location in 1877.¹⁸ It was however, removed from its original site, 'where it had existed, albeit unofficially', and in fact, following that incident, 'all the locations in East London existed in an insecure state as the municipality freely removed and resettled black inhabitants, often forcefully, when the welfare of the white community

¹⁵ This photo appeared Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989; also in the Sunday Times' special issue in 2000; and also appeared in the South African Rugby Football Union's (SARFU) official magazine: 'Champs' in 2000.

¹⁶ See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21.

¹⁷ See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21.

¹⁸ See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.4.

was deemed to be at stake'.¹⁹ In justifying forced removals, authorities argued that they were 'at least temporarily cleaning up'.²⁰

Rugby was played under these difficult conditions. This should be viewed within the broader economic and political context of the country at the time. There were few 'native' political organisations in existence though Dr Rubusana's Vigilance Association, formed in East London in 1892, and the early 'African Bond or *imbumba*,' that started an organ for 'Native Opinions', should be remembered.²¹ At the time, it was unthinkable that rugby should become an important tool for the country's liberation struggle. However, under the surface it was precisely such tendencies that were stirring, and sports events did not only serve as family outings but also as places where social and political ideas could be initiated, discussed, tested and exchanged.²² However, sport was ostensibly played 'for sport's sake,' and the assertive political consciousness that was to develop later had not surfaced. Rugby was an arena for political socialisation, but as yet, not overtly and assertively so.

Black rugby in East London locations in this period faced many challenges that inhibited participation by large numbers. This is so probably because apart from grappling with the new urban environment of which rugby was a part, there were the profound challenges of racism and poverty. The physical conditions for blacks in this racially segregated city have already been described. 'East London was from its inception a segregated town' and black people had to contend with racial prejudices and harassment.²³ Though most inhabitants were immigrants, there were those who lived permanently in the town and knew no other milieu than the city locations from the beginning. These identified themselves as 'native' East London dwellers, typically stating that, 'we are indigenous residents of East London. We were here

¹⁹See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.4.

²⁰See Reader, H, *The Blackman's Portion*, 1961, p.11.

²¹See Odendaal, A, *Vukani Bantu: The Beginnings of Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912*, 1984, p.xii.

²²See Booley, AM, *The Forgotten Heroes: History of Black Rugby - 1882 - 1992*, 1998, p.11.

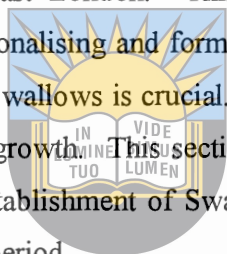
²³See, Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.2.

from inception, even before the establishment of the town itself. We didn't come from anywhere'.²⁴

Faced with such challenges, black East London players, tired of disorganised rugby, decided to come together to establish Swallows. That was how club-rugby began in the area and the entire region. This transformation is discussed in the following section.

The Birth of Non-racial Rugby in East London, 1911

The transformation from groups of informal players to organised club rugby was a notable event in early East London. This section aims at outlining the influences leading to this institutionalising and formalising of the game. As the first organised club, the emphasis on Swallows is crucial. This club gave direction to and shaped the nature of club-rugby growth. This section also outlines how other early clubs developed following the establishment of Swallows and where, by whom and how the game was played in this period.



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Swallows RFC: The Mother "Unozala" of Black Club-Rugby in EL

According to Swallows RFC's 75th Anniversary Souvenir brochure, compiled by NL Ngqondela, former Swallows player and administrator, the players who started the Swallows were workers in hotel and domestic employment who initially engaged in informal rugby emulating local whites.²⁵ Swallows was established in 1911 at the old EBL (later Duncan Village), by AS Magalela, M Kotobe, J Dweni and W Rigala, later joined by Zachariah C Futshane and Sydney Stuurman from Cape Town. It is said that these men '...approached the "Doc", Dr WB Rubusana who formulated the first formal procedures and structure. Mooi was the first president and first Captain

²⁴See, Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.2; interview Gxasheka [by Landiswa Maqasho], on 18 November 1999 (Henceforth: Interview Gxasheka). Gxasheka, a former East Bank resident was born in EBL in 1918. He appears touched by this issue, as he repeatedly stressing the word "indigenous".

²⁵See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21.

and Rubusana given the post of Life President from the club's very inception. So the first black club was born in 1911...'²⁶

Rubusana was a rugby and cricket enthusiast since his youth at Peelton and later became a notable social and political activist. Songezo Joel Ngqongqo demonstrates that Rubusana had a life-long commitment to rugby and cricket as both a player and later a sports administrator.²⁷ He also contributed to the formation of Swallows RFC although he did not originate the idea, and contributed to establishing schools, a church and other early cricket and rugby clubs in Peelton and East London.²⁸

However, Rubusana's contribution to establishing Swallows should be viewed within the wider context of the role of educated black people of the time in the emergence of African nationalism, as described by Odendaal and later Ngqongqo and others.²⁹ Like other educated Africans, Rubusana played a major role in uplifting socio-economic standards of the East London region. Early western educated Africans such as Rubusana found themselves living in the worlds of their African heritage and their newly acquired western education.³⁰ However, the majority of the African community had not undergone a similar change. British rule had a disruptive effect on the conquered African societies, imposing on them a European system of administration supported by functionaries who were in some senses agents of imperialism such as missionaries, teachers and traders. Rubusana and other

²⁶See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21; and almost all Swallows respondents gave similar evidences on this issue; see Richard Price Bunga Ncunyana' interview, 3607 NU 8 Mdantsane, 19 December 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Ncunyana); Patsa Matyeshana, 1920 NU 17 Mdantsane, 19 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Matyeshana); Thobile Mtya, 25 Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mtya). All respondents acknowledged that Swallows was the first black organised rugby club in East London and that its membership, from inception, was not limited to Africans, it included coloured players such as T De Wet, M De Wet, J Adams, S Mitchell, R Marcus, John & Janie Martin etc.; see 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.21 for on this issue.

²⁷See Ngqongqo, SJ, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910: The Making of the New African Elite in the Eastern Cape', Fort Hare: (unpublished) MA, 1996, pp.35-36, in an interview between Ngqongqo/Leander Fikile Siyo, 3 February 1992 (Henceforth: Interview Siyo).

²⁸See Ngqongqo, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910', p.34.

²⁹See Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 1984, p.xii; see also, Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana: 1848-1910', 1996, p.35.

³⁰See Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana 1848-1910, 1996', p.35.

“civilised” Africans like him were the products of this system. Sport was an integral part of this process of assimilation and mobilisation, together with politics, education and religion. Organised sport such as rugby was one of the many aspects of British culture that the new African elite enthusiastically adopted.³¹ Most of this elite, including Rubusana, was therefore faced with the challenge of attempting to uplift the standard of living of their fellow Africans.³² Odendaal however argues that the so-called ‘school people’ were much more closely tied to their own communities than is often realised.³³ Certainly, Rubusana and others did not divorce themselves from the majority. As he said, addressing the Commission on Education in 1908, ‘...You will agree that the school native is working in the interest of the red native. He is even more enlightened than his heathen brother and is trying to lead him to light...’.³⁴

Rubusana expressed such sentiments despite the fact that he had adopted the dominant western way of life.³⁵ This indicates that many early educated people maintained a moral obligation to their communities. Sport was a crucial part of this ideology of service and obligation. Thus, though Rubusana did not originate the idea of forming Swallows, the nature of the club shows the influence of the moderate elite politics of the time, such as espoused by the early ‘African Mbumba’ of the African Bond described by Odendaal.³⁶ From its inception, Swallows’ constitution did not discriminate on race and, to a certain extent, sexual lines as it allowed all races and females as members. The list of names in the Swallows roll-of-honour of 1986 in its 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee Souvenir Brochure confirms this point.³⁷ Rubusana was tasked to ‘formulate the first formal procedures and structure,’

³¹See Ngqongqo, ‘Rubusana 1848-1910, 1996’, p.35.

³²See Luzipho, SWT, *Biography of Dr WB Rubusana*, 1969, p.18, in Ngqongqo, ‘Rubusana 1848-1910’, 1996, p.34.

³³See Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 1984, p.xii.

³⁴See the A.1-1908 Cape of Good Hope report of the select committee on education, par.11797, p.261, in Ngqongqo, ‘Rubusana 1848-1910’, 1996, p.36.

³⁵See Ngqongqo, ‘Rubusana 1848-1910’, 1996, p.36.

³⁶See Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 1984, p.xii.

³⁷See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.21.

including constructing the club's first constitution.³⁸ Mzwandile Caga, a former president of Mdantsane Rugby Union (MDARU), the current Border Rugby Football Union (BRFU) Senior Vice-President and Winter Rose RFC President, argues that non-racialism in sport which 'we seem to be talking and boasting about, has been in the constitutional make-up of this "GREAT CLUB" [Swallows] since its establishment in 1911. Thanks to the foresight, vision and clarity of its founders...'.³⁹ Dr LM Msauli, a former Swallows Vice-President concurs, asserting that from its inception Swallows committed itself to the principle of non-racialism in sport, as confirmed by its membership roll of honour.⁴⁰ Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela argues that young men of those days (1910-1912) were concerned with the conditions confronting youth, asserting that there is much that the contemporary club can learn from its founders, who should be recognised as laying down non-sexist and non-racial principles that are highly relevant even today.

However, it should be acknowledged that Griqualand West Colonial Rugby Football Union (GWCRFU) and not the founders of Swallows RFC were the first to bring non-racialism in sport. From its inception in 1894, the GWCRFU comprised coloured, Malay (Moslem) and African clubs. Odendaal argues that the GWCRFU was one of the first specifically non-racial sports organisations in South Africa. The Xhosa columns of *Imvo Zabantsundu* noted that this union did not discriminate on the basis of 'bala, luhlanga, lulwimi, nanqulo' (colour, nationality, language and religion).⁴¹ This seems to be the earliest evidence of this development. Odendaal argues that the founders of this union used 'colonial' in the name rather than the usual racial appellation of the time, thus distinguishing themselves from the white body, indicating that they were serious in their aims. Also, by the mid 1890s, the regional cricket association had no less than ten Indian, "Malay", coloured and African

³⁸Though this task was solely given to Rubusana, this should not rule out the possibility of political consciousness and what has been referred to as a 'spontaneous contribution to nationalism', among the illiterate and/or, traditional Africans, suggested by Odendaal in *Vukani Bantu*, 1984, p.x.

³⁹See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 'Mzwandile W Caga: MDARU President', 1986, p.7.

⁴⁰See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 'Dr LM Msauli: Vice-President', 1986, p.9.

⁴¹See Luzipho, *Biography of Dr WB Rubusana*, 1969, p.18; see also Odendaal, *Vukani Bantu*, 1984, p.xii; A.1-1908 Cape of Good Hope report of the select committee on education, par.11797, p.261, in Ngqongqo, 'Rubusana 1848-1910', 1996, p.36; 'Ibala labadlali', *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 26 August 1897, in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.37.

teams.⁴² The secretary of the GWCRFU was 25 year-old Isaiah Budlwana Mbelle, typical of the new generation of educated intellectuals and sport leaders of the day. He studied at Healdtown and then taught before becoming the first African to pass the qualifying examination for the Cape Civil Service. He was fluent in at least six languages and was appointed as Interpreter in Native Languages to the Northern Circuit of the Supreme Court in Kimberley.⁴³ His sister crossed traditional ethnic boundaries by marrying Sol Plaatje, the prominent journalist, author and politician. Though this relationship caused uneasiness in family circles, it was indicative of how determined were the western-educated, urbanised and “Christianised” youth of the time to cross boundaries and shape new life patterns.

Swallows RFC went from strength to strength and was widely known as a club for the “township-fellows”, *abantwana beLokishi*, and *abantwana be-vet'kuku* [*vetkoek* or fat cakes], according to ZG Mahambehla, a former Winter Rose administrator and Border delegate to SARU. He says that Swallows predominantly for the people from the East London locations though it warmly welcomed good players originating from elsewhere. All the same, the ‘township-fellows’ nickname was their peculiar identity and ‘trade mark’.⁴⁴ This belief is evidenced by a number of strange yet important club symbols. For instance, Swallow’s administrators had portfolios with specific roles and responsibilities that were unique. These included the club Lecturer, Speaker, Chaplain and others. It became the only club that from its inception had its own anthem (*umhobe*). These symbols cannot be underestimated and it is no wonder that they kindle debate among rugby enthusiasts in the area. They are symbolic of the idea that the club was not just an ordinary rugby club but rather that to be a member of Swallows ‘meant being part and parcel of a great establishment’.⁴⁵

⁴²On the social life of the new black elite in Kimberly, B Willan, *An African in Kimberly: Sol T Plaatje, 1894-1898*, p.257, in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.37.

⁴³See Willan, *An African in Kimberly*, in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.37.

⁴⁴See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.26; interview ZG Mahambehla, M&K Centre, corner of Shai-Qumza Highway Roads, Highway, Mdantsane, 28 June 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mahambehla); Bishop Mgwebi, BRFU offices, Waverley Park, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mgwebi).

⁴⁵See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.26; interview Mahambehla; Mgwebi.

With many members of 'good standing' in the community, the club became a major force in numerous aspects of the game's development in the region throughout its existence.⁴⁶ Most noticeable was that Swallows administrators, players and its general membership were in influential positions within the community at the time. Then, when the location developed, many worked in the municipality, the Native Affairs Department, as local company foremen, community organisers and in other influential positions. When people were moved to Mdantsane, Swallows members filled many educational posts as school inspectors, principals and teachers. This inevitably influenced some young migrant men to join Swallows. Amongst the privileges that they helped to access and enjoy were securing passbooks and permits that were necessary to secure residence and employment within the city. Employment itself was often obtained within firms where influential Swallows members worked. Playing for Swallows thus implied urban privileges such as easy and accelerated access to passbooks, which were crucial for securing a job and other opportunities such as municipal houses. Swallows connections assisted migrant children with easy admission to the location and township schools that were often difficult to access for one reason or another at the time.⁴⁷ In general, urban life was eased, giving security and acceptance to many migrant families in a community that branded new comers as "amagoduka".

Rugby Clubs and the Apartheid Laws

The significance of Swallows did not stop other clubs from being established and developing to competitive levels. Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute of Winter Rose argues that it was the difficult socio-political living conditions that hindered club-rugby development in East London at the time. However, he claims to have managed to mobilise "club connections" and networks for mutual benefit. He says

...I started in the club during a very difficult period when the pass laws were severely enforced. Even to get employment...became...more or less impossible because one was

⁴⁶Interview Ngqondela.

⁴⁷Interview Mgwebi; Mahambehla; Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, 46 Duton Road, Cambridge West, East London, 20 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mnyute).

expected to have special permits to be in the city first. Then one would be expected to secure a work permit as well. In most cases people got the chances by associating themselves with or playing for a particular club that would assist them in finding a job in exchange for his rugby playing services. Swallows recruited mostly the location people and it was dominating in the schools here in East London too. There was a point where it was very difficult for people to get to East London if they were not going to play for the Swallows ...[W]hat I should mention is that the early clubs played a crucial role in the livelihood of migrants and they themselves produced high quality and entertaining rugby indeed...[W]e were confined into carrying pass books and at the time I was entrusted by my club to organise pass books for all Stutterheim people coming into East London. What was interesting was that I was stealing some of father's money to organise the passbooks for the new players that I am talking about because it was very difficult to get into the location at the time. Then, I would then buy passbooks at Lloyd's (*kwa-Lloyd*). The trick that I used was to temporarily change all the surnames of our prospective players into my own surname so as to facilitate the processing of these pass books. For instance, guys like Vukile, Ma-Boys, Ngxamngxa, I converted all their surnames to be the Mnyute's though they had their own surnames. You know when you are a long serving resident in a particular place you end up knowing how things are done in it. You learn all the tricks of life and survival mechanisms (*ude uyibone imiphini ukuba ixhozwa njanina*). So, I myself as well, I established contact with a certain guy who was working in the legal firms (*emagqwetheni*) and who was in fact my father's friend and I manipulated him to my best ability. At Lloyd's as well fortunately, I had some relatives, *Amagqwashu*, we shared clan names with these old men that were working there and I relentlessly persuaded them into seeing things my way. I would say to them, 'no old men you cannot do that to your own sons. These young men are also Mnyute's, please do something that they could get into the city too'. Even though I knew very well that I was just telling lies. The old men would ultimately give in and the young men would be the Mnyute's till such time that every thing worked out well for them. In fact they changed their surnames back to their original one after the passbooks were abolished...⁴⁸

Conditions like these were triggered by the National Party electoral victory in 1948.⁴⁹ Racial discrimination was extended and legalised. The new government passed a barrage of discriminatory legislation, including the Group Areas Act, Influx Control Act, Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, Bantu Education Act and others, until eventually there were more than three hundred laws controlling every aspect of people's lives. These political changes greatly affected the country's sport as it has always been linked to the social and political developments of the time. However, some managed to manoeuvre through these rigid laws as Mnyute indicates above.

⁴⁸Interview Mnyute. Charles Lloyd was location superintendent in East Bank for some 30 years beginning in 1901. He became very popular in the location as our life historians revealed. As such the administrative offices in East Bank were named after him. People generally referred to this place as *kwa-Lloyd* (at Lloyds).

⁴⁹See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline* 1995, p.50.

Swallows and Iliso Lomzi

All successful clubs operated to a large extent as mutual benefit societies. However, in particular Swallows people of 'good standing' were deeply entrenched and earned the club recognition and respect in the community. This has been shown by the honours that were bestowed on many of them when living and even posthumously. Many schools, streets and roads in East London locations and in Mdantsane are currently named after different Swallows members in recognition of their contribution in their community. One thinks of Rubusana Park at Tsolo section in the old EBL; Dr WB Rubusana College of Education at Mdantsane, named after the Swallows co-founder, player and administrator; Lujiza Street at Duncan Village Extension, named after the former Swallows player and administrator; Qumza High Way at Mdantsane, named after Gordon Qumza, a former Swallows player, club administrator, national rugby selector and councillor; Fanti Gaqa Higher Primary School at Mdantsane, named after another former Swallows player, coach and administrator; Gil Ntoni Primary School, named after the former Swallows player, coach and administrator; RH Godlo Lower Primary School at Mdantsane, named after the old Swallows and Advisory Board member, and many other community facilities named after Swallows stalwarts. Swallows was synonymous with Gompo rugby and *Iliso Lomzi*, the Vigilance Association, probably because the association was founded by one of the key club founders, Dr WMB Rubusana, in 1892, and because many club members were prominent in the organisation over the years.⁵⁰ Patsa Matyeshana insisted that Swallows was not just an "ordinary" club but was formed with deep social-cultural and socio-political intentions in mind. Associating it with Rubusana's earlier organisation, he refers to it as *Iliso Lomzi*, literally meaning "the eye of the nation" or officially referred to as the Vigilance Association:

...Swallows RFC was an East London club that was known as "*Liliso Lomzi*," that is, "the eye of the nation."... Swallows RFC was born with the task of "looking after the people of East London and the nation". People had to be looked after. There was a belief and an aim that there are important social things that we can address through sport and sports organisations. At one point when people talked about the Swallows RFC members, they would also be

⁵⁰Interview Matyeshana; Fikile Dunga & Vukile Magqabi, 303 NU 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Dunga & Magqabi); Sonwabiso Geleba, 220 NU 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Geleba); see also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.4; see also Mayer, *Tribesmen or Townsmen*, 1961, p.52.

referred to as “*AmaNdlambe*.” Players from the villages like Kwelerha used to be the main Swallows players including the children from the East London locations...⁵¹

Thus some Swallows members hold the view that there was a close association between their club and *Iliso Lomzi*, literally meaning, “the eye of the nation” or the vigilance Association. One of the prominent Swallows, Border, SAARFB and SARA administrators, Sonwabiso Geleba sums up the interlocking social role of rugby, *Iliso Lomzi* and age:

... our rugby was more centred around and controlled by old people. *Amaxhego* [i.e., old men] used to discuss important social issues as *Iliso lomzi* (vigilance association), and “oversee and guard” against the lowering of standards of rugby, and to maintain and exercise strict discipline within the rugby circles... When rugby matters started go out of hand, old people deserted rugby one by one, otherwise in the early days, people who were coaching rugby in our location were those old men. *Iliso lomzi* was constituted by old people of those days who were of great assistance in the social life of people and the form of offering guidance in disputes that are bound to occur in all communities. They often assisted in maintaining discipline and promoting harmonious and high standard life and healthy moral fibre within the societies. Those people would come from several different clubs, though Swallows members were always prominent, as long as they are mature and well experienced in a number of social issues, *izinto zasekuhlaleni*, as it would be referred these days, people with lots of experience in rugby issues such as administration and in social life in general. In the list you would name the likes of the old Kotobe’s, the Hanabe’s and so-on-and-so-on...there was a split and *Iliso lomzi* played an important role in trying to resolve the dispute...splits came to being following a Border selected team which it became apparent that it was not going down well with the majority of the location people (*abahlali*) and as a result a group of...star players...formed...not a club but a union of all those stars that were left out in the cold as far as they were concerned. The *Iliso lomzi* featured a great deal in that dispute in trying to solve it. People like Fanti Gaqa, Lujiza, and Siyo of those days tried to cool down and get together the parties that were at loggerheads. Another important aspect of this association was the people such as Gilindoda Ntoni, *tat’ uMhana Mqala* of those days were well known for their excellent coaching abilities. These people coached people right across the spectrum but not necessarily focussing only on their own club, Swallows...⁵²

Swallows RFC contributed enormously to growth and transformation of the game over the years. Many East London rugby people believe that it is the stem from which most rugby clubs in the region grew. Mzwandile Caga of Winter Rose acknowledges that Swallows made its mark in the promotion of rugby not only in the Border Area but also in the rest of South Africa.⁵³ Msauli argues that Swallows has been instrumental in the formation of many other clubs in the Border area. It widened

⁵¹Interview Matyeshana; Dunga & Magqabi; Geleba; see also Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.4; see also Mayer, *Tribesmen or Townsmen*, 1961, p.52. The people of the greater East London area and the areas around Maclean Town, belong to the “sub-tribal group” known as *amaNdlambe*.

⁵²Interview Geleba.

⁵³See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.7.

its community participation by involving itself in netball, cricket, tennis and golf⁵⁴. Lujiza, a former Swallows player and Life President, asserts that Swallows 'has today become a country-wide name from which all clubs in East London took a leaf in forming their Clubs'.⁵⁵ Swallows has been attributed with near-cosmic significance: 'When Halley's Comet came round in 1911, Swallows was born and 75 years later when Halley's Comet is back, Swallows celebrates its 75th anniversary', writes Ngqondela, in his Club Presidential message in 1986. Msauli also argues that 'it was no mistake that the birth of Swallows was linked to Halley's Comet...'.⁵⁶

Following its establishment, Swallows RFC developed into a strong sustainable club. However it became evident that its main challenge, as the first and only club in the area at the time, was to get competition. It was confined to playing the jumble of groups in the surrounding areas, and to travel to far rugby playing centres such as Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown to encounter reasonable competition. Thus, a few years following Swallows' establishment, a decision was amicably taken by the club that some players must break away to form a second club. That marked the birth of the Early Rose RFC, which became Swallows' sister club to offer the much needed competition. These two clubs have played regularly against each other since then. According to the *Daily dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, players such as B Matiso, CZ Futshane, WB Rigala, F Miya, AC Makayi, T Msengana, PZ Tshaba, GW Jamela, J Hlanganisa, JS Nteyi, J Lukashe, H Mkefile (sic), S Mjuza, P Mketete, BD Lukashe played for the first team with WM Rubusana, and K Ludidi, W Mangaliso, H Alexandra (sic), SM Mjuza (sic), AS Magalela, AN Other, P Mfene, J Kameni, J Mbi, P Masingata, Tannahill (sic), A Masingata, J Maho, K Vena in the second team. These formed the key line-up of the Swallows team in the 1920 season. It is also possible that some of them started playing earlier than this.⁵⁶ The Swallows RFC, 75th Anniversary Souvenir brochure gives the following list of players that are believed to have 'featured as the core line-up of the first original team of 1911[:]...WT

⁵⁴See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.9.

⁵⁵See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.15.

⁵⁶See *Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, 'Native Rugby Football: Early Rose Vs Swallows FC, 'Communicated' - 3 September 1920, p.8. This article is describes as "Communicated" to the *Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser* maybe by a club official or other sources.

Phillips, W Nokele and S Stuurman...⁵⁷. Some of the early players that comprised the line-up of the Early Rose RFC first team, according to the *Daily dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, include the following: LT Koka, W Koka, R Thomas, C Mazingi, H Mzinyati, D Hatebeni, G Nyobo, J Martin, W Xatasi, J Metu, N Joloza, S Gunuse, GW Xuza, C Ngxamngxa, W Mpofu. Its second, junior or “B” team comprised the following: B Njokwana, F Mkosi, R Solomon, E Qengwa, D Gussha, J Dyani, E Konqobe, E Salayi, J Mabumbulu, J Mali, J Tsala, C Ndlovu, L Thomson, M Fuma and F Xololilitye.⁵⁸

The New Challenges of EL Rugby, 1911-1920s

From 1914 to 1918 EL the First World War disrupted rugby. There was little activity on the field of play, since many men, including rugby players of the time were sent to assist in the war. The little activity there was was dominated by juniors, as there was an absence of the regular, more senior players. This affected sport activities throughout the country at the time. The South African Coloured Rugby Board (SACRB) and establishment white sport suffered in the same way. The SACRB organised its first post-war tournament 14 years after its previous one.⁵⁹ White rugby’s Curry Cup tournaments were also not held between the 1914 and 1920 and no test matches were played between 1912 and 1921. As if that was not enough, in 1918-1919, East London was attacked by the influenza epidemic that killed many people throughout the world. The EL rugby fraternity suffered accordingly.

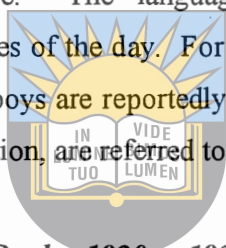
The beginning of the 1920s marked a radical rugby reawakening among blacks in the area. Early Rose and Swallows continued their old tussle with the latter especially attracting and producing many quality players. Many Swallows members assert that their brand of rugby was the attraction and that the club could boast of excellent players. They further claim that Swallows dominated the rugby scene in the 1920s and became a major force in the league matches of the East London Native

⁵⁷See ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.23.

⁵⁸See *Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, ‘Early Rose Vs Swallows FC, “Communicated” - 10 September 1920, p.7.

⁵⁹See, Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.42.

Rugby Union (ELNRU), later named Gompo Rugby Football Union.⁶⁰ However, the researcher has identified three articles about black rugby in the *Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser* between 1910 and 1920, published in the same month and same year, that is on the 3rd, 6th and 10th September 1920, of which one reports that Swallows lost to Early Rose by eight points to three and the other two articles just advertised matches these clubs were to play. So at least some of the Swallows patriotism may involve a certain retrospective adjustment of scores. It is also worth noting that in the *Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser* of this period, cricket appears to have dominated sports coverage until 1913 with few articles about rugby, black or white, being published. In fact, articles that were directly about black achievements are scarce. If an article on black sport happens to be published, generally it would be negative. The language used also demonstrates the segregationist and racist tendencies of the day. For instance, in one article published in 1911, where certain coloured boys are reportedly to have stabbed one another in a particular sports event in the location, are referred to as Hottentots.⁶¹



The Rapid Growth Club Rugby, 1920s – 1933

University of Fort Hare

Together in Excellence

Rugby fixtures and friendly matches were scheduled for Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays at the time.⁶² Early 'clubs had had their own paddock before the old Rubusana Park was built and Swallows was where the Suncrush or Coca-Cola factory is currently located'.⁶³ Among the new clubs established in the 1920s were Orientals, Rovers, Home Sweepers, Takers, and Spring Rose. With this new batch of rugby clubs, the EL players and spectators hoped to witness stiff competition. Early Rose, joined by Orientals and Rovers gave Swallows rigorous competition in league

⁶⁰See *East London Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, 3 September 1920, 'Early Rose Vs Swallows', p.7; 6 September 1920; 'Swallows lost 3-8 to Early Rose' and 10 September 1920, 'Native Rugby Football: "Early Rose Vs Swallows FC"', p.8. All these articles described as "communicated" to the *Daily Dispatch* of the time and their author is an unidentified person.

⁶¹See the *East London Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, 'Young Hottentots stabbed each other', 9 April 1912.

⁶²See *East London Daily Dispatch and Frontier Advertiser*, 3 September 1920, 'Early Rose Vs Swallows', p.7; 6 September 1920; 'Swallows lost 3-8 to Early Rose' and 10 September 1920, 'Native Rugby Football: "Early Rose Vs Swallows FC"', p.8.

⁶³See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

matches. In those early days, friendly matches were played on a home-and-away basis between rugby centres such as Grahamstown, a strong centre of the sport, and Adeford (Adelaide and Bedford combined). Later, in the 1920s and onwards, inter-town friendly matches were played against places such as King Williams Town, Uitenhage, Somerset East, Queenstown and Port Elizabeth.

The Mahonga Trophy, named after a Queenstown man who donated it, was the first to be played for in these inter-town tournaments. The first tournament of this type in the region was held in Queenstown, perhaps in honour of its donor, on 24th and 25th May 1922. The five centres that participated were Queenstown, Aliwal North, Molteno, King Williams Town and East London. Thirty East London players went by train to Queenstown and 17 of them came from Swallows. By 1923, there were six rugby clubs in the first division of the East London Native Rugby Football Union (ELNRFU) league: Swallows, Early Rose, Orientals, Home Sweepers, Rovers and Spring Rose.⁶⁴ These clubs played together until the mid 1920s when many of them died out for one reason or another, leaving only Swallows and Spring Rose. Many players from the disbanded clubs joined Swallows while the residue reconstituted themselves as new clubs. In short, new clubs that emerged between the mid 1920s and the early 1930s such as Young Wonders, Thembu United, Black Lion, Bush Buck, and Winter Rose RFC, replaced these clubs. Their organisation and development will be explored in detail later. The emergence of these new clubs also indicated a marked increase in the number of people interested in the game. In the 1940s and 1950s other clubs such as Storm Breakers, Boiling Water, Wallabies and All Blacks were also established.

By the mid 1930s, East Bank rugby had grown from strength to strength and showed new features. Rugby fixtures were no longer scheduled for Wednesdays and Fridays. Saturdays became exclusively dedicated to sport, with Sundays entirely barred from any form of sport activity. This transformation was so strong that later generations almost believed that not playing sport on a Sunday was an old tradition at EBL. One respondent stated that 'during our time as sportsmen and even in the early days before us, no rugby was played on Sundays in East London. Rugby which was

⁶⁴See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

by far the most popular sport in the East London locations at the time...was...never played on a Sunday in East London'.⁶⁵ People in the locations would attend church services on Sunday mornings and in the afternoons attend other activities such as ballroom dancing concerts at Clements Kadalie or Peacock halls. Mayer's study confirms that church attendance was the most popular social activity among the early East London location residents, especially those who were literate⁶⁶.

Rubusana Park became synonymous with recreational activities, especially rugby. Local clubs like Spring Rose, established in 1922, Black Lion (1925), Thembu United (1927), Bush Buck (1932), Winter Rose (1933) and the Busy Bees (1938) attracted many spectators.⁶⁷ Most respondents reported that rugby was much the most popular sport in the old EBL. Johannes Temmers, the former John Bisseker High School, Rising Stars, Border Coloured Rugby Union and later Winter Rose and Border Rugby Board player indicates that 'those days you would only play rugby because there was no soccer. Not in East Bank....'.⁶⁸ One respondent adds:

...you will often see some leading sports writers...saying, "blacks in South Africa, including those in the Eastern Cape don't know rugby, what they know as their national sport is soccer"... I can tell you and you can even also ask anyone from the old East Bank and West Bank Locations. They will tell you that then, when soccer was played in the same day rugby was also played in that same huge sports ground which had three rugby fields and one soccer field, the great Rubusana Park...people who would be watching soccer would be the following: The linesmen, on both sides of the pitch, together with their referee and perhaps some soccer players from the two playing teams within the pitch only, which is the eleven a side. In fact it was the South African Police personnel that mostly played soccer...⁶⁹

Louis Leo Mtshizana, the former Bush Buck player and Gompo, Border Board and SABRFB and SAARFB General Secretary and President concurs, arguing that it

⁶⁵Interview Sipho Tanana, 16 Edge Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 9 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tanana); most respondents that were interviewed for this study also share this sentiment; see also the East London social studies in Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1962, p.220. This found that the rugby game has been the most popular sport in the early EL location at the time.

⁶⁶See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.220.

⁶⁷Interview with the various former East Bank rugby enthusiasts between October 2000 to June 2001; this is also shown in Pauw, BA, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family Among the Urbanised Bantu in East London*, 1972, pp.172-173, 1973; see also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.

⁶⁸Interview Temmers.

⁶⁹Interview Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Old Mutual Building, Green Acres, PE, 4 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mjo); Twaku; Mnyute; Ncunyana; Temmers.

was only very late that 'soccer completely took over from rugby' in the East London region. He indicates that during their time in the 1950s onwards 'there was little or no soccer in places like Port Elizabeth. There was no soccer in East London, completely no soccer. It was all rugby! There was no soccer in Western Province. It was all rugby. Rugby was very strong'.⁷⁰ He indicates that the prominence of the inter-provincial tournament amongst black communities made it very difficult for soccer to gain momentum even in the areas where it had some growth. Rugby and cricket overshadowed it. According to the *Imvo Zabantsundu*, reasons that further distorted the development of the game were its poor level of administration and infrastructure. *Imvo Zabantsundu*, while hoping for improvement, acknowledged that

...The principal setback here facing administrators as well as players is the lack of a good play-ground...At Rubusana Park spectators do not get full value for their money. Active soccerites get disappointed because...of soccer administrators...Some good players from other places come to East London and after playing a few games realise the haphazard of playing on such a field and as a result decide to give up the game altogether...Players always have to look out for themselves because of the slots and potholes...Soccer administrators formulate plans today and they are wrecked the next morning. In a nutshell their problem can be analysed thus: No grounds, no gate, no funds, no organisation.⁷¹

The manner in which early clubs were formed is fascinating. Following the 'amicable break away' of some Swallows club members to form Early Rose, other clubs emerged in the same manner.⁷² These breakaways happened for various reasons such as change in work and dwelling places and misunderstandings among club members. Most importantly, and ironically, the growth of the game itself was noted as a key factor.⁷³ Following the establishment of Spring Rose RFC in the early 1920s, Black Lion RFC emerged in 1925. People originating from *emaGqunukhwebeni*, which included Alice, Middeldrift and the surrounding areas, formed this club. This club was formed following the tour of the British Lions to South Africa in 1924. The British Lion's team 'left a positive gesture and significant legacy of influence in black rugby in the EBL of the East London region, that of a club, called the Black Lion'.⁷⁴

⁷⁰Interview Louis Leo Mtshizana, 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana).

⁷¹See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Bright prospect for EL Soccer', 10 January 1959, p.12.

⁷²See, 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.23.

⁷³Interview Mgwebi; Twaku.

⁷⁴Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

The Thembu United RFC emerged two years later, born out of the transfiguration of the old Early Rose in 1927 by men such as Malamba, Xakekile, Nkwanca Xhego, Tywabi, Mbambe, Josiah Simanga Mngqikana, Charlie Mazingi, Malotana and others. The new club participated 'in the then East London Union Fixtures [Gompo Rugby Football Union] with Mazingi as its first captain, but did not win the trophy till a year later, as Spring Rose won the Championship Cup' in 1927.⁷⁵ From then, the club was to cater for and unite people originating from Thembuland spreading through to the Transkei.⁷⁶ That is, it was intended to unite *abaThembu* and *amaGcaleka* as they were known at the time. Its name is an indication of how serious the founders were about their aims. However, that objective was ambitious because six years later, in 1932, many 'Transkeians' (*amaGcaleka*) broke away and formed their own club, Bush Buck.

There are several reasons for this decision, amongst them the growth and development of the game and increased rugby interest amongst migrants in the location. Thus, in the 1930s, many migrant labourers, including the Transkeians in East London, grew in number and decided to break away from Thembu United and regroup themselves into their own club. There are contradictory views on this breakaway. Bush Buck proponents argue that they were getting a 'raw deal' in terms of team selection and other club benefits from the Queenstown (*Oonqal'ntloko base Komani*) dominated management and coaching staff⁷⁷. Some confessed that they were rather overwhelmed by the Thembus in the club, and needed 'a home' with which to identify and in which to be comfortable. Thus, Bush Buck emerged.⁷⁸ Pulle Twaku, the former Winter Rose player and administrator indicates that 'people joined clubs that they identified themselves with, felt they belonged to and were accepted'.⁷⁹ However, there is an indication that club breakaways were somewhat related to individual players' rugby talent, abilities and skills. Therefore, players struggling to reach higher levels within the club got frustrated, given that big clubs at the time had

⁷⁵See *Daily Dispatch's: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget', by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14.

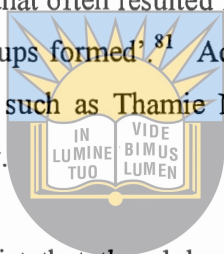
⁷⁶Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁷⁷Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁷⁸Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁷⁹Interview Twaku.

many rugby players and all they could do was to organise more development teams to accommodate them. This meant that some of these players could also ‘reach the limelight’.⁸⁰ It seems that many players that led breakaway groups were indeed such players. Respondents acknowledge that, in cases where breakaway groups emerged, this was due to the fact that players struggled to make “breakthroughs” to the first teams, and if they failed they often resorted to forming breakaway clubs so that they could get a chance to play in the limelight too, even recruiting young boys to join them. Sipho Tanana, the former Bush Buck player, concurs. He argues that ‘as rugby developed clubs got many good players and that meant that players that were in the third and fourth teams could really struggle to break-through to the second and first teams. In some cases there were players that were in the second teams but struggling to progress further than that and that often resulted in disillusionments, dissatisfaction and frustration, thus splinter groups formed’.⁸¹ According to Tanana, this was how Bush Buck emerged, with men such as Thami Ngebulana, Kholisile Tanana and others engineering the breakaway.



Bush Buck members insist that the club name is “Bush Buck”, not “Bush Bucks” as many people are inclined to believe. It seems though that this name was adopted from the Transkei Bush Bucks Soccer Football Club, which was established shortly before Bush Buck RFC in East London around the same period. Thus, in order to distinguish themselves from their ‘sister club, Bush Bucks Soccer Football Club’ back home, where they often visited to compete against local rugby clubs, the ‘s’ at the end of its name was omitted.⁸² Respondents acknowledge that Bush Buck players were very good ball kickers and they confessed that they acquired these skills from the soccer game that they enjoyed and played back home.

Ironically, in 1949, players from Bush Buck, the Transkei and many locals broke away to form their own club, Storm Breakers in 1949. The club split because the dissidents felt ‘disrespected, bullied, misused, underrated and undermined’ by the

⁸⁰Interview Tanana.

⁸¹Interview Tanana

⁸²Interview Ntandazo Rufus “Jujuju” Mabija, 669 NU 10 Mdantsane, 30 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mabija).

Transkei-dominated management. Hence they called themselves Breakers, argues Bishop Mgwebi, a former Bush Buck player and its administrator. He adds that Bush Buck management and coaching staff often opted to recruit “good players” from the Transkei, overlooking its local full-time players, when the club was to play major games like cup finals. This demoralised most of the non-Transkei players who then decided to form their own club. However, Tanana argues that Storm Breakers was a break away from Bush Buck in 1949 following a problem, which involved people such as Sparks, a prominent politician and also a Robben Island prisoner. It is said that Sparks, Mjamba, Metele and others were playing in the Bush Bucks third and fourth teams. Then in 1949 they decided to break away from the Bush Buck camp, probably because it was not easy for them to climb up the ranks to the senior team. As a result, Storm Breakers was formed. Mgwebi acknowledges that this marked the beginning of a long-standing and fierce rivalry between these two clubs. However, the rugby-playing atmosphere was boosted and the standard of play at all clubs rose with old clubs fighting for their reputation. Losing to new and relatively small clubs was embarrassing but losing against clubs such as Swallows, Thembu, Black Lion was understandable’, asserts Mgwebi, who adamantly states that ‘indeed Storm Breakers never beat my club, Bush Buck’. This is how some rugby clubs in the region came into being while others developed and grew in good spirit. This will be developed further in the following chapter.

A year later, following the formation of Bush Buck, people who predominantly came from Stutterheim and the surrounding areas established Winter Rose. The founders include Martin Mapukata, David Mapukata, Edmond Daka who was its first president; Sizani who was a committee member; Dywili who was the vice chairman and later became the president, Mlenzana, Twaku, Waka Twaku’s father, George Mnyute, James Mnyute, Ndikho, Kwepile and Livingstone’s father, who later played for the club too, Alfred Mene, Philmon Gqirhana, Hockley Kweza, Donald Ngamlana, Norton Gijana, S Kwatsha, Ngoyi, Fana Dlanga, Boyce Ntshudu, the life president, and others.⁸³ Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, the former club player and coach and also Border player, states that the club was later reinforced by players such as

⁸³Interview Mgijima Theophilus Sam, and Khumbulele Wotshela], Mgwili Village; Stutterheim, 9 March 2001 (Henceforth: Sam & Wotshela); also ZG Mahambehala, supplied the author with some information in this issue in 9 November 2000 and 6 June 2001, in informal interviews.

Mpotsololo Martin Gqirhana, Sam Mgijima, Khumbulele Wotshela, Ntlaluntlalu Solomon, Mthetho Solomon, Philmon Gqirhana, Mathemba Nano, Tegu Nqegu, Mthini Mphini, Ngamlana, Mzamo Nobhadula, the Stoto brothers (Gulf and Gary) who were originally from Adelaide, Makhahlana, the Duze brothers, and Peter Ncevu, 'whom I know best because I was with him in our group in the club'.⁸⁴

***The Organisation of the early Clubs in the East London Locations:
Amakhaya and Rugby***

The key question is: how were the early rugby clubs formed and organised in the East London locations? Some if not all of the early rugby clubs emerged as some form of social group or association. Early Winter Rose members state that the club developed from a burial society, or *umasingcwabane*, formed by the Stutterheim migrants.⁸⁵ In fact, these people were generally viewed as the Reds (*amaqab'akuXaxazena*) of *Xaxazena* village of Stutterheim. However, the first black rugby club, Swallows is believed to be the only club, which was established from the beginning as a formal club. Swallow's history is outlined below.

Black sports clubs in East London in a number of codes were closely linked to the community. However, a particular connection was noted with rugby, where a considerable organisation emerged. Respondents in the current study and the earlier studies by BA Pauw in the late 1950s and early 1960s on Africans in town, indicate that rugby football was by far the most popular sport in the early East London locations.⁸⁶ These studies show that sport had become an important part of the social life of black urban locations by the mid-twentieth century. Pauw also found that a significant number of urbanised East London born residents indicated an interest in sport. About 50% of his respondents specifically mentioned rugby and almost all of them claimed to be club members. Another important observation was that rugby interest was dispersed along the entire residential spectrum though the under-35 year

⁸⁴Interview Mnyute.

⁸⁵Interview Mnyute; Sam & Wotshela; Mahambehhlala.

⁸⁶See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, pp.220-221; see also Pauw, *The Second Generation*, 1962 and 1972, pp.43-45.

olds and those with an educational level of standard five and above showed most enthusiasm for the game. Swallows was by far the most popular club and was the first organised African rugby club in the East London region if not in the whole Border including the Transkei⁸⁷. Many rugby enthusiasts did not only regard it as the East London home club *par excellence*, but was also regarded as particularly connected with the *Ndlambe* tribe.⁸⁸ 'In my younger days, I was an active member of the Swallows club, and I did my best because Swallows was and still is the club of *Ndlambe*'s'.⁸⁹

This suggests that the early East London clubs had connections with particular 'tribal' groups and with original birthplaces and/or background areas. A number of rugby clubs in East London therefore catered for and associated themselves with the respective tribal groups of specific areas. For instance, Black Lion was a club for the *amaGqunukhwebe* of Middledrift because it was formed and dominated by them; there was the Thembu United for people from Thembuland, that is Glen Grey, Cala and the Queenstown areas (*Oonqal'ntloko base Komani*); Bush Buck for *amaGcaleka* or Transkei region; Spring Rose for *AmaNtinde*, the Xhosas from Ncemerha, Peelton and the greater King Williams Town areas, and Winter Rose for Xhosas of Stutterheim areas like Mgwali and the surrounding villages, people who were referred to as *amaqab'akuXaxazena*⁹⁰. However, it should be emphasised that the term 'tribal' is used here to refer to specific groups of people without necessarily suggesting some form of tribalism or manifestations of hostility, though ethnic and regional identities stimulate intense competition and rivalry among clubs both on and off the field and

⁸⁷ Almost all the respondents interviewed for the current study noted this.

⁸⁸ This was because East London was in the area under the jurisdiction of the *Ndlambe* chieftainships.

⁸⁹ Interview Mhani, 646 NU 14, Mdantsane, 27 July 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mhani); Mjo; Ncunzana; also see Pauw, *The Second Generation*, p.172, 1972.

⁹⁰ The respondents for the current study such as Mgwebi; Twaku; Sam & Wotshela; Geleba; Dunga & Magqabi; Matyeshana; Mjo; Mnyute; Lappley Sontshi, 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 16 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Sontshi); Ben "Ta Ben" Tengimfene, 19 Albrow Gardens, Milnerton, Cape Town, 6 February 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tengimfene); Christian Nondo, Amatole District Council Municipal offices, Commissioner Street, EL, 9 November 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Nondo); Mhani; Mabija; Justice Mbadamana, Border Rugby Football Union –Game Development Offices, Waverley Park, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mbadamana); Temmers; Arthur Willard, in an informal conversation with the author at 54 Lewis Stores, Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Willard), also gave this information; see also Pauw, *Second Generation*, 1972, pp.172-173.

fights over the possession of players and “belongingness” became prevalent. This was the case probably because location people invariably organised themselves in this manner long before the formation of clubs and associations. And it should be noted that there were times when this trend was disregarded, with people transcending tribal and regional lines. There were some occasions where cross-pollination was tolerated, though minimally. This is understandable when the strong community sense that characterised East London locations is taken into account: ethnic identities could not be allowed to get out of hand and disrupt the fabric of day-to-day life.

Studies that have been conducted on African social life in town also confirm this regional principle. Mayer and Pauw say that Africans organised themselves in town broadly into specific principles, such ‘as *amakhaya*, (i.e., home-people), red and school people and others’.⁹¹ They cite fundamental features that characterised the establishment of the early rugby clubs in the area. Their findings did not differ much from what the current work has found, though there are obvious differences in interpretation. These are important studies but the reality is that the time in which they were conducted needs to be considered. By the mid-1950s and mid 1960s, EL rugby had transformed dramatically and strong and prominent clubs were already in existence. In fact, by the mid-1930s onwards, rugby in the area was at its peak and there was an unprecedented high number of people involved in the game.⁹² Mayer argues that in view of the larger numbers involved in rugby than in any other form of sport its significance must not be underestimated.⁹³ He argues that Africans formed their clubs based on regionalism, though ‘...[T]his tribal and regional slant is not an important feature of the organisation of other forms of sport.’⁹⁴ The majority of sport clubs, Mayer argues, were formed on some other principle, that is, socio-economic status or, and most frequently and significantly, on lines of class stratification. “School people”, generally equivalent to the better off, organised themselves separately owing to their higher status and better socio-economic backgrounds,

⁹¹Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.221.

⁹²Interview Ngqondela; see also ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.25.

⁹³See, Pauw, *Second Generation*, 1973, p.173.

⁹⁴See, Pauw, *Second Generation*, 1973, p.173.

invariably organising clubs and associations along class lines. There is an evident limitation to this discussion, especially when looking at the example Mayer uses to advance his argument. He mentions Storm Breakers and some other sports including tennis, and cricket that he claims catered solely for the literate people:

...In 1957 two out of the four tennis clubs catered mainly for particular classes: the Highlanders for teachers, nurses, and clerks (with a sprinkling of 'ordinary people'), and the Silver Star for labourers and domestic servants (with a sprinkling of teachers). The Stone (sic) [Storm] Breakers Club (Rugby) was well known to cater for the most educated players, including Native Affairs Department clerks and other civil servants: ['It can be taken for granted that everyone who joins our team is educated...']⁹⁵

There was never a club called "Stone Breakers", as referred to by Mayer and Pauw, in East London, but there was "Storm Breakers".⁹⁶ The club logo confirms this, as it consisted of a ship cutting through a troubled ocean'. These inaccurate accounts have misled other scholars over the years. Mayer's views were influenced by the time and place in which he wrote. The time factor, the stage that location rugby development was at and its level of transformation, play a crucial role in this question. It is clear is that, when Mayer was researching, most of the prominent and influential clubs were already established, with Storm Breakers formed in the late 1940s. Thus, his argument is incompatible with the manner in which *early* rugby clubs were organised. The example given by Mayer should not be used to reflect the patterns of early rugby in the area, though his views might make sense when considering late clubs like the Storm Breakers.

Class stratification in any society, can be expected to surface in some way, including in how sport is organised. However, most importantly, an understanding of the specific nature of the society at hand and its way of life at the time is essential to grapple adequately with their underlying social structures. Class, in other words, is mediated through the particular culture and historically generated ethos of any society. The ethos prevalent in old East London such as togetherness and the vibrancy that was evident over the years should not be underestimated. It has previously been noted that the literate elite assumed the responsibility of uplifting the

⁹⁵Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.221; see also Pauw, *Second Generation*, 1973, p.173.

⁹⁶Almost all interviewees for this study and the local newspapers referred to this club as Storm Breakers RFC but not Stone Breaker RFC.

community, many playing roles within community circles.⁹⁷ The community was not 'classless', but class differences were masked by the elite ideology of service, by the mixed nature of residence in the location, and by a common relationship.

The idea that people organised themselves based on level of education is also debatable. For example, East London rugby people claim that Swallows with its high profile and respected leadership through the years was the club that prided itself on its 'intellectuals'.⁹⁸ Bush Buck RFC also proved to possess these elite human resources through the quality leadership it sent as delegates to Gompo Union and Border Union. Mgwebi asserts that not only Bush Buck members recognised and appreciated the distinctly high level of education within the club. He says

...I want to say there were a number of non-Transkei people who joined Bush Buck RFC because they liked the club and one major factor was that it had a number of educated people in its camp. For instance, guys such as Fikile Bhengu and Gwabe, who were the local people, they did not originate from the Transkei, but they chose to play for Bush Buck RFC because they liked the company of educated club's membership at the time. The whole culture of Bush Buck RFC promoted education because its educated people were an inspiration to the young up coming players... amongst them there was Luis Mtshizana, an attorney at Law, Joe Sofuthe, Dr Ntshona, Dr Ziphangele, Dr Nonkwele, Magqwashu who was a lawyer, Myamana, Ntandazo Mabija, who is a retired school inspector and many other educated people. Many young boys from Welsh High School also fancied being within Bush Buck camp because its membership was a source of inspiration and role models to them. I remember another day when one of our players, Myamana brought his mother to one of our gatherings to publicly confess and acknowledge this saying, "I didn't know the reason why my child wanted to play for "amaGcaleka" but I have just realised it now. I asked him several times, as to why he did not want to play for Spring Rose, his home club. But he was adamant and insisted that he liked the company of the Bush Buck RFC members because he believed that was a correct choice. He further stated that the club was composed of highly educated people. And this is why I feel that I should also acknowledge and confess before you today, saying yes, I have just realised what my son have been saying all along!" ...In fact, it was generally known that other clubs can defeat *amaGcaleka* (Bush Buck) but they would never defeat them when it come to debating its protest cases around the round table. We were just good in debating and we won a number of matches through lodging protests!⁹⁹

The manner in which East London rugby was organised was complicated. It should not - perhaps even in the 1950s, and certainly not in the 1930s - be reduced to a question of rugby as a sporting code for the uneducated, and other codes like tennis

⁹⁷It should be noted that in the African locations, there were Xhosa, Sotho, and coloured residents, and of course other ethnic and/or sub-ethnic groupings. All these people lived together. Even today, former East and West Bank location residents know each other and are still keeping contact. I have noted this during data collection.

⁹⁸Interview Mhani.

⁹⁹Interview Mgwebi.

and cricket for the educated. It was more complex than this. Therefore, Mayer and Pauw have committed serious factual errors and have generalised where they should not. They have failed to adequately consider change over time.

Rugby Clubs and the East London Locations' Social Life

The role that rugby clubs played within societies also holds special fascination. It has been noted that more often than not, most early rugby clubs did not promptly emerge as rugby 'clubs' but surfaced as some form of social group or association. It is interesting to explore exactly what these clubs stood for within the community and how they interacted with it over the years. It has been observed that Swallows was at one point synonymous with *Iliso lomzi*, the Vigilance Association. How did other clubs emerge and what was their significance to the community at the time? Winter Rose veterans state that the club developed from a burial society, or *umasingcwabane* of Stutterheim migrants.¹⁰⁰ Mayer confirms that two institutions which were common to migrants in town, that is the saving group (*umgalelo*) and burial societies (*umasingcwabane*).¹⁰¹ He found that these 'burial unions consisted mainly of country-rooted men who wanted to ensure that even if they were to die in town they could be properly buried, at home in the country'.¹⁰² Several clubs in East London emerged from these burial and savings groupings. Mnyute says

...The *Amakhaya* played crucial role...as clubs were formed according to the people's places of origin. The Spring Rose RFC was the club for the *Ncemerha* people and the surrounding areas, people from these rural areas, when they came to reside in East London on a migratory basis and during their labour period in the city, they got together to form the burial societies. It was from these societies that some later decided to extend their groups and change their nature, incorporating sporting activities by forming these rugby clubs. Their main aim was to do something that could keep them together, maintaining their home relationships, hence these burial societies and later clubs were formed. My club, the Winter Rose RFC is a team from Stutterheim, eCumakala... Stutterheim people initially formed a burial society then later converted it and/or extended its services to a club. ... That was how the club came into being and I am...the son of one of those old men who were actually involved in the establishment the Winter Rose RFC in the early thirties...¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰Interview Mnyute; Sam & Wotshela; Mahambehala.

¹⁰¹Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1962, p.81.

¹⁰²Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1962, p.81.

¹⁰³Interview Mnyute.

Earlier and current Winter Rose generations acknowledge that the club founders' illiteracy led to major setbacks in its development, which was a challenge that the club had to endure for decades. Sam acknowledges that

...The major problem of these founders was how to pick a team of fifteen footballers from a group of rugby ignorant men who did not know a single law of the game, team positions, how to scrum, etc, etc. It was like taking a group of farm boys to school and lead them into a sub-B classroom and expect them to do arithmetic from the chalkboard without guidance. They knew their rugby orally, from sheer observation and immilation (sic), [emulation]...¹⁰⁴

However, the club was formally instituted and Sam adds that Winter Rose 'elected its executive committee to administer it and it affiliated to the GRFU which governed all black rugby clubs in the East and West Bank locations, as these were called in those days. They even elected a delegate to represent them at the GRFU meetings that were held every week to receive affiliation fees, administering all clubs, arrange fixture matches for the clubs, etc. ...'.¹⁰⁵ It became apparent that Winter Rose had other challenges as well as developing and constituting a team of fifteen players. Sam cites another problem that also proved to be central in the club's development:

...eyona ingxak'enkulu ekukhuleni kwe-Winter Rose yayikukuba abantu bayo babenesikolo esifutshane. Babengayiqondi imicimbi kwaye bengayazi ukuba mabathini na ukaphucula iklabhu yabo...¹⁰⁶ [...the main problem that the Winter Rose founders faced was their illiteracy. Thus, this posed a big challenge in as far as developing their club in those early days. They just didn't understand club management and union procedures...].¹⁰⁷

Though a stigma to some people, to Sam, this was a reality in terms of Winter Rose's founding fathers. He acknowledges that they were illiterate and he referred to those sent to the Gompo Union as delegates as 'Oopagana nje' (literally mere puppets and/or ignorant and naive persons) because they were not capacitated to play a leading role in representing their club.¹⁰⁸ Sam talked openly and enthusiastically on this issue because he felt that this was a reality but indicates that, unfortunately, the

¹⁰⁴ A short history on Winter Rose that Mgijima Theophilus Sam wrote and gave to me, at Mgwali Village, Stutterheim, November, 2000.

¹⁰⁵ A short Winter Rose history that Sam, wrote and gave it to me in November, 2000.

¹⁰⁶ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹⁰⁷ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹⁰⁸ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

stigma later dented the image of the club: ‘...We were never given a chance as we were believed to be a batch of illiterates and a “naive company”...’.¹⁰⁹

He acknowledges that it took a lot of courage and perseverance for the club to shake-off its ‘illiterate’ stigma. Even after he completed his teaching certificate at Lovedale and went to play rugby full-time in East London he remained illiterate in the eyes of ELR people, be they officials or spectators. He vividly remembers the day when they played a match against Black Lion. When he tackled one of its players down the touchline one Black Lion female spectator shouted at him angrily, saying:

...‘*lithen’eliqaba? Akubon’ukuba ngomntwan’eskolo lo umenzakalisayo* (what’s wrong with this Red? Don’t you realise that this is a young school pupil?)’ The other person down the line outside responded to my plight informing the women that I was a Teacher. But she further insisted saying, ‘*nokuba angade aba yilo-titshala, liqaba qha into ayiyo, sibhanxa seqaba!*’ (well, yes he might be educated, that is immaterial, the thing is, he is still *iqaba*. Full stop! What’s the matter with him. This stupid red!)’...¹¹⁰

Therefore Sam was always aware that it would take a lot of courage and perseverance for the club to shake off its ‘illiterate’ stigma. However, though the Winter Rose in its early period seems to have been a club for typical “reds”. It however did not generally represent all the early East London clubs of the time. Its story is outlined in detail, because it is one of the samples chosen for this work.

The most outstanding factor in the origins of early East London location rugby clubs is that place of origin took precedence. Clubs were organised on the basis of where people originally came from before residing in East London locations. This was due to the fact that migrant labourers that came to East London in search of employment opportunities opted to organise themselves in that fashion. They shared rooms through sub-letting arrangements as discussed above. Therefore, when social groupings were formed, it was inevitable that they were also going to be organised in the same manner. Hence it is not surprising that people from various places gathered together to form rugby clubs, burial societies and/or investment societies. It is observed that these societies were often converted into other structures and served

¹⁰⁹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹¹⁰Interview Sam & Wotshela.

various roles within the unfamiliar and often trying life style of the city. These societies contributed in getting the home-mates in the city together.

The migrants' organisation is also acknowledged in Mayer's study in the 1960s. This organisation created a frame of reference within which "Red" people inevitably behaved differently, without necessarily having to modify their behaviour to conform to the standards of "School" or town people. More specifically, however, each group of Red *amakhaya* (people of 'the home') formed a community on their own.¹¹¹ Mayer also noted that this organisation was 'really an extension of the community at home, which constitutes by far the most effective vehicle of opinion and guardian of morality. The sanctions wielded by *abakhaya* did not stop short at diffuse ones. The *abakhaya* groups on occasions, acted corporately, giving help, exercising restraint or imposing punishments on their own members'.¹¹² In fact this was one of the fundamental reasons that migrants strove to be together if they possibly could in town. Mahambehlala says that this was mainly 'to maintain the discipline of the "home, *Mgwali*"'.¹¹³ Mayer also noted that the term 'home- people' or *abakhaya* was applied primarily to people from one's own rural location. The definition of home-people in town may be stretched to include, if necessary, people from these near-by locations. Most of the respondents in this study acknowledged this. In short, this was how clubs and societies were organised in the East London location. However, not all the early migrant clubs such as Spring Rose, Black Lion, Thembu United, Bush Buck and others were typically "Red" dominated clubs.

Women and Black Rugby

East London rugby grew from strength to strength and by the early 1930s, newly formed clubs such as Bush Buck and Winter Rose competed in the second team category against the junior teams of well-established clubs like Swallows, Spring Rose, Black Lion and Thembu United. At the time, most clubs had established Ladies

¹¹¹See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.99. The Xhosa word *Amakhaya* might be better rephrased as *Abakhaya*, meaning the home-mates or people of the "home".

¹¹²See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.99.

¹¹³Interview Mahambehlala.

Sections. Other clubs claim that women were involved even before they were actually formed. Winter Rose members acknowledge women such as Mrs Ngxamngxa, Mrs Maguga, Mrs Daka, Mrs Ngoyi and others. MT Sam acknowledges that 'the Ladies Sections were a source of encouragement to the club and to the gentlemen that played rugby at the time', adding that the 'women's contribution included supporting the club by all means possible...'.¹¹⁴ Many meetings were held at Ngoyi's home, where deliberations took place between people contemplating the establishment of a rugby club. This club came to be known as Winter Rose. Women were involved from the very beginning and later contributed to recruiting strategies, formulating the club's early constitution and choosing club colours.¹¹⁵

Women's role in rugby over the years has been undermined. However, to understand women's involvement in rugby, it is imperative to understand the nature of the society in question before making judgements. It has been observed that in the old East Bank community gender and class boundaries were often effectively masked and neutralised. In his survey in the mid-1950s and early 1960s, Pauw found that though only 12,5% of East London women interviewed showed an interest in sport, some actually claimed to be members of the local rugby clubs. This finding is extraordinary in the context of a patriarchal society that often pushed women into the kitchen and forbade them from playing or even following sport.¹¹⁶ However, this was not really the case in East London locations. Women, migrants and youth were often accorded the status and freedom to participate in important community issues. The early *Iliso Lomzi*, or Vigilance Association is a good example. Mayer acknowledges that the Vigilance Association's meetings were crowded with hundreds of participants and that it was generally recognised as representing 'the people's views' regardless of gender, age and social status. 'A migrant with a lodger's permit could join and vote for the executive committee. As one respondent put it, it used to function "exactly like an *inkundla* in the country, with the difference that not only men could attend, but

¹¹⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹¹⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹¹⁶See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52; also see, Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.48.

the old and young of both sexes”¹¹⁷. To a considerable extent, this community was able to transcend gender, class and age barriers.

Ngqondela acknowledges women's role, saying, ‘Swallows had very strong Ladies Section who by no means played a mean role. Oh no! This was a powerhouse. ...kept the Swallows flag high...have done sterling work as a spirited unit of hard workers’.¹¹⁸ Mgwebi stresses that women's contribution was more profound than earlier realised:

...when playing rugby during our time, our girl friends supported and appreciated us in many ways...they even trusted us more than they otherwise would have been if we were not rugby players...they always believed that if we were not with them we would be definitely busy with rugby practice and other matters. Our girl friends loved us more as young men because we were rugby players rather than being useless alcohol abusers and our wives, after we got married admired the fact that we played rugby as their husbands because we were doing what people perceived as much better thing than just being drunkards. I would say our rugby at the time was like a church, some people might not realise that though it is a fact because to me, in rugby we preach discipline, good manners, we encourage people not to indulge in substance abuse, that people shouldn't drink alcohol heavily than normal or even to abstain from it for that matter, we encourage married men to live together in harmony and peace with their families...¹¹⁹

There is a widespread belief that women's involvement in rugby in the later years was limited to club fund raising and washing club “kit” [i.e., jerseys]. These functions were important, but their role went considerably beyond this. Women's contribution through rugby to the black community can be categorised as follows:

Economic functions

People played rugby in bad conditions in the highly disadvantaged communities. Women were of great assistance here. Peires clearly depicts this environment in the early days saying:

...The game itself was played in appalling conditions. Most fields were without grass, and many were riven by ditches, located on slopes or acting as public thoroughfares. Boots were

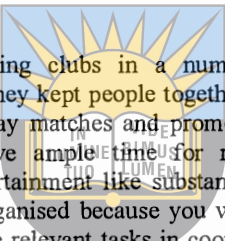
¹¹⁷See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1961, p.52.

¹¹⁸See ‘Swallows 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.27.

¹¹⁹ Interview Mgwebi.

considered a luxury...Such circumstances bred dedication and selflessness: sacrificing one's wage to the team colours, walking all night to be at a match on the following day. It also bred dependence on the local whites. So much was so far beyond the reach of the average man...'.¹²⁰

The poor conditions in which rugby was played and the need for funds to reward this meant that fundraising for the club by organising tea parties, concerts and other events was important. '...The ladies...arranged tea parties, collected funds...'.¹²¹ '...These club's Ladies Sections even had choirs where they would compete with those from the other clubs and they would also hold tea parties on Sundays as well. The Ladies Section of a particular club would host a tea party and invite other Ladies Sections from other clubs to attend in the form of a fundraising strategy for the club'.¹²² Mgwebi argues that



...these activities were assisting clubs in a number of ways apart from being mere moneymakers. For instance, they kept people together and took most of our time on the late Sundays following the Saturday matches and promoted discipline and encouraged positive behaviour. People didn't have ample time for roaming around...ending up involving themselves in bad social entertainment like substance abuse and criminal activities. These Ladies Sections were quite organised because you would find that they had their presidents and secretaries to carry out the relevant tasks in coordinating and organising these activities. In short, this shows the important role that the women played in our rugby but we need and miss them dearly these days because they are no longer there! Since we came over to play in town with whites following rugby unity, we ended up losing a lot when it comes to our club cultures and traditions. We did not have specific roles for them anymore following the integration process in 1992...'.¹²³

We see here, in the case of women, an aspect of the disruption of black rugby that will be dealt with in chapter five.

Maternal functions

One of the roles that women's sections played was to assist in keeping the club kit neat and in good condition. They washed it and sewed it when it was torn or damaged. 'Ladies...took care of Swallows uniform...'.¹²⁴ '...They helped us a lot in a

¹²⁰See Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.1.

¹²¹See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.27.

¹²²Interview Mgwebi.

¹²³Interview Mgwebi.

¹²⁴'Swallows 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.27.

number of things for instance it was their role to wash our rugby jerseys, both our girl friends and our wives would help us with our rugby clothes', acknowledges Mgwebi.¹²⁵

Psychosocial aspect

Though forming an integral part in giving it its proper identity over the years, what can be called women's psychosocial role has been the most neglected contribution made by black women to their community rugby. Women have been the inspiration and motivation to black players in the field of play. '...ladies were a source of encouragement...'.¹²⁶ This has been an important role that women have played in traditional African societies. An African man will always try to do his best in the presence of women.¹²⁷ Mgwebi states that

...all the early location clubs had their respective Ladies Sections that vociferously cheered them all the way. You would often hear some of the female supporters 'shouting and screaming' a particular player that has done something wrong or performed badly in a particular moment or failed to convert a penalty and so on. "Hey'ndakunika le-blumasi yam'uphum'undinike, loq-bulukhwe yakh'ukub'udlal'ububhanx'apha! [Hey you, get out and give me your rugby shorts and you take and put on my underwear then, because I can do better than the your clumsy performance]. Our Ladies Sections motivated us a great deal when playing our matches those days...¹²⁸

It is against this background that Mrs Ben (sic) Sikhundla criticises the contemporary game:

...we used to watch games, appreciating good things done by players. We were Spring Rose Ladies. We made tea for visitors from Uitenhage and we did not misbehave like the present ladies...The present generation has not seen good things. Rugby today is scrappy.¹²⁹

It is hoped that this has put black women's contribution to rugby into perspective and disproves the view that their contribution was confined to fund-raising and washing.

¹²⁵'Swallows 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.27; interview Mgwebi.

¹²⁶See 'Swallows RFC175th Anniversary', 1986, p.27.

¹²⁷Interview Mgwebi; see also Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*, 1958. The authors' personal experiences also play a crucial role in understanding these issues.

¹²⁸Interview Mgwebi.

¹²⁹See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.204, citing Sikhundla saying this in 1931.

The Beginnings of Assertive Politics in Black Rugby, 1930s

The 1930s ushered in numerous challenges to East London rugby as white authorities that managed black locations at the time constantly caused disruptions. Problems started about 1933 when officials of the Location Superintendent's Office intruded into rugby affairs though they had never been part of them before. These officials manned the ticket booths and took over the gate takings from the GRFU. Consequently, the clubs affiliated to the newly established GRFU boycotted Rubusana Park where rugby was played at the time and decided to play on open spaces around the location. This problem was not the first interference by whites in black rugby affairs at the time. The forced removals of black rugby games by the authorities from the early playing fields in the area where the Clarendon Girls School is located, after white residents complained of the "natives" presence 'on our doorstep' should be remembered.¹³⁰ Thus, the Rubusana Park boycott can be seen as the eruption of a long accumulated and simmering anger among blacks at the time. Alegi, soccer historian, also noticed white interference in African Football in Durban at about the same period. He argued that such 'new and more intrusive' events led to anger and a quest for appropriate identity as Africans, and they changed their organisational names and titles accordingly.¹³¹

Rubusana Park in the heart of the old EBL at Tsolo section was laid for the people of the East London location following their removal from the earlier site. Another major milestone in the growth and transformation of rugby in the 1930s was the name-change from ELNRU to GRFU.¹³² This union was named after the part of East London known as Gompo area. Gompo was an early Xhosa chief who used to sit on a rock near the Rock-cliff Sea.¹³³ This discussion is further developed below. Having boycotted Rubusana Park, Gompo clubs continued playing under bad

¹³⁰See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000; see also 'Swallows 1986 75th Anniversary, 1986, p. 23.

¹³¹See the correspondence from Peter Alegi, 08 October 2001:to H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU, 'SANN to ANC', Peter Alegi, Eastern Kentucky University: Peter.Alegi@eku.edu.

¹³²Interview Ngqondela; see 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

¹³³Interview Mgwebi; Ngqondela.

conditions until the Location Superintendent's Office was forced to retreat and surrender control to the Gompo management. Swallows people played a big role in resolving this problem, especially GW Jamela, who contested the action by the Location Superintendents' Office.¹³⁴ Through his intervention, the matter was solved and matches returned to Rubusana Park.

Swallows RFC was 'known to have within its midst a number of personalities of good standing in their communities'.¹³⁵ These were prominent and respected people who were constantly called upon to contribute to the community's well being. Such men showed their prowess in 1939 when there was a dispute between Swallows and GRFU. Swallows felt that it was being treated unfairly by the Union. The dispute started after the trophies that it won were, for one reason or another, awarded to other 'non-deserving clubs'. The club and the rugby administrators became embroiled in a court case that Swallows ultimately won. All the affiliates of GRFU, except Spring Rose were against Swallows. People such as WS Bashe, who is said to have been the 'chief whip in that legal wrangle', and Swallows' Organising Secretary, GW Fanti Gaqa, as General Secretary, JS Mzazi as Acting President, D Mtyongwe as Committee member, played a big role in resolving the dispute. Reverend FC Botha of the *Rabe* Church, also a Swallows captain in the mid-1930s, together with RH Godlo, a member of the Location Advisory Board, and Reverend ZB Mesatywa also played a big role in reconciliation during and after the dispute. This sort of association between rugby and community upheavals is characteristic over the years, showing that black rugby was a vital part of social life in these communities. And it shows that many black rugby people cared about community livelihood.

This name change from East London Native Rugby Union to Gompo Rugby Football Union was indicative of the nationwide shift and development in political consciousness among politicised Africans around this period.¹³⁶ Alegi asserts that probably, the name change from South African National Native Congress (SANNC)

¹³⁴See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

¹³⁵See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

¹³⁶Interview Ngqondela; see also 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.25.

to African National Congress (ANC) reflected a changed consciousness in South Africa in the 1920s. The ripple effect of this relatively assertive nationalism soon went beyond the ANC, as non-political African organisations, such as football associations in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town, also changed their titles in the early 1930s.¹³⁷ Peter Alegi notes the change, for instance, from the Durban District “Native” Football Association founded in 1916 to Durban & District “African” Football Association in 1932. He argues that this was triggered by the ‘new and more intrusive’ presence of white authorities in Durban football. Led at the time by prominent figures such as Albert Luthuli, the DDAFA became a leading force in the struggle by alternative institutions in black communities to preserve their partial autonomy from local and central government control. DDAFA’s adoption of the new symbols of assertion, which included a constitutional amendment passed in 1932 to foster the use of English in meetings rather than the usual Zulu, is viewed by Alegi as the endorsement of, and, in the case of Luthuli and AR Ntuli of Clement Kadalie’s ICU, its leader’s direct involvement in, the articulation of this new political consciousness among black South Africans.

The intensive linking of sport, culture and politics at the time was more than just a regional issue as other similar name changes also took place in other parts of the country. Alegi claims to have discovered a similar trend on the Rand and in Cape Town. The mine clerks of the early Witwatersrand & District “Native” Football Association, established in 1917, reconstituted themselves as the Transvaal African Football Association in 1930, and the early Cape Peninsula Bantu Football African Association of 1927, changed to Western Province African Football Association in the mid-1930s, possibly 1936. All this is parallel to the change from ELNRU to GRFU in East London about this time. However, it would only be in the mid-to-late 1950s, after the ANC’s own radicalisation, that rugby and South African sport generally entered the mainstream of the domestic and international struggle against state racism in the country. This matter will be discussed in the following chapter.

¹³⁷Correspondence from Peter Alegi, 08 October 2001: to H-SAFRICA@H-NET.MSU.EDU, ‘SANNC to ANC’, Peter Alegi, Eastern Kentucky University: Peter.Alegi@eku.edu

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the manner in which black rugby had been organised over the years reflected numerous influences that also shaped South African society. Black rugby in the area developed from *Oombambo* - teams of loosely organised adults. The relatively unorganised era since the beginning of the twentieth century was transformed into organised club rugby by 1911 and early political influences in the game and in black communities emerged. Though there is evidence that blacks modelled their rugby on that of the local whites, it is apparent that blacks themselves took the initiative in spreading the oval ball across its populace.

From the mid 1920s through to the early 1930s more competitive club-rugby emerged. Many clubs however, disbanded for various reasons, one being the lack of mechanisms to sustain game development. It became apparent that East London rugby enthusiasts began playing a pivotal role in the uplifting and developing the immediate populace. The fundamental principle on which clubs were organised seemed to be that of regionalism mirroring how migrants organised themselves in town, with class organisational principles being generally insignificant and masked by the vibrant community life, as opposed to what early researchers believed.

The role of women in black rugby has been underestimated in the past, being merely considered to maternal functions, fundraising and cheering, without exploring some other underlying dynamics of women's contribution to the game. In fact, women's role was more complicated and fundamental than appreciated by the early scholars. The latter part of the chapter indicates the emergence of assertive political development in the game in response to national struggles, manifesting itself through widespread changes in the names of organisations. It should be emphasised that it was not intended in this chapter to document the chronological order of events, but rather a discussion of specific themes of interest.

CHAPTER IV

The Growth of Black Rugby and the Beginnings of Overt Politics, 1930s-1950s

Introduction

This chapter outlines the transformation and development of black rugby in East London at the beginning of overt political influence in the 1930s. There is a longstanding association between sport and politics. Mayer states that, as early as 1953, the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), the youth wing of the South African National Native Congress (SANNC) later African National Congress (ANC) gained control of the Gompso Rugby Football Union (GRFU).¹ During this period the East London sport unions received serious attention from political bodies since they enabled large numbers of supporters to be brought together easily, quickly, and without incurring suspicion.

This chapter discusses this rugby transformation from the mid-1930s until the early 1950s, the beginnings of overt political development and the growth of nationalism within the black population. Themes discussed include rapid growth of black rugby in the East London locations from 1935 to the late 1940s; East London location black rugby and its relationship with the Border Bantu Rugby Football Board (BBRFB) and Border Coloured Rugby Union (BCRU); East London rugby as a crucial socio-cultural activity within black communities; the establishment of the South African Bantu Rugby Football Board (SABRFB), its initial challenges and role in the conceptualisation and organisation of the racially organised “*Bantu-Coloured* test” matches in 1950; the beginnings of interprovincial tournaments in 1936 and their subsequent development over the years; East London rugby enthusiast’s interaction with the country’s segregationist laws; the special role played by Swallows RFC and the contribution of the education institutions to the growth and development of black rugby in the area. This is dealt with in the context of various socio-political challenges that black rugby had to contend with in this period.

¹See Mayer, P, *Tribesmen or Townsman: A study of the Bantu family in East London*, 1961, p.221.

Issues such as persistent organisational splits and personal differences, forced removals and responses and adaptations to these are examined. However, again it should be appreciated that this chapter does not intend to document the chronological order of events but rather conceptualises this rugby transformation within the context of these defined themes.

Border Bantu Rugby Board and the Border Coloured Rugby Union

By the mid-1930s, East London rugby had grown to six first division clubs competing under the auspices of GRFU. The provincial body, the BBRFB, grew steadily from its establishment in the 1920s, with its affiliate sub-unions such as GRFU in East London; King Williams Town and Districts, Zwelitsha African Rugby Union and “the Fort Hare rugby teams” that also participated as a sub-union. Additional sub-unions emerged much later. The 1920s also saw the establishment of the East London Coloured Rugby Union (ELCRU), a coloured sister union to GRFU, established by men such as W Christian, JJ Abrahams (Treasurer), H Tommy, A Schoeman (after whom the Schoeman Stadium in Buffalo Flats has been named), and G Foster (after whom the Foster Stadium is named). In its early stages it played against the King Williams Town Coloured Rugby Union.² As there were fixtures between BBRFB sub-unions, the encounters between these two unions led to the formation of the BCRU in 1926, (please see the attached photos of the ELCRU team that won the Reggy-Chetty Trophy Border Tournament in 1955 and the BCRU team that was selected for the Rhodes Tournament in 1955). At the time, many coloured players in the EBL were already playing in black clubs such as Swallows and Black Lion, and were thus members of the GRFU and BBRFB. In fact, Swallows had many coloured players from its inception.

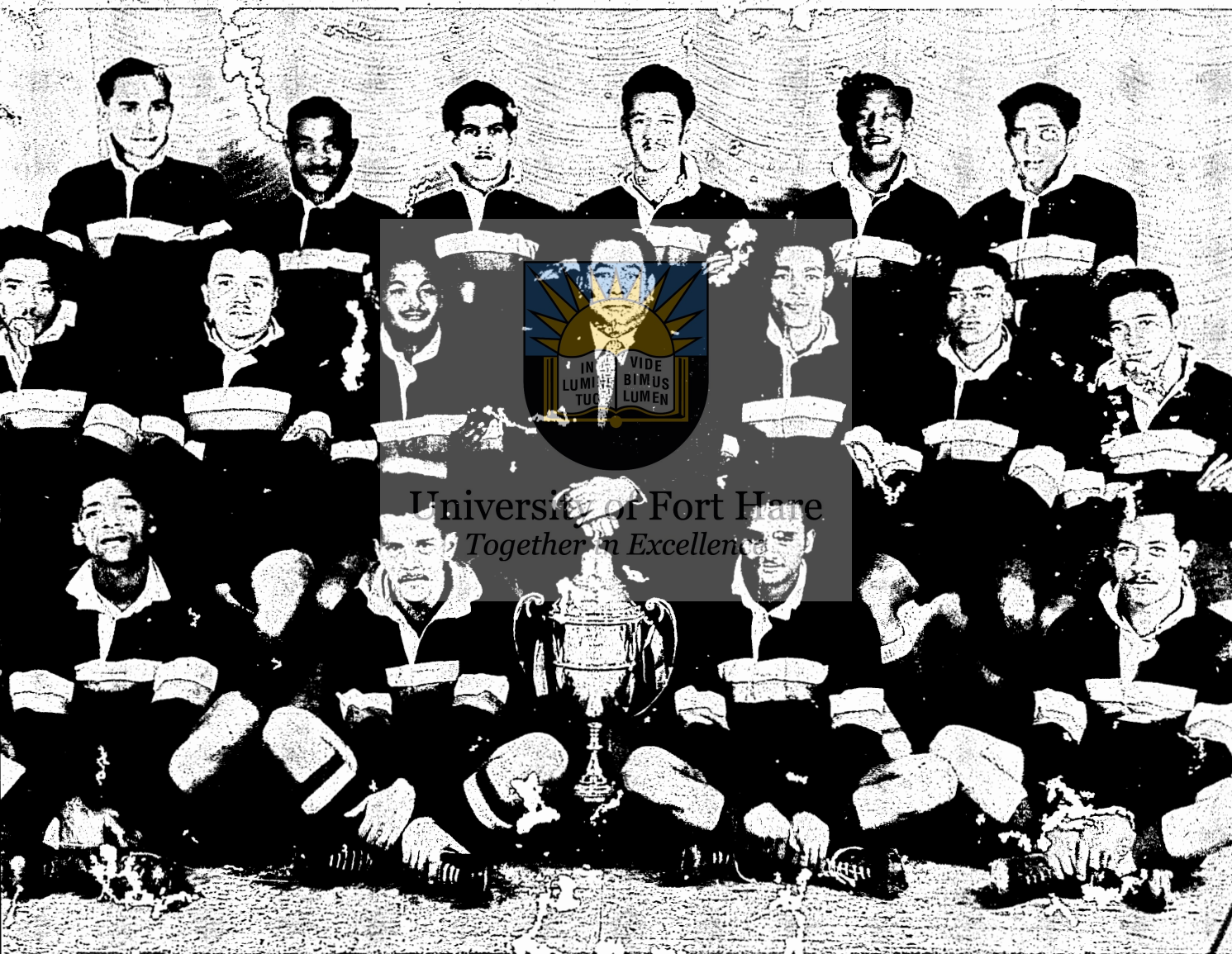
Apart from Swallow’s apparent non-racial stance, there were other reasons for this interracial mix in East London locations. Many coloured people resided in EBL

²See articles and notes at Rhodes University: Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), East London Branch; also see also Landiswa Maqasho, ‘East London Land Restitution Claim (EBLRC): “Social History Report”’, on behalf of Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER): Rhodes University, 2000, p.4; see also Booley, AM, *The Forgotten Heroes: History of Black Rugby - 1882 - 1992*, 1998, p.120.

EAST LONDON COLOURED RUGBY UNION

WINNERS OF REGGY-CHETTY TROPHY

Border Tournament 1955



SPRINGBOK STUDIO

Back Row: F. JENNEKER H. WYNNE, C. ABRAHAMS, D. JORDAAN, A. GALLANT, M. MOPP.

Middle Row: G. BOTES, R. FEIX, A. BLIGNAUT (Capt.), F. JOHNSON (Man.), J. TEMMERS (Vice Capt.), S. TURNER, S. DE WETT.

Sitting: D. JAGGERS, R. NASH, R. MOONSAMY, H. CAINE CROSS. Absent: G. BOTES, H. JONES, P. SMITH.

BORDER COLOURED RUGBY UNION

RHODES TOURNAMENT TEAM, 1955



Back Row: Mr. D. Fourie, R. Moonsamy, G. Abrahams, F. Jenneker, S. Turner, R. Felix, Mr. E. B. Meyer
 (Selector) (Selector)
 Sitting: Basil Francis, H. Botha, W. H. Basson, Mr. J. R. Pepper, A. Blignaut, J. F. Temmers, Billy Francis.
 (Captain) (Manager) (Vice Captain)
 In Front: A. van Eck, R. Gobalsamy, H. Wynne, D. Botha.

alongside Africans. Further, Swallows is believed to be the first formal *nonwhite* club in the area at the time. Thus coloured players joined black clubs as coloured clubs such as Universals, Home Boys, Heavy Batteries, Rising Stars, John Bisseker Old Boys and later Spartans, only emerged later. Further, having been established, the later clubs 'showed little competition'.³ There is evidence that many coloured players also joined Black Lion, Spring Rose and Thembu United, and much later in the 1950s and 1960s, Winter Rose, and other clubs also recruited these players, with some players simply joining on their own accord. As *Indaba*, the *Daily Dispatch* Supplement, said '[t]hough apartheid sport was the talk of the day during the late 1940s, 1950s and 1960s it was not difficult for coloured players like Eric Blignaut, and his brother Abey (sic) who played for Black Lion, and Oomdu [Johannes] Temmers and Corrie Alexander who featured prominently for Winter Rose, to join their black brothers in sport.'⁴

Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, Winter Rose and Border player, club organiser and coach, states that though there were good race relations among different racial groups in East London locations, strangely, from its inception, there were no interracial club fixtures between coloureds and Africans. However, African clubs recruited coloured players just as he did for Winter Rose in the 1950s. This is so probably because South Africa was structured on racial lines decades before the adoption of apartheid as a national policy in 1948 and this had an influence on how different races perceived each other. Subsequently, the notion of integration was greatly hindered by the manner in which apartheid laws divided people along racial lines. Racial indifference was further encouraged by and perhaps, also emanated from the separate residential areas such as Parkside, North End, East Bank and later Vergenoeg and Mdantsane, which were demarcated exclusively for these different racial groups. Parkside, North End and Vergenoeg were reserved for coloured residents while East Bank Location had both these groups, though for a long time, coloured people were encouraged to leave and relocate to

³ Interview Fikile Dunga & Vukile Magqabi, 303 NU 9 Mdantsane, 8 January 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Dunga & Magqabi).

⁴ See *Indaba*, 'Looking back: "Oomdu - Star of calibre"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 20 October 1994, p.11.

“their own area”, with Mdantsane solely for Africans.⁵ However, together, black people achieved a reasonable level of understanding and “togetherness” at EBL. Mnyute says

...It was all very pleasing and interesting in the location at the time and there was no mischief because people shared one common sport understanding. I recruited for my club, Winter Rose RFC in 1950. I recruited a lot of coloured guys like [Johannes] Temmers (*Oomdu*), Corrie [Alexander], Varkie, ...Alexander and the other coloured chaps because at the time we all stayed together with them in the location and we didn't discriminate them in terms of race ... We mixed and intermingled with them as people that we stayed with and that made it easy for me as a club organiser and recruiter to get them over to our club...⁶

Vukile Magqabi, the former United Higher Mission Primary School, Welsh High, Thembu United, Border and Adams College rugby player and Border Administrator and a referee, says many coloured people resided in the East Bank Location as well as at Parkside, which was designated for the coloured people.⁷ Fikile Dunga, the former United Higher Mission Primary School, Welsh High, Thembu United, Healdtown, Lovedale and Border player concurs, indicating that most coloured people initially resided with Africans at Tsolo Section, with Parkside emerging later at the time of ‘separation of people according to their racial groupings’.⁸ He mentions Johannes Temmers as one of the many coloured people who resided at Tsolo Section of EBL and ended up playing for African clubs, leaving his former coloured club, Rising Stars, and BCRU, to join Winter Rose. He was even selected for BBRFB.⁹

Though these groups lived together at EBL they did not play each other in formally scheduled fixtures at Rubusana Park or in any of the coloured rugby stadiums. Magqabi and Dunga agree saying that ‘no, [...we did not play...] fixtures as such but we would accommodate some players that wanted to play in our clubs. They had their clubs

⁵See Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, p.24.

⁶Interview Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, 46 Duton Road, Cambridge West, 20 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mnyute).

⁷Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁸Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁹Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

and fields at Parkside and played fixtures there separately'. 'I understand that they named one of their stadiums after the old coloured chap, Forster...'.¹⁰ Temmers also confirms that there were indeed no directly scheduled club matches between blacks and coloureds in the location at the time. Temmers says, 'strange enough, that didn't happen. You wouldn't find that at all because blacks would be busy with their fixtures and the coloureds on their side would be committed in their own fixtures ...'.¹¹

However, Lappley Sontshi, the former Welsh High School, Thembu United, Lovedale, Border and 'Springbok' player and captain notes that though the location clubs did not play any organised fixtures against the coloured clubs, from the early 1940s some individual GRFU clubs however did play Saturday friendly matches against the predominantly coloured soldier's club, Heavy Batteries. This was especially when there were no fixtures scheduled by both the GRFU and ELCRU, later known as the East London Rugby Union (ELRU), the Heavy Batteries' affiliate sub-union. Sontshi says there were both Africans and coloured players in Heavy Batteries. During World War II, more than half of the Heavy Batteries and the 175th Engineering Corps were stationed at Signal Hill in East London, and this developed into what was called the Wartime League in 1945. 'This regiment players maintained a high standard of play, which boosted local rugby'.¹² Sontshi says

...They [The Heavy Batteries players] were staying at the location, and others in their camps at West Bank. There was a...guy in the Heavy Batteries called Bonnie. He also played against us at the time. There was also another chap... Basson played and captained the coloured Springboks in the 1951 test against Bantus. In fact, in that test, both captains were from East London, in the form of myself [Lappley Sontshi] and...Basson...There were some African players in the club but not many because it was mostly composed of coloureds...and we as Thembu United played against Heavy Batteries Club...We...would play them this week then the following week it would be...Swallows versus Heavy Batteries and so on. They, together with the rest of the coloured clubs

¹⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹¹Interview Johannes "Oomdu" Mdubane Temmers, 54 Port Rex Street, Buffalo Flats, East London, 12 June 2001, (Henceforth: Interview Temmers).

¹²Interview Temmers; see also, the letter written by Mrs Schoeman, one of the former EBL coloured residents. This letter is currently in my possession, courtesy of Johannes Temmers.

were not playing competitive rugby with us at Rubusana Park. They would sometime play alone as Coloureds not with us. This Basson fellow also played for the Universals RFC player...¹³

Thus, although Africans and coloured people competed against each other at national level and to a lesser degree at provincial level, ironically, there was little interaction at club level. The closest interaction at this level witnessed between these two groups was when a particular African club decided to “hire” talented coloured players from their clubs to assist them on specific occasions. For instance, Black Lion often did this. This practice was generally referred to as “*ukuodarisha*”. It would be said that, for example, Black Lion or Swallows “*i-orderishile* or *baya-orderisha*”, [has ordered or hired players], “to beef-up” its team, without any fuss and complaints from the opposition.¹⁴ ELCRU players such as George Botes, R Felix, Johannes “Outjie” Botes, Albie Blignaut featured almost regularly in the GRFU’s Black Lion line-up throughout the 1950s.¹⁵ This practise was available for every club. The coloured fixtures would continue as usual though a handful of one particular club’s players had been “hired out”, ‘because people appreciated that if Black Lion and or any particular club desperately needed them, then they would field other players in their positions. There was the wonderful spirit of cooperation among people of the place’.¹⁶

Swallows, Black Lion and some other clubs in the GRFU however had some of their own full-time registered coloured players.¹⁷ Temmers says

...there was a wonderful spirit in people...You would find a situation where the whole Old [Bisseker] Boys RFCs back line ... is hired by the Black Lion RFC in a particular important match. Usually for cup games, the Black Lion RFC would hire all those coloured guys. The Black Lion team would temporarily adopt them. There was a wonderful spirit within people and there were no complaints from the opponents claiming to be suffering from some unfair deals out

¹³Interview Lappley “Swarie” Sontshi, 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, 16 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Sontshi).

¹⁴Interview Temmers.

¹⁵Interview Temmers.

¹⁶Interview Temmers.

¹⁷Interview Temmers.

of that issue. What would they say again? They would say *baya-ordarisha*, meaning they have ordered ... the coloured guys to play with them..¹⁸

However, this African-coloured relationship was a rather a one-sided affair with a large number of coloured players registered with African clubs but very few Africans crossed over to coloured clubs. Temmers says:

...Very few [black] guys came over [to play for the coloured clubs]. That was a peculiar thing nhee! ... Victor Maki played for Winter Rose and he came over to the coloured club called the Universal RFC, a club that belongs to the North End. In that North End area, people did not play rugby...but they played it in Parkside where the coloured players had a rugby field. So...that is the only guy that I remember this Victor Maki chap! There might be some other guys but I am certain...very few did. But coloureds were mostly in the black clubs. For example, in East Bank coloured people who played for the black club include the late Bonnie Erasmus who was a teacher and played for the Swallows RFC. Then the old man De Wet who played and in fact also coached the Swallows RFC. He played many games this De Wet old man together with Mhani Kotobe, apart from being rugby players; they were also great names even in cricket. There were lots of other coloured guys that played in the black clubs and this emphasises the great spirit that prevailed amongst people at the time.¹⁹

This situation is worth exploring. One view is that the coloured rugby population at the time did not really play highly competitive rugby compared to that of Africans.²⁰ Bishop Mgwebi, Sipho Tanana, former Bush Buck players and administrators and Lappley Sontshi, argue this.²¹ Sontshi indicates that Africans were 'superior to the coloureds and later on they improved because of the guy, Bonnie Erasmus, who was a teacher here in East London. He became a great influence within coloured rugby indeed and in fact he played for Winter Rose'.²² Thus, there was a sprinkling of highly talented coloured rugby players that black clubs recognised and appreciated. The fact that coloured rugby players only had three first division clubs seems to confirm this idea.

¹⁸Interview Temmers. It is interesting to note that these coloured players were assisting these clubs without any form of reward in return. They were doing it for the sheer love of the game.

¹⁹Interview Temmers.

²⁰Interview Sontshi; Sipho Tanana, 16 Edge Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 9 May 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Tanana); Bishop Mgwebi, BRFU offices, Waverley Part, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mgwebi).

²¹Interview Sontshi; Tanana; Mgwebi.

²²Interview Sontshi.

Johannes Temmers argues that one possible reason why some coloured players later moved over to join black clubs was that they appreciated 'the high quality rugby, fierce competition and the whole colourful Black rugby culture in the location' at the time. There were more coloured people that resided at East Bank than either at North End (where a large number of Indians and a few coloured people resided) or anywhere in East London at the time and 'it seems that they were sort of overwhelmed by the black rugby community' and became part of it.²³

Another view is that coloured people played their rugby at Parkside, far from Tsolo where black rugby was played, making it difficult for proper interaction between these two groups. It is known that there were more Africans than coloured people at East Bank, the heart of rugby in the region. Thus, African apparently overshadowed coloured rugby and this also created the impression for some Africans that coloured club rugby was "inferior". This possibly made it difficult and unusual for Africans to defect to coloured clubs. However, Temmers argues that the matches between the BBRFB and BCRU were often tough, with both teams benefiting from them in terms of game development. Temmers says *Together in Excellence*

...The Black [BBRFB] Border team would play against the Border coloured team just to get them ready and in shape before its annual and later biennial interprovincial tournaments ... In those provincial Black-coloured warm-up games was where you would find rugby...really hard stuff...guys were not playing a fool but tackling each other viciously...rugby would be the winner at the end...having played for the Black Border side, I would often hear the Black guys acknowledging that they really had a wonderful practice match indeed against coloureds.²⁴

It is apparent also from Dobson's reports that Africans, 'often assumed ... to have been the cinderellas of South African rugby, more than held their own'. For example, in 1960 the Eastern Province (EP) Africans beat the Western Province (WP) coloured team

²³Interview Sontshi.

²⁴Interview Temmers.

9-6 in front of twelve thousand spectators in Cape Town, in a match that was to determine the champion provincial team in South Africa.²⁵

There were some coloured players that represented both African and coloured Border teams and sometimes played club rugby on both sides, such as Johannes Temmers. The 'wonderful spirit' within the rugby people of both sections and within and between clubs that Temmers acknowledges apparently promoted this. People from these groups appreciated playing together and 'rugby always benefited'.²⁶ Temmers is one player that achieved this double and he acknowledges that

...in 1955, at the time I was still playing for Border coloured team...I started playing for the Winter Rose, a black club at EBL...in fact, in the same year I was selected for Black Border rugby team...and I played in the tournament that was held in Port Elizabeth and at Adcock Grounds ... I had just completed a tournament under the Border Coloured Rugby Union (BCRU) and I had the chance then to play for the Africans after that...there was never a conflict of interest between these two rugby structures whatsoever...²⁷

Temmers thus says his double selection by BCRU and BBRFB did not pose any conflict of interests as one might think, 'the social situation of the day within the location made it easy for him as an energetic and enthusiastic rugby player to play for both structures'. Though he was never selected for the Bantu Black Springboks, deserving coloured players within the SABRFB from other provinces were selected. Temmers says that one of the provincial and national selectors, Siphon Gordon Qumza, would often tease him saying 'Oomdu [Temmers], even if you deserve selection for Bantu Springboks, I would always question your loyalty'. However, some of his colleagues in Winter Rose believe that Temmers 'indeed deserved selection if it was not for favouritism within the SABRFB selection circles'.²⁸ Such favouritism will be discussed later in the chapter.

²⁵See Grundlingh, A, Odendaal, A and Spies, B, *Beyond the Tryline: 'Rugby and South African Society - The Untold Story of Black Rugby in South Africa*, 1995, p.55; see also Dobson, P *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, South African Rugby Board: 'Association', 1989, p.209.

²⁶Interview Temmers.

²⁷Interview Temmers.

²⁸Interview Mnyute; Sam; Wotshela.

The integration between coloured people and Africans is a long lasting culture at EBL. Temmers praises the location's 'harmonious life-style', where, especially at Tsolo, 'people lived and mixed together, blacks and coloureds...There was no segregation whatsoever between us. We played together as young stars. For instance I grew up with lots of guys that belonged to different clubs'. Temmers also indicates that 'it was a "must" that guys who grew up in EBL to choose playing for either [Rising] Stars, which was a coloured club, or Swallows, Thembu [United] or any other big black club'.²⁹ In his case, as a boy he played for Rising Stars, at the time affiliated to the coloured league at Parkside.

The Establishment of the SABRFB and the Birth of Inter-provincial Tournaments

This section discusses specific issues such as poor playing conditions in relation to the increased interest in rugby, with the game becoming a vehicle for popular culture in the area; accelerated club-rugby growth and development; provincial participation and successes; SABRFB challenges (favouritism in team selections, splits and corruption) and responses to them, and the contribution of schools and tertiary institutions to the development of the game in the area.

Club rugby in East London continued to grow and contributed to the broader national transformation of the game. The African national rugby body, SABRFB, had undergone dramatic changes over the years, and in the process changed names. Men such as JM Dippa, MR Masabalala, E Ntshinga, PP Mati, WB Ntshekisa, C Manana and TI Sondlo initially named it SABRFB following its establishment in Kimberly in 1935. Though a number of such matches had been played since the early 1930s, this marked the emergence of formally scheduled provincial rugby, which became the cornerstone of black rugby. East London had the GRFU, affiliated to the BBRFB provincial and the SABRFB, the mother body. The BBRFB contributed numerous Springbok players and

²⁹Interview Mnyute; Sam; Wotshela.

administrators of national calibre for many years in the history of SABRFB. The latter includes WSM Bashe, LF Siyo, SG Qumza, LL Mtshizana, P Cossie, C Nqakula, W Gqibithole, S Tanana, DM Jongilanga, S Geleba and many others.

These interprovincial tournaments played a pivotal role in rugby development in South Africa with various provinces showing off their talent. EP and Border dominated and seem to have overshadowed other SABRFB provinces, though Transvaal and WP later improved. WP was nominated as the most improved province in the 1958 interprovincial tournament in Queenstown, with Border and EP 'weakened by the internal strife'.³⁰ However, EP was arguably the best province in the country, according to the respondents in this study. Its outstanding performance in these interprovincial tournaments was confirmed when it won twelve out of 28 tournament championships, with Border winning six.³¹ Border played many provincial matches throughout the 1930s, even before SABRFB was established, notably the friendly that it lost to Natal 8-3 early in May 1936, in East London, in front of four thousand home spectators. But, strangely, Border, Natal and WP, did not participate in the first SABRFB interprovincial tournament in Kimberly later the same year.³²

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These interprovincial tournaments were held annually from inception, according to Paul Dobson, though biennially after 1954, running for 37 years from 1936 to 1973, 28 in total.³³ Home-and-away matches, sponsored by Bols Brandy (Stellenbosch Farmers Winery) replaced these tournaments after 1973.³⁴ In some years they were not held for various reasons, such as during World War II, lack of resources and other reasons. For example, in 1942, 1943, 1946, 1952 and 1954 there were no interprovincial tournaments

³⁰See Imvo Zabantsundu, 'Sport Highlights: "Rugby,"' 10 January 1959, p.11.

³¹Interview Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, Education Regional offices, East London, 11 April 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Ngqondela); Sam & Wotshela at Mgwali Village, Stutterheim, 09 March 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Sam & Wotshela); Dunga & Magqabi, etc., conducted between 2000-2001.

³²See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.204.

³³See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

³⁴See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

played and reasons are not clearly known. In 1963 and 1964 tournaments were suspended owing to 'inadequate finance'.³⁵ Since they were a major event in black rugby they generally attracted substantial sponsorship and made reasonable returns through gate-takings. Regrettably, the officials often stole some of this hard-earned money. This was one of the main challenges that the SABRFB had to face because it often created tensions between the board members and its affiliates for many years. Internal squabbles often erupted persistently and, at worst, ended in the courts of law. These squabbles promoted jostling for and abuse of power, often resulting in further splits and numerous complications. Throughout its history, the SABRFB had to deal with these challenges. These will be discussed below within the context of rugby transformation from the establishment of the SABRFB in 1935 to its last tournament in 1973.

However, on the field of play, black rugby flourished, especially in and from the 1940s to the 1960s. According to black rugby enthusiasts, this was the time that East London rugby and that of the whole country was at its peak with regards to club rugby's growth and development, increased inter-provincial participation and the general interest in the game.³⁶



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Through an analysis of the interprovincial tournaments, this section discusses the peculiar social nature of the game as adapted by blacks; the growth and development of club-rugby in East London, with aspects such as the emergence and role of junior or second teams, coaches and playing fields; the death of some newly established clubs in the early 1930s and 1940s; responses to the country's apartheid laws; relationship between rugby and the educational institutions. The interprovincial tournaments are also discussed.

³⁵See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

³⁶Interview Ngqondela.

Black Rugby in East London Locations: Not rugby as usual

This section discusses socio-cultural aspects of black rugby in East London locations. These include the familial bonds and relationships to rugby; symbols associated with it and specifically, the game's ability to unify people, accommodating even the relatively disabled and those with "special needs". These are discussed within the nature and context of this society.

Club Rugby and Familial Bonds

Despite poor playing conditions, black rugby grew, playing a pivotal role in upgrading social life in the area grew, playing a pivotal role in upgrading social life in the area. Since the mid 1920s, six clubs affiliated to the GRFU shared a single field for both practise sessions and regular weekend fixtures. EBL rugby enthusiasts however, emphasise that they cooperated in utilising the inadequate facilities provided to them by the authorities.³⁷ Rugby was organised and adopted as a "family affair".³⁸ Mahlubandile Puzi noted that 'if the father as a head of the family is a Winter Rose member, in any capacity, either as a player, an administrator or even a spectator, his whole family had do likewise. This [was] an unwritten law of some kind'.³⁹ In rare cases where this was transgressed, intensive confrontations often erupted. When Pulle Twaku introduces himself he says, "rugby is myself" because I grew up in a rugby-playing family'.⁴⁰ In illustrating how prevalent these rugby-familial bonds were, he also says for instance, 'if you are a Mandleni descendent, the whole location knew that your club is Swallows

³⁷Interview Richard Price Bunga Ncunyana, 3607 NU 8 Mdantsane, 19 December 2000 (Henceforth: Ncunyana); Tanana; Mnyute; Sam & Wotshela.

³⁸Interview Mahlubandile Puzi, Langa Rugby Grounds, Langa Township, Cape Town, 1 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Puzi).

³⁹Interview Puzi.

⁴⁰Interview Pulle Twaku, Lewis Stores, 54 Oxford Street, 9 November 2000, (Henceforth: Interview Twaku).

because from the beginning, the Mandlenis belonged and played for Swallows'.⁴¹ He also notes that 'very few families had breached this arrangement', citing a certain young Maho who deserted his family club, Swallows, for Winter Rose, thus creating a big fight, strangely, not only amongst the two clubs, but in numerous location clubs. This was viewed as setting a bad precedent and as being a negative influence in rugby circles. However, Twaku indicates that these cases were indeed very rare as East London rugby was organised on closely linked familial bonds. He says:

...The Chewu family belonged to Spring Rose...Twaku family was and is still Winter Rose, Njikelanas are Swallows, Bafanas are Black Lion, Mfaxas are Storm Breakers, Meteles are Breakers RFC...there was that family bond arrangement among the clubs and everybody in the location was aware of that. But most importantly, rugby was very great at Rubusana Park, with all these families coming to watch very good guys showing us exciting rugby playing skills...⁴²

This is related to the regional way in which migrants generally organised themselves in East London. Vukile Magqabi says that 'group spirit' was important at the time.⁴³ Links between families and clubs were profound and young boys knew their home-clubs and were aware that they must play for them when they mature.⁴⁴ Fikile Dunga says that his own decision to play for Thembu United was influenced by his parents and was in fact a 'very simple' one because 'there was no other available choice to consider. Joining a club at the time was based on people's places of origin or 'amakhaya' [homes]'. "Homes", in this context meant where your descendants originated before landing in East London'.⁴⁵

⁴¹Interview Twaku.

⁴²Interview Twaku.

⁴³Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

⁴⁴Interview Magqabi & Dunga

⁴⁵Interview Magqabi & Dunga

Black Rugby: Its Symbols and its Role as Popular Culture

Jeff Peires confirms that particular families were attached to particular clubs to the extent that 'walls of their houses might be covered with photographs of great teams of the past. Children and even adults spent hours making banners and carving emblems of their clubs'.⁴⁶ Theophilus Mgijima Sam, the former Winter Rose, Gompo and Border player and administrator notes the great interest in the game. He says:

...Ribusana Park was always full to capacity. There was no Saturday...that it was empty! Even if...the "big and important" clubs such as Swallows, Black Lion, Spring Rose and Thembu United were not playing, people would always attend...I personally liked and enjoyed watching Swallows and Black Lion matches... when I arrived in East London... and watched rugby for the first time I was thrilled and fascinated by the uniforms worn as by their spectators...because I didn't know a thing about uniforms as I was from the rural villages of Xaxazena at Mgwali near Stutterheim...I liked Swallow's jerseys and uniforms...had a flying swallows bird drawn...it also had its own anthem (*umhobe*)! It was the only club that I know of that had its anthem at the time and in fact, till I left East London...and its supporters put on their club's full uniform...clubs were neat...and there was never a situation where someone from one club wears another club's colours, a Swallows jersey, Winter Rose's shorts and Black Lions socks, three clubs in one body. This was just unthinkable during our time in the 1940s and even before...⁴⁷

Lappley Sontshi says that on Saturdays, during the club fixtures and tournaments, the whole location would go and watch rugby, and the clubs had their ladies wearing uniforms in the colours of the clubs, singing and cheering for them'.⁴⁸ Singing is an important part of African socialisation and it has always been part of black rugby, with both players and spectators actively involved. Temmers says that they would always sing songs of appreciation and sportsmanship on their way to and from rugby matches especially during tournaments.⁴⁹ He says

...I still remember the songs that we sung when we were to play a match. My family always laugh at me whenever I sing these songs in the bathroom these days. We would sing "*Molo province [Eastern Province] siyakubulisa siyiBorder...*" [Hallo province, Border humbly greets!], greeting

⁴⁶See Jeff B Peires, "'Facta non verba': Towards a History of Black Rugby in the Eastern Cape", paper presented at the History Workshop, Witwatersrand, 1981, p.2.

⁴⁷Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁴⁸Interview Sontshi.

⁴⁹Interview Temmers.

the host province as we arrive...for instance...in the Eastern Province, we would sing songs in a way of showing respect and a sense of appreciation...⁵⁰

There is no doubt that SABRFB interprovincial tournaments were a vibrant socio-cultural event in black communities. Players sang, danced and made long lasting friendships. However, in the field of play, hard, physical yet entertaining rugby was played, with 'great sportsmanship' being displayed.⁵¹

East London Rugby: An Accommodative People's Game

Black rugby in East London accommodated people of different abilities, with very few discriminatory tendencies. Men, young and old, women, children and even the disabled participated, benefited and enjoyed rugby in their own right.⁵² Mgijima Sam recalls one mildly disabled man known as Poti, who played flyhalf, with Tamte and Charles as centres for All Blacks in the 1950s. He says this man gave his opponents a tough time, '*ibasadulisa*'.⁵³ He says 'this disabled chap' was so troublesome and funny because he would always cut through his opponents, "dummying and dodging" them, through sheer fluke, assisted by his deformed short leg as he ran down to the scoring line.⁵⁴ Poti's "deformed leg" confused the opponents into thinking that they were being "dodged" whereas in actual fact, this was how he ran. This bizarre movement was clearly viewed by spectators from the sideline, 'where one can easily see how he confused his opponents with his deformed leg movements. *Uyakutsho nje ukuba, whoauw!, ababantu bayaphela ses'siqwala*'.⁵⁵ Sam indicates that his own club, Winter Rose, also had a disabled player, namely, Mpotsololo Gqirhana ('*Oom Gqirh*'). *Oom*

⁵⁰Interview Temmers.

⁵¹Interview Temmers.

⁵²Interview Ncunyana; Tanana; Mnyute; Sam & Wotshela; Cyril Mzwandile Mjo, Old Mutual Building, Green Acres, Port Elizabeth, 4 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mjo).

⁵³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁵⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁵⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

Gqirh had ‘distinctively one arm shorter than the other and that posed a big problem when passing the ball. He could not pass the ball easily, thus, had to get close to the ball receiver so as to simply give it over “*ayinyengeze*”. However, the club worked hard to compliment his plight especially that he very was good on the ball particularly when a gap presents itself’.⁵⁶ *Gqirhana*’s other strong point was that he was a very strong and physical man, “*wayesisigantsontso*”, and that made it difficult for his opponents to tackle him.⁵⁷

Another peculiar aspect of black rugby in East London was that it was not uncommon to find players extending their rugby playing careers for several decades, stretching late into life and simply adjusting playing positions.⁵⁸ Peires also noted that rugby in black communities was played much later into life, in some cases past the age of forty. ‘You play backline when you’re younger, forward when you’re older and heavier’.⁵⁹



Rugby in the East London locations was highly meaningful in people’s lives and in some instances reflected how “manly a man is”. Magqabi argues that

...If a man didn’t play rugby, he wouldn’t be considered a man at all (*awuyondoda*) by the society! You wouldn’t be considered a real man honestly! ...and in fact, that would be just madness! Madness! Madness! I am telling you honestly, people were just well taken up by the game. For instance, young boys at school would take *ikatriva* (the horse shoe tobacco bag or small sac) and push in papers and rags improvising a rugby ball so that they can play. If we don’t have *ikatriva* we would even take the plastic tobacco (Boxer) packs to make our rugby ball and play in our *mbambo*-teams...in fact, most players in these teams played naked or wholly bare. We played naked because we were avoiding damaging our shorts that more often than not, a boy had only one set to wear. However, we enjoyed this a great deal and I insist that men who didn’t play were simple mad...madness in the true sense of the word, in the eyes of the rugby crazy community...⁶⁰

⁵⁶Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁵⁷Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁵⁸Interview Ncunyana; Tanana; Mnyute; Sam & Wotshela; Mjo.

⁵⁹See Peires, “Facta non Verba”, 1981, p.2.

⁶⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

Many impoverished people were prepared to sink their wages into paying club subscriptions.⁶¹ To Lappley Sontshi, a teacher, and a few relatively privileged like him, this was fairly affordable but to the majority of his teammates, it was often a difficult struggle. Sontshi notes that

...the subscription fee was low because the train was cheap, and those trucks...they used to break down on the way. We were foolish because we would go for the cheapest transport on offer. I remember when we were going to play a tournament in Cape Town. We stayed the whole day in Mossel Bay. Sail [i.e., canvas] was usually used as a canopy to cover the truck and when it travels at 30 km/h to 40 km/h, you would really appreciate that it is really running very fast! For instance if we are going to Umtata or PE, we used to travel two days...⁶²

Tanana agrees that players usually hired a lorry and also bought their own food. Many remember the 1958 trip to Aliwal North. Tanana says, 'we pulled off from East London at about one pm by a lorry without a canopy but only with some sail on the sides, do you imagine, to Aliwal North to play rugby travelling about 300 odd kilometres. We didn't have problems with all that and there would be like mealie-meal sacks on the back of the lorry and we would sing and talk in there'.⁶³ This indicates how blacks loved and enjoyed rugby and were willing to make great sacrifices for it. Sontshi and Mjo recall that Tomi Mini's truck was often hired to take Border provincial players to tournaments in various distant destinations. However, apart from willingness and sacrifices made by players and lack of funds to get better transport, it appears that even when there was an opportunity to secure more comfortable but also more expensive transport for players, officials would not budge. Sontshi insists that in many instances officials could have organised better transportation for players, but did not because they often enjoyed luxuries with the money which was not their own.⁶⁴ There might be several explanations for this behaviour, but selfishness, insensitivity, and at worst, greed and a high level of corruption were probably most prevalent.

⁶¹See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981.

⁶²Interview Sontshi.

⁶³Interview Tanana.

⁶⁴Interview Sontshi; see also Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p3.

However, to many players these incidents did not matter much, and did not affect their love for the game. Players travelled extraordinarily long distances, sometimes on foot or with difficult means of transportation. Khumbulele Wotshela of Winter Rose says

...after I finished my studies I couldn't secure a job in East London but only got a teaching post in Mount Frere and I went there driving my motor bike...thus meant no opportunity to play rugby that I dearly enjoyed...I was forced to travel to East London every Friday afternoon to play rugby the following day...before I left for Mount Frere I was a regular within the Winter Rose RFC of East London...because I had no other form of transport other than my motorbike...Mr [Mgijima] Sam and other Winter Rose people would arrange me a place to put up. They usually appreciated my constant arrivals for weekend rugby matches especially when we were to play Swallows...Swallows people...on the other hand constantly cried to one another each time they see my bike entering the location, saying, "the troublesome motorbike" has arrived' ...⁶⁵

The difficulties that characterised black rugby did not deter its growth and people's interest in the game. Ironically, these difficulties fostered dedication and selflessness as described by Sontshi and Peires. In response to these challenges, blacks concentrated on things that inspired them as players. Typical to this is the "health" and tea parties that East London clubs often organised to celebrate their successes and to raise funds. Winter Rose organised their big "health" celebration after it won its first Trophy under the GRFU in 1939 and the second one in 1948. These "health" celebrations were held in community halls or in schoolrooms so as to accommodate many local people, apart from the members of a particular hosting club. Sam says that they referred to these functions as "health" because 'it is a healthy thing for people to get together singing, drinking, and dancing joyously'.⁶⁶ These activities were also used as platforms for reconciliation amongst those of different clubs. Clubs would often surprise people by inviting even their worst enemies to these events and what is more, some also allowed such clubs to play active roles in their programmes of the day. Sam says

...we would invite clubs *ukuze zibe nenxaxheba eziyidlalayo* [to play certain roles and be an integral part of our programme] ...Winter Rose had good relations with Swallows...The club that badly hated us was Thembu...oh, *babesithiyil'abobantu!* ... however, we decided to spring a surprise and invite it and as if that was not enough, we even offered it to render an item...a brief speech in our *health* programme. Joe Mngqikana, who once ridiculed my club, and me calling us

⁶⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁶⁶Interview Sam & Wotshela.

"*amaqaba*" (the Reds) and also questioned my ball catching and passing skills, was asked by his club to do the honours on its behalf on the day...⁶⁷

The clubs ladies' sections often played a pivotal role in these functions. Refreshments in the form of hard liquor would be served and large sums of money were often spent on these occasions. The host club would offer one bottle of brandy to each of the club captains representing their clubs. 'You should imagine the sums of money spent on that though it wasn't that expensive because the currency we were using at the time was pounds and shillings'.⁶⁸ Clubs like Winter Rose getting this opportunity for the first time did not really mind. For instance, the club held its first "*health*" function in 1939 after it controversially "won" the championship trophy of the "second teams" [i.e., junior teams that were playing in the second division equivalent].⁶⁹ Sam does not hide that Winter Rose "won" the trophy controversially because it was in fact, meant to be awarded to Swallows, who were disqualified due to certain administrative faults. Winter Rose, as runner up, was awarded it.

East London Rugby in the 1930s: Some Early Clubs Die-out

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From the mid-1930s black rugby in the East London locations transformed and developed radically, with primary, secondary and tertiary educational institutions emerging as strongholds of the game. Location clubs continued competing fiercely, with new ones developing, and Swallows' long time dominance increasingly threatened. However, some early existing location clubs disappeared, with their remnants either re-emerging with different identities or defecting to others. Clubs such as the Independents, Nkanyuza's Gun Bush, 'Basotho team', Rovers and later All Blacks died a natural death just a few years following their establishment. Clements Kadalie, who pioneered black trade unionism in South Africa, established the Independents RFC.⁷⁰ A Malawian

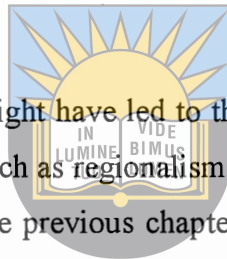
⁶⁷Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁶⁸Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁶⁹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁷⁰See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000.p.2; see also Phil Mthimkulu, 'The role of mass movement in SA liberation struggle - 1990 -"Mass Movement of the 70's and 80's and the Liberation struggle"', a paper

(iNyasa), he was a unique leader who contributed to the social and political development of East London locations.⁷¹ A man called Nkanyuza formed Gun Bush RFC solely for Stutterheim people. Nkanyuza was originally from Stutterheim and he established this club on his return from participating in World War I.⁷² The name “Gun Bush”, ‘might have been prompted by his memory of the war’ in the early 1920s.⁷³ ‘Basotho team’ was established in the early 1940s by a sprinkling of Sotho people who came to work and reside in East London around this period.⁷⁴ All Blacks was established and named after the New Zealand “All Blacks” that toured South Africa in the 1928. The club was lucky to be strengthened by many players that defected from the Independents shortly after it was formed. Ironically, All Black RFC also died a few years later with most of its players joining Winter Rose.⁷⁵



An investigation of what might have led to the collapse of these clubs is difficult and confusing. However, issues such as regionalism, migration, and other socio-political factors are relevant. As seen in the previous chapter, regionalism was prevalent among the migrants in the East London location, and this might have been further promoted by the manner in which the early societies and clubs were organised. This thus might have filtered down through to all spheres of life in the area. This organising phenomenon strengthens clubs, and also weakened and destroyed some. Thus, given this regionalism organising style of people in the area, from inception, the life span of Basotho teams and Independents was bound to be short-lived. Though, specific underpinning factors leading to each club’s doom varies to a certain degree. Basotho had little opportunity to develop

published in the *Southern Africa Regional Institute for Policy Studies (SARIPS)*, Sipho Buthelezi (ed), SARIPS Trust, 1995, p.97. Mthimkulu was at the time a journalist and political analyst, declared that ‘with the exception of Clement Kadalie’s Independent Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of South Africa (ICU) [founded in 1920s], there was no mass movement within South Africa’s resistance politics’.

⁷¹Maqasho, ‘EBLRC’, 2000, pp.19-20; see Mthimkulu, ‘Mass Movement of the 70s and 80s’, 1995, p.97.

⁷²Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁷³Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁷⁴Interview Sontshi.

⁷⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

and prosper in numbers and support in a society characterised by “*home-mate*” circles or *abakhaya*. Since the Basotho team was solely for Basotho, of whom there were very few in the area at the time, development and survival became impossible in this regionally organised way of life. Lapple Sontshi says

...the Basotho team was established around 1942/44, but did not last long and their players were taken by other teams. These Sotho people came to East London and they decided to gather themselves together as Basothos to form a club. They were from Aliwal North but some from Burgersdorp, and Herschel. Players of note within the Basothos include guys like Diare, Sam Nkosi, who played as a centre and wing...later played for Thembu...⁷⁶

This group of people could not survive this competition against a community that had adopted rugby as a part of its culture for decades.

However, the death of Independents was more complicated. The club became a victim of circumstances. For example, most of members were workers belonging to the Industrial Commercial Union (ICU), an organisation founded and led by Clements Kadalie.⁷⁷ This meant that Kadalie’s personal and political influence on his constituency and the whole community became crucial in the sustenance or collapse of his institutions, included his Independents RFC. Another important factor was the competition between his club and the local clubs for players. In fact this became paramount. Once acclaimed as the first man to bring mass trade unionism to the country, Kadalie’s reputation later declined as he and his organisation failed to retain and secure jobs, better wages and improved working conditions. Mayer states that orders for a general strike were given in 1930 and it proved highly effective in that 86% of the workers responded.⁷⁸ However, Kadalie was arrested and eventually quit politics, the wage struggle failed and many workers lost their jobs. His prestige never recovered in the ensuing years of economic depression, when trade unionism fell out of favour among black workers in the area.⁷⁹

⁷⁶Interview Sontshi.

⁷⁷See Mthimkulu, ‘Mass Movement of the 70s and 80s’, 1995, p.97.

⁷⁸See Mthimkulu, ‘Mass Movement of the 70s and 80s’, 1995, p.97.

Influx Control regulations tended to tie them to their jobs. All this had a negative effect on his rugby club.

Sam, the former Winter Rose player, club and provincial administrator, agrees.⁸⁰ The ICU and the Independents RFC numbers 'continued to dwindle and dwindle and in fact, Kadalie himself was becoming less strong and influential than he was previously'. His downfall and apathy towards the ICU was strongly reflected in his other institutions including his club and church, as there was a relationship between them. ICU members, East London location workers including migrant workers, played for the Independents.⁸¹ Thus, success or collapse of the ICU inevitably affected his other two institutions. Though Independents players were predominantly from the ICU, it is evident that it competed and in fact, tampered with local clubs' recruitment drives. This was so because most ICU members were location people including migrant labourers, who, apart from being the Independents, had to play for and belong to their own home-clubs, thus creating further rifts within the rugby fraternity and the whole community.

Another big challenge was that Kadalie found himself and his organisation in opposition to the ANC and the ANCYL particularly when contesting seats within the Advisory Board. Mayer and Pauw reported that the ANC and ANCYL were at one point very strong in East London. Thus the black community became divided.

Further, the ICU and Independents endured pressure that caused many to terminate membership and its players to defect to other clubs. The studies by Mayer and Pauw found that *school* and *red* Xhosa people in the EBL observed and respected their

⁷⁹See Mthimkulu, 'Mass Movement of the 70s and 80s', 1995, p.463; interview Dunga & Magqabi. For an account of the 1930 strike, and for his organisation and its activities in 1932, see also MW Hunter, *Reaction to Conquest: The Effect of Contact with Europeans on the Pondo of South Africa*, p.568. Kadalie and his movement are discussed at length in E Roux, *Time Longer than Rope*, chapters XV and XVI.

⁸⁰Interview Sam & Wotshela.

⁸¹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

traditions, customs and rituals, especially initiation or circumcision of boys.⁸² Many workers at the time were ICU members and '*babe siva ngaye*' (they respected and listened to him [Kadalie]), '*kuba yayiyi-chap eyay'khumsha kakhulu leyo*' (because he was highly articulate and fluent in English). However, many people believed that he was uncircumcised and this put a lot of pressure on men that belonged to the Independents. Sam indicates that Xhosa men in the locations publicly denounced the ICU and Independents players, stating that '*isisimang'into yokuba amdod'azidlayo ngobudoda bawo ukuba alawulwe yinkwenkw'uKadali*' [it is indeed very funny and rather ironic to find that mature Xhosa men who pride themselves of their manhood but allow themselves to be led by a boy, Kadalie'].⁸³ This "boy" stigma stemmed from the fact that Kadalie was *iNyasas* or of Malawian nationality, and thus uncircumcised' since it was generally believed that *Nyasas* do not undergo this ritual. Kadalie's institutions, including the Independents, had had to face this pressure of being constantly scorned and ridiculed publicly and denounced as 'less manly and perceived as committing taboo'. It became common to hear their opponents saying 'Independents members are idiots led by a "boy"'.⁸⁴ Following this constant public mockery especially when Independents RFC was victorious against reputed old clubs, many deregistered (*barhoxa*) and defected to other sides, thus, bringing about the entire collapse of the club.⁸⁵

It can be assumed that some or all these socio-cultural and socio-political factors might have led to the collapse of the Independents. Following its death, some of its players defected to form All Blacks, which was in fact its residue, while some joined Winter Rose. Amongst the survivors of the Independents was George Mnyute and his son, Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, who went on to become key members of Winter Rose.⁸⁶

⁸²See Pauw, BA, *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family among the Urbanised Bantu in East London*, 1962, p.121; and also Mayer, *Tribesmen or Townsmen*, 1961, p.46.

⁸³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

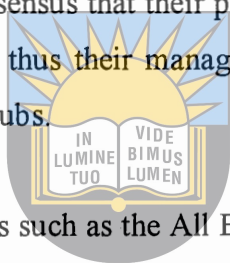
⁸⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela; interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁸⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela; interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁸⁶Interview Sam & Wotshela; interview Dunga & Magqabi.

However, Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute strongly disputes this. He says he was never an ICU member and that the first time he got involved in politics was when he joined the ANC.⁸⁷ He further doubts that his father was a member of ICU because it was not easy for people to disclose their political affiliation at the time.⁸⁸ Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, the former United Higher Mission flyhalf and scrumhalf, Welsh High, Swallows, Fort Hare, Border and SAARFB's player, agrees, arguing that Ndikho Mnyute was his comrade within the ANC and 'is a man one can trust'.⁸⁹

Following their demise, former Gun Bush and All Blacks players joined Winter Rose and others teams. Reasons behind its death and that of the All Blacks are not really known but there seems to be a consensus that their problems were mainly administrative since their broad membership and thus their management was illiterate and unfamiliar with the administration of formal clubs.



Another challenge that clubs such as the All Blacks, Gun Bush, Independents and Basotho had to contend with was the lack of enthusiastic youth development in their ranks. These clubs did not take youth rugby development seriously as they did not all have junior teams as a second layer to take over from the maturing players. All Blacks grew and played in the first division with the other well-established clubs but unfortunately, it never reached the standard to become a real force within the GRFU. Fikile Dunga states that the All Blacks was 'never a strong club as it merely depended only on Poti, the disabled man, Tyamtye, Dyasi and Shoti and Felibongo, their scrum half, and to make things worse, it did not have "*ihlumelo*", the youth development teams'.⁹⁰ Thus, its collapse in the 1950s, not long after it was established, did not really come as a shock. After it disbanded, some of its players such as Dez "*Oom-Dez*"

⁸⁷Interview Mnyute.

⁸⁸Interview Mnyute.

⁸⁹Interview Mjo. Simo Mjo and Ndikho Mnyute were and are still members of the ANC since their days in the uMkonto Wesizwe's (popularly known as MK) underground operations in the early 1960s and Mjo strongly feels that Ndikho is a 'is a man one can trust'.

⁹⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

Makhatala joined Vusumzi RFC that mainly comprised railway workers. Vukile Magqabi says that 'a part of the All Blacks RFC...joined Vusumzi RFC because it [Vusumzi RFC] initially came about from a group of men that called itself "*Spes Bona*," [which merged with] the club for the railway people...which themselves might have been the residue of All Blacks in the first place'.⁹¹

However, some of these clubs produced valuable players that later strengthened the rather 'shabby' Winter Rose of the time. Sam says that 'Nkanyuza's Gun Bush dissidents gave his club [Winter Rose] the impetus to pick up the first fifteen [players] which then affiliated to the Gompo Rugby Football Union'.⁹²

In short, this was how the Independents, Gun Bush, Basotho team, All Blacks collapsed. Apart from the factors that led to these clubs' downfall, the lack of "*ihlumelo*", junior, "B" or second or development teams seems critical. Dunga argues that most clubs that did not have second teams simply died natural deaths because they were depleted after their players matured and retired. He states that

...It was a question of club development...Certain clubs didn't have young people to take it up where the older guys left off. So, they ran short of players as they didn't have *ihlumelo*... the young developing players in their lower ranks...these clubs were established by...adults without the involvement of the young generation to continue with the club when the founders mature and couldn't play any more...this was the situation with these clubs such as All Blacks, hence they simply died out...⁹³

Though this was highly contested, especially among Africans and coloured rugby enthusiasts in the "Cape Province", the other factor that might have led to the collapse of some of the *early* clubs is that rugby development at the time was still in its infancy and 'some people were a bit sceptical of getting involved in the game because they couldn't imagine themselves, as mature men, running with the "cow skin!"'⁹⁴ It is clear that there

⁹¹Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁹²See Mgijima Theophilus Sam, 'Brief History of Winter Rose', March 2001, n.p.

⁹³Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

⁹⁴Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

is no single justification as to why these early clubs died. However, there is consensus that the fundamental challenge that most of them faced was the lack of development teams. This could be said about Gun Bush, Basotho team, Independent and Rovers, as they all died a natural death.

Magqabi concurs, arguing that 'the issue of developing young boys so as to continue with the clubs' programme was indeed a big challenge to all the clubs, even though these clubs survived over a number of decades. Most clubs found themselves without the necessary youth to replace the mature players'. He further adds that the idea of the second teams came much later in the East London rugby playing communities. Dunga argues that the situation was particularly serious especially considering when the Border provincial junior teams were introduced, in the mid 1930s. 'By the 1940s, they were strong with players such as Ngaku and Botha playing for the Border third team and at the time the second team were already in existence and quite strong too'.⁹⁵ Some of the local clubs disregarded this issue altogether. However, in the 1940s, East London black rugby was displaying signs of 'assertive developments, with clubs realising the need to have the development teams'.⁹⁶ Dunga acknowledges that by the late 1940s clubs with second and third teams included Swallows. In fact, Swallows and Early Rose (later Thembu United) had second or junior teams as far back as 1920. This was to be expected because 'Swallows RFC "*ngunozala*," was the fountain of all rugby clubs in the area'.⁹⁷ Spring Rose and Black Lions started their junior teams later with Bush Buck and Winter Rose junior teams established and starting participation in the Gompo Rugby Football Union fixtures in 1932 and 1933 respectively.

There was radical growth and development of black rugby in East London locations from the mid-1930s through to the 1940s. The Martin League Cup was the main prize that clubs aspired to in the 1930s. Clubs such as Swallows and Thembu

⁹⁵Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

⁹⁶See 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary Diamond Jubilee Brochure, compiled by Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, 1986, p.26.

⁹⁷Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

United regarded this period, as their 'vintage years', with their players bringing numerous spectators to Rubusana Park 'to watch exciting rugby'.⁹⁸ However, Thembu United's prowess became clear in the late 1920s, especially in 1929, two years after it was founded. This club established itself as the key rival to Swallows, taking over where its predecessor (Early Rose) had left off. The Swallows generation acknowledges that 'Thembu United gave them "anxious moments" throughout this period'.⁹⁹ According to Thembu United people of this generation, their club's turning-point was in 1928, when 'Josiah Simanga Mngqikana was elected as captain, the position he held until 1942, when he retired from 'first class rugby'.¹⁰⁰ Thembu United won its first championship trophy in 1929 and recorded ten consecutive wins until 1949. Mngqikana says in *Indaba* that Thembu United's "greatest side" was in 1931, with players such as Dududu Sondlo, Xakokile (sic) [Xakekile] and many others and it "beat all comers" and in fact, not a single team crossed our try line but we scored 214 points and only four were scored against it, and that four was a drop goal.¹⁰¹ However, it was Swallows' senior team and second team that became the first winners of the Burell and National Cups respectively in 1940.¹⁰²

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Industrialisation grew in the 1940s and many young men came to East London 'seeking greener pastures'.¹⁰³ Many clubs were formed but some soon vanished as shown above. Some old clubs disbanded, making way for fresh ideas. Men such as Mjamba, Metele, Sparks, Skomo, Mdingi and others formed Storm Breakers as a result of a breakaway from Bush Buck in 1949. Shortly after, men such as Gwili, Javu and others, with young men they recruited from Ndende section in EBL in the early 1950s, formed

⁹⁸Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.26.

⁹⁹Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also 'Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.26.

¹⁰⁰See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget' by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14; interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁰¹See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget' by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14; interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁰²Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.26.

¹⁰³Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.26.

Boiling Water. Dunga states that clubs like Boiling Water emerged as breakaways from the existing clubs following the disillusionment of many players that could not make “breakthroughs” into the first teams. Sipho Tanana argues that ‘as black rugby grew and developed in the early 1930 onwards, clubs found themselves sitting with numerous talented players and that meant delayed or no promotion for those in the third and fourth teams to the second and the first teams. In fact there were evidently fierce struggles to break through to the second and the first teams’.¹⁰⁴ New clubs such as Boiling Water, Storm Breakers and others emerged from these breakaways ‘since every player wanted to be in the limelight too’.¹⁰⁵ Wallabies RFC formed by people from *ezinqayini*, or West Bank Location in 1956 is another of these newly formed clubs. Clubs such as All Blacks, Vusumzi, Strand Lopers and Vultures emerged at a later stage. However, it should be remembered that there was a club called All Blacks in the 1930s, which died a natural death together with clubs such as Independents, Rovers, Basotho Team and some others in that era.



New Directions: Swallows RFC Leads the Way

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The growth of new clubs marked the beginning of intensive competition within the Gompo Union with the majority taking advantage of new migrants coming into the city. This strengthened many clubs, thus challenging Swallow’s dominance. Ironically, around this time, Swallows produced well-recognised coaches such as Gilindoda Ntoni, Mhana Mqala and others, who ‘availed their services to all the interested rugby converts and never denied coaching even to the lowest player of each club in the location. Because Swallows was strong, it was unanimously agreed that Mhana Mqala be “spared” to coach Winter Rose RFC’ in the mid-1930s and through to the 1940s. Results were immediate in that quality players such as Maboy Mbize, George Qinga, Malawu Solomon and others emerged and were acknowledged as stars in their own right’.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Interview Tanana.

¹⁰⁵Interview Tanana.

¹⁰⁶See the ‘Swallows RFC 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.26; interview Magqabi & Dunga; Mnyute; Ncunyana; Puzi; Mjo; Dumisani Mhani, 3436 NU14, Mdantsane, 27 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mhani).

Mnyute states that

...the East London locations saw an increased rugby fascination and sports vibrancy throughout the 1940s...such that I could safely say, that people in the area were “sports crazy”! Adults within the community kept children under tight control. We played rugby because our parents and old members of the community took care for us and guided us through the way. One other fortunate thing about EL rugby was that there were committed people like [the old] *tat'uMqala* of the Swallows...I used to visit him in his house, asking him to assist us with this and that because we were struggling to win matches at the time. Things were so bad that I ultimately approached him and said, “please old man, can’t you please coach us as well, we want to be strong and win too”. He agreed whole-heartedly and in fact we were personally on good terms. He showed me lots of things in our coaching sessions together and in our initial meetings, he coached me very well and I gained a lot from him. Interestingly, after each and every “secret coaching session”, he would often softly say, “look here my son, please, *ungandivezi*, [don’t dare disclose our “secret coaching” sessions’ to anybody]. *Ungandivezi*, just shut up, don’t tell anyone! Go practise what we have done and coach your teams now”. I gained lots from his amazing fountain of rugby skills and in fact I absorbed all his rugby and went on to coach my Winter Rose and the results were immediate, as the club became the champions in the second team competition in 1948...¹⁰⁷

There is ample evidence of Swallow’s contribution to East London rugby over the years. Apart from being a pioneer of club-rugby, it assisted most local clubs to emerge and sustained them thereafter. With what was referred to as its ‘patriotic, wise, creative and hardworking’ leadership and membership, Swallows managed to ‘establish itself as a formidable institution’ that has ‘always stretched itself beyond limits, selflessly in developing black rugby in the East London region and in the entire country’.¹⁰⁸ Mahlubandile Puzi concurs saying ‘Swallow’s old men were “assets to the East London rugby in all respects” and they contributed immensely towards its growth and development’ for a number of years. He states that these men were also very good coaches, willing to motivate and assist emerging young stars in the region regardless of their clubs. These men are described as “patriotic”, preoccupied with promoting and developing rugby in greater East London. *Babez’misele ukupucula izinga lerabhi yase Monti*’.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Interview Mnyute.

¹⁰⁸Interview Magqabi & Dunga; Mnyute; Ncunyana; Puzi; see also ‘Swallows 75th Anniversary’, 1986, p.26.

¹⁰⁹Interview Puzi.

However, East London club-rugby had yet to undergo radical game growth and technical development because important aspects of the game were still overlooked. For example, club coaches, training sessions and junior teams were not really taken seriously by many clubs, with the exception of Swallows. Sam argues that 'this ignorance and naiveté could be attributed to *ubugaba* (illiteracy) and game underdevelopment', especially if 'one considers the fact that there was no club that had a coach in all the local clubs except Swallows and Welsh High School because it was a school team'.¹¹⁰ He acknowledges that 'the person who was Swallow's coach, Mhana Mqala did not strictly assist only his own club but everybody who needed such service. In fact this man was the only coach in the location and willingly welcomed every club's coaching invite'.¹¹¹ Mqala also assisted the primary schools and produced lots of good fly halves and centres in the area. He was a good flyhalf himself and was 'very dangerous to the opposition with or without the ball'.¹¹² He was known for his selflessness and excellent coaching skills. He wanted to develop black rugby in East London and he encouraged and motivated all good players in the area irrespective of their club. He had an eye for talent and the ability to nurture it. Mqala and his club, Swallows, were interested in the technical and tactical development of black rugby. This made a big difference to this club as compared to the rest in the GRFU for many years.

The fact that it took a long time for all the other clubs, including the provincial teams, to think seriously about the role of coaching indicates how influential Swallows people were in the development of black rugby in the region. Sam states that at the time full-time club coaches were 'not something that Xhosas put much concern about'.¹¹³ This naiveté cost clubs and Border teams numerous winning opportunities. East London

¹¹⁰Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹¹¹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹¹²Interview Sam & Wotshela; Mnyute says Mhana Mqala was a thinker and always careful about being tackled, someone close to be referred to as a "coward" *idlezi* [i.e., elusive] that didn't want to put himself in a difficulty situation, where he could be tackled.

¹¹³Interview Sam & Wotshela; Mnyute.

rugby enthusiasts remember many provincial matches that Border lost due to lack of coaching and proper guidance in and outside the field. Because not much value was attached to having a responsible person coaching the provincial team, conflicts amongst Border officials persisted. Failure to reach consensus on the selection of the 1948 Border team advantaged the Transvaal team that sprung a surprise, defeating it in front of its spectators. However, many rugby enthusiasts were not really shocked because 'given the cream of players that the province had, as opposed to the selection made, with good players left out and those included, played tactically out of positions'.¹¹⁴ What compounded the problem was that the Transvaal team was comprised of many former Border and Eastern Province players and they were aware of Border's strong and weak points, and the tactical blunders and technical problems that it was facing at the time. Players such as Mzwandile Kota, Edger Tyurumaka Miya, Bandile Ben-Mazwi and many others with the Transvaal team were initially Border players. In fact, most of them were the former Thembu United RFC players, who ended up enticed to the Transvaal because of job opportunities.

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This was but one of the things that pressured Border to seriously consider coaching, especially as Swallows had long benefited from having a coach. There is no doubt of the influence of Swallows, especially Mhana Mqala and Gililindoda Ntoni. Ngqondela describes these men as 'non-single-club-minded individuals with their sole mission to develop rugby across the board'.¹¹⁵ Soon, there were many coaches in the region. Coaches such as Ndikho Mnyute of Winter Rose also assisted many clubs that asked for his services. He says that they

...learnt a lot of things from the old rugby people and they in turn loved me because of my manners and discipline...old people of the day were disciplinarians and sport lovers...just as...myself...I didn't take alcohol as some other young people...I was a "sports mad" young man. *Amaxhego*, [these old men] at the time appreciated that kind of behaviour ...[the old] *tat'uDe Wet*,

¹¹⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela; Mnyute.

¹¹⁵Interview Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, Education Regional offices, Room 8, 2nd Floor, East London, 11 April 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Ngqondela); also the 'Swallows 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.23, cites this information.

a coloured man...Swallows coach...there was *tat'uMhana Mqala* and *tat'uGilindoda Ntoni* to mention but a few. I always kept close company to them¹¹⁶

These men, hailed as 'coaches of note', 'never received any formal rugby coaching and training qualifications but were self-made pioneers of the game in the region'.¹¹⁷ They learnt the game through personal experience, which included playing the game, watching others play, constant peer feedback and reading books describing rugby technical and tactical skills, training and knowing the rules of the game. Talking about his experiences, Mnyute says he blended his personal experience and all what he was taught by his early coaches, with 'some other tips that he gathered from the French team' that toured South Africa to play the white Springboks in the 1940s. The coaches would analyse these and other rugby matches. Mnyute says that

...I was just pre-occupied with learning new coaching ways all the time...when I got back from Robben Island I realised that my club, the Winter Rose RFC was so weak that it was on the verge of being relegated and I decided to resume playing again even though I later realised that the young guys were very fast and nippy for me... I just couldn't match them...from bad prison conditions (*ndiphelil'esamenteni*) ... I turned to...coaching and training...I changed the pattern that they were initially using and introduced new ways...¹¹⁸

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EL Black Club Rugby: Growth and Perceived Standards

Though he made great personal efforts, learning new coaching tactics, Mnyute is still acknowledged the old Swallows men for the pivotal role that they played in developing his game and that of the region. Mnyute says 'apart from the important technical and tactical awareness, including basic rugby skills such as kicking, catching or receiving, passing and ball handling, these men encouraged fair play and safety. They taught us numerous safety aspects of the game.'¹¹⁹ It should be noted that black rugby coaches emphasised that good techniques and tactical execution are important in injury

¹¹⁶Interview Mnyute.

¹¹⁷Interview Mnyute.

¹¹⁸Interview Mnyute.

¹¹⁹Interview Mnyute.

prevention. Mnyute says he was taught many skills when he was young, for instance, ‘to pass the ball correctly, one shouldn’t face the receiver but anticipate where he is and “throw” the ball to an angle such that his running speed is not altered in the process’.¹²⁰ This is no doubt indicative of the fact that blacks know and have enjoyed rugby just as their white counterparts and the standard of their game was in no way outdated. They also read books on game tactics and techniques and used the same “law books” that every rugby coach read.

This marked a major turning point in East London rugby, with many clubs and the provincial teams seriously adopting the idea of responsible individuals as coaches and following scheduled practise and training sessions. This improved the standard of East London rugby and many clubs ‘gained confidence, even travelling to other centres to compete and showcasing their talent’.¹²¹ Comparing his club to the others in the location, Sam notes that the late 1940s saw real improvement. He however believes that Winter Rose’s controversially winning its first trophy in 1939, marked the turning point and strongly boosted the morale of a club that had tasted good results for the first time. It further developed and proved itself over the years such that ‘it was able to send a formidable side to tour King Williams Town, Khobonqaba (i.e., Adelaide) and Port Elizabeth; to compete against Spring Rose in the 1947/8 season’. These tours continued through to the 1950s and beyond, with the club touring Port Elizabeth again in 1958.¹²²

The standard of black club rugby reached its peak in the East London locations from the 1940s. Swallows played a number of matches at Rubusana Park against Union RFC, Port Elizabeth’s best club at the time. Sam says

¹²⁰Interview Mnyute. Mnyute says he was taught among other things the safe way of catching a flight ball. He says that it was emphasised that as a ball receiver one should jump high in the air and lift one leg so he does not get tackled badly by the opponent(s). He is pleased that young black boys were taught these tricks early in their rugby careers.

¹²¹Interview Sam & Wotshela

¹²²Interview Sam & Wotshela

...in Port Elizabeth, there was a...club with white jerseys called Union...I knew it well because I used to watch it here in East London playing against Swallows, *representing* the first teams of these regions...Port Elizabeth and East London. When these two clubs played against each other one would realise that...teams comprised of people who really know the rugby game...I remember the likes of [China] Manana... Black people played lots of rugby...in this country...there was a certain Nomngqokwana chap, the younger brother to *bhut*'Milton...Clifford, *uGatyeni*! I am yet to see a player that dodges his opponents like...I have seen Foreman Skunana who was a very fast fellow...a dodging player of Nomngqokwana's calibre is yet to emerge! ...¹²³

Socio-political Challenges and EL Rugby Transformation

This positive rugby growth was however achieved under difficult socio-political pressures, especially when the NP government won the 1948 election. Apartheid was officially adopted as government policy, causing extreme hardship to black people. These policies affected black people's livelihoods in many ways, black rugby included. The central Government interfered through such laws as the Influx Control Act, the Urban Security Act, and Group Areas Act (GAA). Black rugby development in East London was also affected by this political change, because this game was the embodiment of socio-cultural life in this area. However, migrants were the most affected by this paradigm shift. Joblessness and lack of housing development were other factors that black East Londoners had to contend with, as detailed in the first chapter of this study.

However, black people across the country developed adaptation mechanisms in order to circumvent the apartheid laws. This was difficult as the regime became increasingly repressive. Access to passbooks and the other numerous permits, such as working and residential permits, that government forced people to possess became exceedingly difficult for "full-time" East London residents, migrants already in the area and those newly arriving. However, full-time residents and those that claimed an "indigenous" status in the area had some marginal advantages, and this was of advantage to Swallows, the club for location people. In fact, already most of its administrators and the general membership were "strategically located", to utilise the system to their advantage. Most of its members worked in the native administration and other

¹²³Interview Sam & Wotshela

government sectors. Some of them held influential positions within the private sector, in the firms that employed most black East London labour, including the migrants. Therefore, access to these much needed apartheid government documents such as passbooks and permits was eased. Swallows used this advantage to entice local players from their own clubs and prospective players from outside areas. This continued for a long period but with time, things changed and other clubs also sought ways to beat the system. Mnyute of Winter Rose says

...we all took advantage of accessing these...documents but the club that had a rather much more advantage was Swallows...the *local* club...it is the East London club...most of its people ... that issued pass books were mostly its members...it had a rather easier way of accessing the required...relevant documentation...We fought an uphill battle...against the Influx Control because we were severely harassed by Manci, the municipal police...he would often come shouting with his funny voice (*eteketa*) saying, '*khuph'ipasi ndoda, ipasi ndoda, khupha!*' ['Produce the passbook man, pass book my man, produce, produce'], very early in the morning...fortunately...there was an old man...my family relative...that I *used* to make things easier for our prospective players...to make things more easier was to lie to him...saying...that every new arrival seeking these documents...is the family member...that he might not know from Mgwali...he is a Mnyute... I had a lot of guy's surnames changed to our family name for the purpose of securing these documents...that established me as a club organiser and my key secret...was to draw experience from our traditional club's old members...¹²⁴

The apartheid system had corrupt elements. Mnyute and other club organisers used these loopholes 'to beat the racist laws'.¹²⁵ Some people that were employed within the system to enforce its strict laws enabled the oppressed to gain access fraudulently to essential documents. Thus, even those that did not qualify to access them, at least according to the given regulations, in fact did so.¹²⁶ Mnyute claims to have repeatedly bought these documents from the authorities cheaply. He says

...the passbook prices fluctuated at the time because we were buying from people who were in fact wrongfully selling them...there were quite a number of people who were involved in this business...thus...there was no standard amount charged but what was important...that the passbook is...going to be issued to the person...in the moment of need... Passbook, Section-10 permits were important...to stay in the city as a resident...be able to get a job...people were severely harassed by the police if "they failed to produce" these documents when commanded to...¹²⁷

¹²⁴Interview Mnyute.

¹²⁵Interview Temmers; Mnyute.

¹²⁶Interview Mnyute.

¹²⁷Interview Mnyute.

Competition in corruption “depreciated the “black-market price” of Section 10 permits and other documents. Some clubs did not generally buy these documents as they had strong networks within the system. For instance, Mnyute’s father had a strong influence over an elderly family relative who worked at Native Affairs (NA) issuing passbooks and other documents. Thus, whenever in need, Winter Rose approached him to facilitate changing the surnames of the new migrants and would then approach Dazela, who was Attorney Snyders’ clerk, Mnyute’s legal advisor. Mnyute says this meant that ‘when you get into a problem you have someone who can defend’. Snyders is described as ‘humble man that also defended many security police victims’.¹²⁸

East London Rugby and Education Centres

From the early 1930s schools played a key role in the development of black rugby throughout the country. Since 1936, most men that had been to these institutions participated in the South African Bantu Board interprovincial tournaments with many progressing to the Border, Midlands and EP teams and eventually rose to be black Springboks. These students contributed a great deal in uplifting the standards of the provinces, especially Border and the EP, which became the strongest forces in black rugby in South Africa.

The EL Primary Schools’ Contribution to Growth in Black Rugby

During the mid 1930s, East London club-rugby was mostly strengthened by the local primary schools. Having graduated from the *mbambo*-teams, where almost every young boy in East London’s black communities started his rugby career, the primary schools became the second line in rugby development. In fact, many East London enthusiasts indicate that it was in these primary schools that organised rugby generally commenced and developed. Mjo says ‘way before schooling, boys would have already

¹²⁸Interview Mnyute.

been playing some form of rugby using improvised rugby balls, out of dirty rags and tobacco bags'.¹²⁹ Magqabi further says

...It was in our primary schools where [organised rugby] all began. When we were at standard two to standard three, we would be already into "big time rugby" and one would then progress through the ranks...in my case I was here in East London right through as I was born and grew up at Mtshemla Street at Tsolo Location...where we started and developed... Rugby was very important! It was a big thing indeed...there were fierce competitions at the primary schools level! ...We had well-contested matches on Wednesdays between the primary schools in the location at the time...¹³⁰

The standard of primary school rugby was evidently high, with pupils from these schools also absorbed by local clubs and even by the province. Dunga notes that

...at the time, Border would select players from these primary school boys...this goes to show how high the standard...important rugby was at primary schools...the level of training and coaching that the boys received...was indeed of good quality...guys such as Don Njikelana, Sithela, [Ntandazo] Mabija were...selected by Border whilst they were still at school...and the primary school rugby competition was in itself very strong...¹³¹

Mjo agrees, adding that apart from the workers that were a major force in black rugby, clubs such as Swallows, Thembu United, Black Lion, Spring Rose and Bush Buck recruited many of players from the primary schools, as did Border. Given the standard of play and the value that was attached to rugby in this community, Mjo adds that

...one would simply realise that a particular boy is indeed mature... *ngubhut'omdala*...It was not uncommon to find a young man initiate, *ikrwala* in these primary schools...the highest class was standard six...schools were run and organised by churches and there was United Higher Mission Schools, for Presbyterian Church, *iRhabe*; St. Phillips Mission Higher Primary Schools under the Anglican Church and Wesley...children attended schools that were run by churches that their families attended or belonged to...in terms of church dominations...we belonged to United...Presbyterian Church... we were very fortunate...because we had a wonderful principal...Mr DM Dyani who was a staunch supporter of rugby...he encouraged players a lot...he was a Swallows member...good rugby coach too...¹³²

¹²⁹ Interview Mjo. Mjo was born and breed in East London at the old EBL, in the centre of Tsolo Section, at Mtshemla Street.

¹³⁰ Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹³¹ Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹³² Interview Mjo. Most of these schools were at Tsolo Location and out of these four primary school namely: *Rhabe*, *Tshetshi*, *Wisile* and *Roma*, the first three but the *Rome* was at Thulandivile Section of the EBL. However, there was only one secondary school in the name of Welsh High School. There is evidence that was a school and a church established by Dr Mpilo WM Rubusana in the earlier developments of the location. See, Ngqongqo, SJ, 'Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana 1858-1910: 'The

Teachers within these schools were hailed as a major driving force. Mjo says that the United Higher Mission Primary school rugby boys used to tour the Border Region, led by their 'number one rugby enthusiastic principal' and Tyeki Rubusana, one of the schoolteachers, together with other local schoolteachers. He acknowledges that

...East London showed great interest in rugby those days, particularly teachers...they were influenced by...or adopted a positive attitude towards developing rugby and sport in general from the missionary institutions where they were trained and coached...then...went to work with great zeal...apart from their...teaching responsibilities...they coached their pupils...may... mention...the standard of education was just as high...on par with that of the whites at the time...we sat for the same examination... up to Matric in the Cape...in the primary school, I played...flyhalf and fullback...and captain...as young primary boys, we played against the youngest Welsh High School team...known as the Rising Stars...Welsh...had five rugby teams...first...to the fifth...their youngest team competed against the primary schools...later...graduating from *Rhabe* Primary school, many boys, including myself, went...Welsh...

The Welsh High School and Rugby



The early 1930s became a major turning point in the contribution of education institutions to the development of black rugby in the country. Black rugby thrived in tertiary institutions such as Fort Hare and Lovedale College in Alice; Healdtown at Fort Beaufort; St. Matthews and Fort Cox College in Keiskammahoek and in high schools such as the Welsh High School of East London; Newell and Cowan High Schools in Port Elizabeth; Langa High in Cape Town and Nyaluza in Grahamstown. As early as 1936, men that had been to these institutions participated in the South African Bantu Rugby Football Board inter-provincial tournaments. These players made crucial contributions in the Border and Eastern Province teams over the years. They made the difference in strength amongst the rest of the South African black provincial rugby. Combined teams from these institutions, especially Fort Hare and Lovedale, competed against provincial teams from all over the country, as they did with the touring Transvaal team in Alice in

making of the new African elite in the Eastern Cape', University of Fort Hare: (unpublished) MA, 1996, p.34.

¹³³Interview Mjo.

1935.¹³⁴ Players like Mgijima Sam, Bandile Ben-Mazwi, Green Mpuntsha, Bassie Constable, Fikile Dunga, Lappley Sontshi, Ntandazo Mabija, Eric Majola, PV Maneli, Sdondi Ceko, Sobizana Mngqikana, Tanana, Vukile Magqabi, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo and others featured in these matches.¹³⁵

From its inception, the Welsh High School grew strong both educationally and in sport.¹³⁶ Since it was the only black high school in the region, even coloured learners also had to enrol at Welsh High School to qualify for matriculation. Sontshi says that ‘the coloured schools went up to Junior Certificate, hence some coloured learners had to do their matriculation in white schools, with some enrolling at the Welsh High School. This boosted the standard at the schools. In the tours that it took throughout the Border and other regions, it became unbeatable’.



Sam boasts that

...we didn't have competition in East London...because Welsh...was the only black high...we had to visit far away schools...we would travel to King Williams Town to compete against Forbes Grant High and other places such as Queenstown. I remember one terrible occasion when we played Forbes Grant...where we were simply robbed in broad daylight...we were made to play a rugby match for two solid hours because Forbes Grant people wanted to defeat us at all cost...the objective that they ultimately achieved...we were so tired...¹³⁷

Sam indicates that, like many young black boys originating from the villages outside East London, he started his rugby career at Welsh High School. That was the first time in his life that he got to know rugby. On his arrival in East London, he would watch the local rugby clubs and Swallows was his favourite, ‘because it played the best rugby’.¹³⁸ He was directly initiated into the game in 1938 at Welsh High School.

¹³⁴See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

¹³⁵See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

¹³⁶Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi. The first principal who started the school was Dr Welsh together with another four teachers. Its first black principal was Ebenezer Majombozi who came from Peelton, hence the school's name was later changed to be called Ebenezer Majombozi.

¹³⁷Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi.

¹³⁸Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi.

Throughout his school years he polished his rugby skills. At the same time he also joined Winter Rose, his home team, as an ordinary member though only playing in the school team. He says

...I enrolled at Welsh...in 1938...continued...1939, 1940, and 1941...I played with...Malgas...from Nxarhuni Village...a very dark...well built fellow, *indodana eyondlekileyo*. He played...flank...the position I played as well...we had strange funny coach that you wouldn't dare see wearing shorts or any sports wear for that matter...one of our teachers...however a great tactician...He would say to us, "look here boys, when the ball gets out from the scrummage, don't flock onto it as if you are chasing a rabbit"...he would go on explaining... we learnt a lot from him...I realised that the back line players...should stand a bit behind the line of the scrummage ready to commence their move nicely after the ball has been released you are likely to get yourselves good gaps...this is opposite to the foolish rugby that *Boers* are playing these days...they don't form this wing (*iphiko*) formation...at the time we had guys such as Malgas, Green Mpuntsha, Dlikidla, Bandile Mazwi, Gulwa...playing together...we would really enjoy ourselves...I vividly remember these guys... *neLaw' aph'ekuthiwa ngu* [and another coloured chap called] ... Bassie Constable because we played together for a long time...After having completed...at Welsh...I went to Lovedale...where and when I started to play fairly regularly compared to when I was at Welsh...Winter Rose...often fetched me...when there is an important match in the Gompo fixtures... when I am not engaged with college rugby...¹³⁹

From the late 1930s to the early 1940s, Welsh High School rugby grew to be a strong force within East London rugby and was not yet participating in GRFU fixtures. It started taking part in these fixtures a few years later. However, in the mid-1940s it really began to be noticed. Though the school played a few games with the Breakers RFC of Queenstown in the late 1930s, it was rare for the Welsh High School boys to play adult rugby clubs at the time. Sam states that

...in the 1940s Welsh started competing against the adult local clubs, however, before this time, our rugby was yet to develop and the most important thing was that clubs did not compete with us, they would rather have us strengthening their teams, if we happened to have a match against a particular club, that would be by mere chance...they "simply boycotted" us deliberately...Swallows and Thembu United had a lot of players within the Welsh...it became very difficult for us to play as an autonomous club because local clubs believed that if they allow us...within Gompo fixtures...they would struggle to beat...young, energetic and speedy boys...compared to the... batch of tired workers...however Welsh...played against the local clubs later in the early 1940s...after I'd left... Welsh boys proved that they were young and energetic...putting us into paces, *yasixhesha*, all the way¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi. Mgijima says his teacher insisted that they should form a wing kind of formation so that when the ball gets out...those that are outside the scrum could receive the ball in smoothly ... The danger of not doing this will be that you would simply lose the ball because you are all over it, piling in one place and ... you will bump on each other and get on each others way even before you could get to the ball.

¹⁴⁰Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi.

Sontshi agrees that during their time, Welsh played such high quality rugby that by the mid-1940s they started competing with the location clubs. Dunga says that Welsh became very strong winning GRFU championship titles for many years. He says

...it was in 1944 that Welsh High started showing prowess against the clubs...in 1943 it wasn't yet noticed much...guys such as *but*-Lapple [Sontshi] and others who were there in the early 1940s were yet to develop...they could compete confidently within the union...I remember we won the Championship Cup for five years during my era...in 1945, 1946...in 1947 Welsh lost and we regained the title in 1948, 1949...¹⁴¹

During its early stages, Welsh High School had a relatively large number of non-East London born pupils. Many of them had played rugby previously though some came into contact with the sport for the first time, while a handful had very little knowledge of the game. Thus, in order for these groups to fit into the elite rugby playing group, they needed more time to learn the basics and to develop into better players. Some of these pupils did not start playing in the fourth and third teams, where in fact, they would have fitted well and learnt rugby skills and tactics with enough time to take advantage of these early programmes and develop through the ranks. Some, due to their pronounced physiques or maybe age, were just thrown into the second and first teams. This meant that a lot of time was spent on developing them as opposed to getting results. This, in fact should be the main focus in school sport, where participation always comes before winning at all cost. Players such as Sontshi, Sam, Gulwa, Malgas, and Bhengu and many others that enrolled later at Welsh High School such as Ncunyana and Mabija, were not born in East London. Thus, they lacked rugby playing tradition and needed intensive development. For example, Sontshi, only 'came to East London from Burgersdorp in 1940 and enrolled at Welsh in 1942'.¹⁴² Mgijima Sam originated from Mgwali village, near Stutterheim; Richard Price Bhunga Ncunyana originated from McLean Town; Ntandazo "Juju" Mabija from the Transkei; Fikile Bhengu from Kwamasele near King Williams Town; Fikile Gulwa came from Keiskammahoek. These and many others came

¹⁴¹Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹⁴²Interview Sontshi.

into contact with rugby for the first time when they arrived in East London, especially when they enrolled at Welsh High School.¹⁴³ Sontshi states that

...rugby was played at home, however, it was when I came to East London that I started playing...I played in the Welsh High School second team because I was very young, playing number 15 [fullback]...hardly three months later...I was promoted to the first team. I was 14 years old...I played for Border when I was 17 years. In fact I was the first schoolboy to be selected for the province team...I played flyhalf...the position that I played right through my rugby career. I also captained my team until I left high school...¹⁴⁴

Dunga states that Sontshi was 'indeed an excellent flyhalf in his time'.¹⁴⁵ Magqabi adds that Sontshi played 'very well' to such an extent that 'he first played for Border team whilst still at Welsh,' playing as flyhalf, where he in fact 'acquitted himself very well during the tournament that he played in East London 1948'.¹⁴⁶ Price Ncunyana shares a similar experience with Sontshi. He says

...I came to East London in 1947 to do standard six at Welsh High School. I started playing in the interschool matches. Unlike other newcomers, I never started in the third team but played in the second team, most probably because I was a very big chap. After June 1979, I was promoted to the first team as I was looking upon as the most promising rugby player and best forward at school...¹⁴⁷

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Welsh rugby continued to grow and develop through the 1940s, however reaching its peak in the 1950s, with young players such as Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Siphon Tanana, Richard Price Bhunga Ncunyana, Foreman Skunana, Ntandazo Mabija and Vukile Magqabi showing great talent. In the 1950s, Welsh High School dominated the GRFU fixtures more than previously. The departure of players such as Sontshi, Dunga, Bhengu and others changed the scene. The arrival of this younger generation brought new life to the game. Welsh rugby prospered such that local clubs could not match them. In fact, the old tension and animosity between the school

¹⁴³Interviews Sontshi; Ncunyana; Sam & Wotshela; Ntandazo Rufus Mabija, 669 NU 10 Mdantsane, 30 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mabija).

¹⁴⁴Interview Sontshi.

¹⁴⁵Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹⁴⁶Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹⁴⁷Interview Ncunyana; see also Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, p.15.

and clubs resurfaced, with many clubs claiming players within the school teams. It became clear that cooperation between the two rugby sections was collapsing. It was never going to be the same again, with the local clubs sidelining the school. If they did agree to play the school, they tended to play “dirty”.¹⁴⁸ This continued for a long time until the Welsh High School teachers decided to relieve learners from the danger. The school barred the schoolboys from participating in these matches and instead re-channelled energy into competing against other rugby schools and tertiary institutions. Tanana says that

...after completing my primary schooling, as many location young stars, I went to the Welsh High School in 1951, where I played in the second and later in the first team. The Welsh High School was playing in the Gomo fixtures as “an autonomous club”...[It]...had a very strong team with guys like *bhut*’Sontshi, *bhut*’Gush and other prominent rugby players before us...We joined later...though most of these old guys had already completed...but we stopped competing in the Gomo fixtures around 1953/4...because of rough game by the clubs...concentrated on playing against other educational institutions such as Lovedale, Newell and Cowan High Schools in Port Elizabeth...from other places...¹⁴⁹

Welsh High School continued to prosper against other schools and its rugby further developed with the young generation becoming a real force to be reckoned with, taking rugby beyond East London and the Eastern Cape to compete in national competitions. Dunga indicates that many Welsh young stars made their mark in the national schools tournaments with players such as Vukile Magqabi getting higher honours on behalf of the school and the region.¹⁵⁰ The idea of these black school tournaments surfaced in 1952, many years before the Craven Week was started. These school tournaments actually commenced in 1953, with the Welsh High School ‘drawing large crowds’. It played in the final, after beating Queenstown and Fort Hare in the semi-finals, and shared the Inter-High School Trophy, donated by FJ de Villiers, with Newell High School.¹⁵¹ Magqabi says that

¹⁴⁸Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹⁴⁹Interview Sipho Tanana.

¹⁵⁰Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹⁵¹Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also a chapter on black rugby in Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.205.

I participated in the South African Student's team...I in fact captained the side...I was also selected for the best South African School Students team (sic) [Bantu School XV]...playing against the coloureds...before 1950...in 1950 onwards we were so good...At the time I was at Welsh...we took over the first team...developed even further such that it was unanimously believed that clubs couldn't match our game in all departments...backline, forwards, speed, team cohesion...the bad about that was clubs started to play us dirty...we were young and energetic and they were mature and often a tired batch of workers...in fact we simply told ourselves that we couldn't afford to lose over people who are tired of lifting big heavy sacks of maize...in factories...but they resorted to tackle us right through, with or without the ball...because of their dirty play our German teacher...at Welsh High school...pulled us out of the adult competitions...saying...young students couldn't unnecessarily be exposed to such danger...He knew exactly what he was talking...he used to go watch us play...enjoyed the rugby a lot...used to referee in the matches between us and other schools such as Healdtown, Lovedale...¹⁵²

Dunga says their principal Dr Wollheim stopped the school's participation in the adult rugby competition. 'He also didn't approve of the manner in which clubs were treating us and as "a great disciplinarian" who also enjoyed rugby, boldly took that decision.'¹⁵³ Welsh High School continued to compete touring across the country playing against schools in the Transkei, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and elsewhere.¹⁵⁴ Magqabi agrees, recalling a 'very strong and troublesome Griqualand school, with good ball kicking boys'.¹⁵⁵

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Together in Excellence

Rugby grew and developed to be the number one sport at Welsh High School and as enrolment increased, so did interest and teams, totalling five by the 1950s. The school developed such that it was able to compete with tertiary institutions such as Fort Hare, Lovedale, and Healdtown. Many players from the school were selected for provincial and national teams. Players such as Sobizana Mngqikana, Foreman Skunana, Price Ncunyana, Simo Mjo, and others broke through to these teams. Mjo says

¹⁵²Interview Magqabi & Dunga; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.205.

¹⁵³Interview Magqabi & Dunga, indicate that Welsh's principal, Dr Wollheim's stopping Welsh High School from participating in adult rugby competition was indicative of his "great disciplinarian" character that he always demonstrated during his life time, and that he was a firm believer of fair play and also enjoyed rugby very much.

¹⁵⁴Interview Magqabi & Dunga. He remembers that they often played against the Kimberly school called Gobral High School, where some of his colleagues like Dez Makhatala studied.

¹⁵⁵Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

...When I got to Welsh High school in 1951, I first played for the Rising Stars...the first team...fullback and sometimes flyhalf...till...Say Ngalo...one of the rugby administrators at Welsh High School...students were responsible for organising and administering their rugby...He proposed, motivating that I be promoted...I skipped all the other teams...straight to the second team...in my first match...I played...flyhalf...against...Adelaide club called Red Lions...what a bad experience, their second team played a very bad ball-kicking rugby. It was just not a pleasure playing against them at all...the whole thing was new to me...that I had to wear rugby boots and socks...those just made me very uncomfortable...I was used to playing barefooted...however it became clear that I was going to be a “mainstay” at flyhalf within the second team...I played for a long time with old guys...I began to enjoy my rugby... we embarked on institutional tours that included Lovedale, Fort Hare and Healdtown...first and second teams and the school choir...we used to board Goods Train...we never boarded anything else...our principal took very good care of the players and the sports people in general...we always travelled by “luxury coaches”...and we would hire the train carriage and drop it at our playing destinations so that we could use as our camp throughout the tour...sleep inside it as opposed to other students who would sleep on school desks...we lived in real good conditions as players...¹⁵⁶

The fact that Welsh High School boys had ‘well contested’ matches against higher education institutions indicates that their rugby standard was high. In fact, former Welsh High School boys state that most players within these higher education institutions were their former primary or Welsh High School colleagues. For example, Mjo remembers that in one of their tours to Alice in the 1950s, they met Sdondi Ceko, with whom he started playing rugby with at United Higher Missions Primary School. Mjo says

...I was shocked to learn that Ceko was playing in the third division...our fifth team equivalent...and I was playing flyhalf in the first team...however, that day...I played scrumhalf...[Sdondi] Ceko alerted me of a certain fearful Lovedale player...a very strong flank forward and deadly tackler called “Supper”...who was going to be my opponent... I said...“I will see when we get onto the field”...I reckon...Supper never touched me...in fact, no body ever touched me in that whole match because I was giving out the quickest services ever to my flyhalf...I would instruct and..., positioning my flyhalf to stand very far away from the scrummage....therefore I had to constantly execute very long passes to my unorthodox positioned flyhalf. From that day, though I “incidentally” played the scrumhalf position...I studied that position very well...in fact, I was already tipped that I would play in the first team the following year. Indeed in 1953 I played in the first team for the first time...I was also baptised into the [interprovincial] tournament scene...¹⁵⁷

There is no doubt of the importance of the primary schools and the Welsh High School in the development of rugby in East London and the region as a whole. These schools were a breeding group for talent. They made stars of people that otherwise might

¹⁵⁶Interview Mjo.

¹⁵⁷Interview Mjo.

never have been introduced to the game at all. Many of them went to tertiary institutions where they further polished their rugby skills. The next chapter attempts to analyse this development and transformation since the late 1940s.

Black Rugby and other Education Institutions: Lovedale, Fort Cox, St. Matthews, Healdtown and Fort Hare, 1940-1960s

Many Welsh High School graduates furthered their studies in the education institutions such as Lovedale, Healdtown, Fort Hare, Fort Cox and St. Matthews and for some it was where their rugby careers developed and got the much-needed exposure. In fact, to some, rugby became a ticket for further education. For example, Sontshi says

...I'm not boasting...when I got to...Lovedale...I never even applied because many people who knew me...like Fikile Bhengu...made it sure that I went there too. I wanted to go to St. Matthews where many of friends were...as a matter of fact I was already admitted...I got a telegram on a...Thursday...Lovedale was to open...following Monday. Dunga and others...encouraged Lovedale...to admit me because they knew me very well in rugby and other sporting codes...Bhengu...were my seniors at Welsh...managed to get me to Lovedale...I ultimately ended there...Lovedale was...attracting many boys from high schools...it was a good college...many people with potential...went there...was very strong, we were playing with Healdtown, Fort Cox and other...¹⁵⁸

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There was a relationship between East London rugby and the educational institutions within the Border area. Many rugby players from these institutions actively participated in the Border Bantu Rugby Board, with many as members of the East London clubs and thus, GRFU affiliates. Respondents on this study indicate that many of these students were either originating from East London or at least had some other connection with the place at one point in their lives or having studied at Welsh High School. Thus claimed adults clubs within the GRFU. For many, the links between them and their home regions, especially East London and Port Elizabeth, were strengthened. Many of these students, including those from other regions progressed and later got selected for black Springbok teams. In the 1930s and beyond, institutional rugby developed dramatically, with combined teams from Fort Hare, Lovedale, Fort Cox and Healdtown, competing against provincial teams, as they did with the touring Transvaal

¹⁵⁸ Interview Sontshi.

team in Alice in 1935. These educational institutions played a pivotal role in the development of black rugby. As early as in 1936, many of these students and its graduates participated in the inter-provincial tournaments. Many of these progressed to the Springboks teams. Recalling a match between Healdtown and Lovedale, Edger Tyurumaka Miya says ‘...in 1945...at Lovedale...a star studded side which included players like Babs Majekweni, [“] the Ryk van Schoor type [”] of as a centre... We beat them...that was my ticket to provincial rugby’.¹⁵⁹ It is no doubt that these students contributed a great deal in uplifting the standard of black provincial rugby, establishing Border and Eastern Province as the strongest provinces in South Africa.¹⁶⁰

Black rugby grew from strength to strength within these institutions such that Fort Hare decided to affiliate to Border, competing fiercely against the GRFU team, the strongest sub-union in the province and its individual clubs. Throughout the 1950s, Fort Hare had been a major force and “draw card” in the Border sub union fixtures. The 1959 Fort Hare team is unanimously believed to be the best ever produced by the institution in the 1950s down to the late 1970s.¹⁶¹ Mzwandile Caga declares that ‘the 1959 Fort Hare team was second to none, with Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile’s 1975 team trailing just behind. The 1959 team comprised players such as Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo as scrumhalf; Sobhizana Mngqikana, PV Maneli, Sdondi Ceko, Mono Badela, H Pienaar, Zola Ngcakane, Norman Wilson, Hendricks, Terra Mtwaphi as centres and utility backs; Mazwi Mzamane as fullback, and many other players.’¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, ‘The Match I Shall Never Forget’, by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14.

¹⁶⁰ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989.

¹⁶¹ Interview Mjo; Mzwandile Caga (Henceforth: Caga), also cited this in a conversation in March, 2001; Louis Leo Mtshizana, 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana); Temmers.

¹⁶² Interview Mjo; Caga; Mtshizana; Temmers. At the time Simo Mjo was already playing for Swallows, Border and Springboks, while Sobhizana Mngqikana was also a member of Thembu United and a Border and Springbok player.

1973
mns

Mjo indicates that when he got to Fort Hare in 1958 he learnt that soccer was the most popular sport. 'Whenever it plays its field would always be filled to capacity, whilst during rugby games, it would be as if it is a soccer practise'.¹⁶³ Many new students that were enthusiastic rugby players such as PV Maneli, CMS Mjo, Mono Badela and many others arrived into what they unanimously viewed as a "shocking state". However, the 1958 season became a turning point as Mjo says

...I went to Fort Hare...[1958] having left Sobhizana Mngqikana at Welsh High school...I met PV Maneli...who played at wing position...He [PV Maneli]...informing that me he would like to play as our flyhalf...I was going to be in the first team...scrumhalf...I welcomed that...because I was a fresher that year, I still had to see how things were done...but I became a fresher with a difference because I was allowed to speak in club meetings...those days a fresher would only be seen, not heard! ...I was even co-opted... as an additional member in the rugby administrative committee...that year we started playing good rugby...that...shape a wonderful future for the Fort Hare rugby...rugby became a big force to be reckoned with...rugby field saw full capacity crowds...fans came as far as Ntselamanzi, the surrounding villages and the Alice town itself...we played a good rugby such that everybody took note... as a result some soccer players came over wanting to ask to join us...Tinny Siphuka...from North West wanted to play rugby as a wing...the other one...Andrew Masondo who also came to play rugby with us...in fact Andrew once described the rugby game as "wonderful"... interest grew such that every time people looking forward to our following match. We even played our matches outside campus, in Alice and other places...throughout I played as first teams scrumhalf...when I arrived there in 1958 the scrum-half was Reverend Tokota, who unfortunately had to be relegated to the second team. PV Maneli, played at flyhalf...the centres were Titus, a coloured guy and Mono Badela...Hendricks, a coloured guy from Western Cape and Terra Mtshaphi, full-back was Mazwi Mzamane from East London...¹⁶⁴

Mjo believes that the 1958 season resurrected Fort Hare rugby, battling against the dominance of soccer. The 1959 season showed rejuvenation, with many talented players joined the first team, affectionately known as the "Blues", consolidating the success of the past season.¹⁶⁵ This growth was appreciated by many within the institution

¹⁶³Interview Mjo.

¹⁶⁴Interview Mjo. Note that Andrew Masondo went on to be a member of MK in exile in Angola, Tanzania and elsewhere, and has just retired as a General in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

¹⁶⁵Interview Mjo. Here, Mjo referred to Fort Hare rugby team as Blues, creating an impression that the club was given this name before 1975, contrary to what Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile declared in the Victoria East Rugby Union Veterans Honorary event that was held at Fort Hare Sport Complex in March 2002. Stofile indicated this name came up with Vuyisani Qunta, who was at the time the youngest player in the team. In fact he was the only boy. Defending the name "Blues" against a host of other names at Christian Union (CU) Hall, Qunta argued that "Blues" refers to people who have reached the peak in what they are doing, therefore Fort Hare team, was just that in that season, at least according to Stofile.

Vuyisani
Qunta

and the surrounding villages, but it created tensions with some of the 1958 surviving players. Amongst the most threatened in their positions was Mono Badela, the flyhalf, the position that PV Maneli, Sobhizana Mngqikana and Sdondi Ceko also played, perhaps even better than Badela. At the time Mngqikana and Ceko were to enrol at Fort Hare in 1959. Ceko was coming from Lovedale and was prominent sprinter and flyhalf, while Mngqikana was the Welsh High School graduate and a prominent Border flyhalf. Mjo recalls that 'strangely, a big meeting was called by Mono Badela and his allies at the CU Hall at the end of 1958 season an attempt to discuss and in fact to influence the programme of the following year. The meeting characterised by a heated debate resolved that at that beginning of the season, trials would held as usual to determine the 1959 team so as to give every player especially "flyhalf" players the opportunity to demonstrate his skills. Mjo says



...we held trials in the beginning of 1959 season...we constantly change the team around...trying to find out who could best play as the first team backline...we played Sobhizana at his usual flyhalf position, Sdondi Ceko at first centre position, PV Maneli as a second centre, Mono Badela at wing. But...they were just too fast for him...he couldn't match them... that was how he got eliminated from the first team...team ended up comprising...Mngqikana...fly half, scrumhalf...myself - Mjo, first centre...Ceko...a renowned sprinter...then PV Maneli at second centre...the wings...was Mtwaphi and Titus. That team travelled by train to Port Elizabeth to participate in the Spring Rose Jubilee...we played it and FABS...we drew with FABS but it produced a very good rugby such that PE people complained why we were not scheduled...for the main match against Spring Rose...we also played St. Cyprians...had lots of stars...but we outplayed it so much that Pat Cossie...General Secretary...SAARFB, declared in the Evening Post and other newspapers...that "for the upcoming five to ten years Border Provincial team can not never do without Fort Hare's fluid backline...and Border will greatly benefit from the Fort Hare players...strong force to be reckoned within...there are lots of Springbok potentials in the team too"...All what he said became a reality because soon after that a number of Border players became Springbok players...I [CMS Mjo] became a Springbok, Ceko, Maneli, Mngqikana, Zola Ngcelwane...also became Springboks...I remember another coloured guy Norman "Piles" Wilson...from...PE...He was just a star...There were many other good guys that we together made a formidable university team...¹⁶⁶

Mjo says that during their days at Fort Hare Maneli, originally from Fort Beaufort, showed interest in playing for Swallows in East London. Swallows would often recall all "its players" wherever they were to play in crucial matches. Maneli would attend these matches with Mjo and others, where he sometimes played and eventually joined Swallows in 1958. This sparked a big conflict between it and Winter

¹⁶⁶Interview Mjo.

Rose. Amongst its supporters, Winter Rose had a certain Maneli, however, with no relation to PV Maneli. It argued strongly that PV Maneli should play for them because he is a Maneli too. At the time rugby and familial bonds were strong and seriously observed. Mjo recalls some Winter Rose members saying “because” PV Maneli is related to our Maneli, “therefore”, he should be playing for us, Winter Rose, but not Swallows or any other club in the area”. In their response, Swallows people said, ‘but why? ... you even say “therefore”, to push your case through, how ridiculous?’¹⁶⁷ Mjo says that Winter Rose ‘became a laughing stock in the location, with PV Maneli remaining in the Swallows camp’.¹⁶⁸ See the two of the popular Fort Hare *trio* that Mjo is referring to, *strategizing* before a particular match, below.



Figure 4: From L –R: PV Maneli, Sobhizana Mngqikana and Sdondi Ceko in 1959.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Interview Mjo.

¹⁶⁸ Interview Mjo.

¹⁶⁹ This photo was supplied with courtesy of Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo.

Fort Hare's Blues rugby team dominated rugby throughout that year. It toured throughout the country especially places such Port Elizabeth, East London and elsewhere, and wherever it went, the unanimous response was, 'these boys have come out from the dead, and the sleeping giant has awoken'.¹⁷⁰

The level of competition and the spirit in which these matches were played was of high standard and intense rivalry. However, there were some complicate challenges that the colleges and GRFU had had to deal with in the process. For example, sometimes there would be conflicts of interest in relation to player-ownership. Many players within these institutions belonged to their home clubs in East London and were thus, belonging to both for example, Fort Hare and GRFU. However, because these two groups shared the same fundamental objective, that is, the commitment to uplift and develop the standard of black rugby, these difficulties were managed well enough not to blow out of proportion.¹⁷¹ Johannes Temmers says



...sometimes we also had Fort Hare team in the fixtures here at Rubusana Park in East London...amongst them would be a colourful guy...More...a certain Mr More [Dugmore Popo]...who became a lawyer...a certain day when Fort Hare came over to play against the Gomo Rugby Football Union...Fort Hare students came...carrying a coffin which was written, "Gomo Rugby Football Union,"...I cannot remember the actual result of the match...one doesn't always remember the results but the spirit in which the game was played...a guy called Sobhizana [Mngqikana]...had conflicting loyalties...Sobhizana was at the time a Thembu United flyhalf and as he was at Fort Hare...he used to come down to East London to play for his club just as many did...he had to come to play against his own "team"...he was a Gomo player as well...players within the Gomo Union were actually his own teammates...there were such strange things that happened...¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰Interview Mjo.

¹⁷¹Interview Mjo.

¹⁷²Interview Temmers.

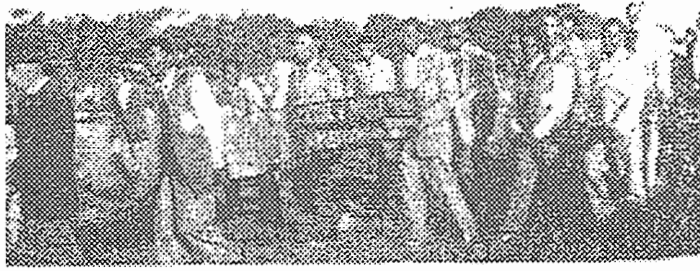


Figure 5: See a group of students carrying a coffin that Temmers is referring to above during what they called a mock funeral before the match between Fort Hare and Gomo, but ironically, the students were the ones buried in the match.¹⁷³

Rugby thrived in other institutions as well, as many who could not afford to register at Fort Hare, resorted to these other institutions. Many of these students played and enjoyed rugby, while at the same time maintaining links with the home clubs. The East London clubs usually fetched their players such as Mgijima Sam, Fikile Dunga, Fikile Bhengu, Lapple Sontshi, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Siphon Tanana and others for important matches like Cup finals. Tanana says that in 1956 after high school

... I went to Alice to study a teachers course at Lovedale for two years...I was both an athlete and a rugby player...I first played, of course in the second team, then got promoted to the first team. I want to note that rugby was very strong those days and I played with guys like [Sdondi] Ceko and many rugby greats of the time...After I completing my studies, I came back to East London in 1970 and played for Bush Buck...I was always a part of the club as early as my high school days because this was a club that was co-founded by my father...As little boys we used to accompany our clubs...when they go out to play other clubs...all the clubs took it up as their responsibility to nurse and nurture the young stars...they used to invite us to go with them as their spectators to watch our elder brothers play...they groomed us to be their future rugby stars when we mature...when we were out of East London studying...our clubs would constantly fetch us...to play for them in the Gomo fixtures, especially when they were to play important matches...¹⁷⁴

Students in these institutions competed against each other. There was a particular rivalry between Lovedale College and Healdtown. Many students from these institutions have memories of their encounters over the years. The positive spirit in which these games were played is evident. Mgijima Sam remembers that

...I used to mock... [Green Mpuntsha and Dlikidla] when Healdtown came over to play us at Lovedale. I used to give them...big spoons or "enamel tea cups" and made them to use as "balls" to pass to each other...just mocking...especially after we have defeated them in a rugby

¹⁷³Interview Temmers; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.202.

¹⁷⁴Interview Tanana.

match...there was a Dlikidla fellow who would often get very annoyed about this...and cry out saying, "I wasn't aware that you are this silly Sam... to make us do these such things..."¹⁷⁵

Black Provincial Rugby: BBRFB and other Provincial Units, 1930s-1950s

The South African black rugby provinces included Border, Eastern Province, WP, Transvaal, Great Karoo, Griqualand West, East Griqualand, Midlands and the NED. Border and EP dominated the rest for many years. The BBRFB had affiliate sub-unions such as the GRFU in East London (*iMonti*), King Williams Town and Districts Union (*Iqonce*), Stutterheim (*iCumakala*), Alice (*iDike*), with Zwelitsha African Rugby Union, established in the 1950s. East London's GRFU was established in the 1920s. The GRFU and the university of Fort Hare rugby team, representing Alice though informally, were believed to be the strongest. Border covered a vast area, with neighbouring Midlands including places like Fort Beaufort, Adelaide and Cradock.¹⁷⁶

These provinces competed in the interprovincial tournaments since the establishment of the SABRFB in 1935. However, provinces like Border, Eastern Province, Transvaal and others played provincial tournaments before SABRFB was formed.¹⁷⁷ These tournaments commenced in 1936 though for some reasons, not all provinces participated in the first competition, with some provinces were yet to emerge. These SABRFB provinces covered the area that Africans, especially Xhosa speakers, resided throughout South Africa. Tournaments were held on rotational basis through the provinces. The SABRFB's prime responsibility was to coordinate and organise these tournaments. For many decades, several venues have been used, including in the Eastern Province: the Show Grounds, or Kwa-Ford, or New Brighton Oval in Port Elizabeth; Border: Rubusana Park in East London was used; in the NED, Queenstown was the main venue; in the Western Province, the Green Point Stadium near Cape Town; in the

¹⁷⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

¹⁷⁶Interview Mjo.

¹⁷⁷See the chapter on black rugby, 'Association' in Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.201-226.

Transvaal, the tournament was held in Johannesburg's Bantu Oval; Griqualand West, in Kimberley and later, Umtata was also used in the 1950s.¹⁷⁸

GRFU & other BBRFB Affiliate Sub-unions, 1930s-1950s

East London rugby was administered and organised by the GRFU.¹⁷⁹ The Gompo Union had about eight local clubs under its control and its main function was to organise rugby programmes for its clubs. GRFU was a Border affiliate together with other unions from places such as King Williams Town. Rugby was therefore organized in local clubs, town units, sub-unions and the provincial structure, in this case, the Border "Province". Border had a very wide radius under its jurisdiction, catered for regions such as East London, King Williams Town, Elliot, Transkei, Stutterheim, Komga, Alice and colleges such as Lovedale, Fort Hare and Fort Cox. It was out of these subunions that the Border team was selected and Magqabi declares that "a person selected for the province was a rugby star in the true sense of the word "star".¹⁸⁰

Players from the GRFU and those that came from the abovementioned education institutions mostly dominated the Border team. Within the Gompo, 'Swallows contributed more players than any other club. Mjo declares that for long Swallows never had less than eight of its players on the Border team, with other sub-unions such as King Williams Town often contributing one or two players.¹⁸¹ He elaborates

...iQonce [King Williams Town] as a Border [African Rugby Board] sub-union contributed a single or two players to the Border Provincial team. However, one club, Swallows would have eight to ten players in that team. Places like Umtata in the Transkei area, there would be about one or two players...I remember for many years Transkei contributed a single player called Dunana. At [Qonce] [King Williams Town] there was a player called Nyakathi...EL generally

¹⁷⁸Interviews: Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi; see Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.201-226. In the early days, Transvaal was predominantly comprised of former Border and some Eastern Province players. It should be remembered that Griqualand West hosted its first tournament in Kimberly in 1947, while Umtata was used only in the 1950s, during the 1953 and 1969 tournaments.

¹⁷⁹Interview Mjo; Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁸⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁸¹Interview Dunga & Magqabi; see also the 'Swallows 75th Anniversary', 1986, p.26.

produced many Border Provincial players...Apart from Swallows, other EL clubs also contributed a handful of players to the provincial and the Springbok team...Prominent Winter Rose players that made Border team before and during our ear include [Philmon Mpotsoholo] Gqirhana and George Mnyute, who also played for South African national team [black Springboks] as a front ranker in 1950...In difficult provincial matches such as Border versus EP, Border side wouldn't have less that eight Swallows players in its line up...¹⁸²

Border Boards' Performances in the Interprovincial Tournaments

Josiah Simanga Mngqikana, at the time a Thembu United and GRFU player, became the first Border captain to win the Native Recruitment Cooperative (NRC) Cup, donated by the Chamber of Mines in 1940. The *Daily Dispatch* supplement, *Indaba*, states that 'when the newly established [1935] South African African Rugby Board (sic) [SABRFB] started the interprovincial tournaments...Mngqikana was selected for the Border Provincial side that took part at the tournament in Port Elizabeth'.¹⁸³ However, in *Indaba*, Mngqikana indicates that, '...I did not go to Port Elizabeth...I had to get married during the time of the tournament and I chose my wife instead of rugby. I played for Border the following year in Johannesburg'.¹⁸⁴ The tournament was played in East London in 1939 and Mngqikana was chosen to captain the Border team.¹⁸⁵

It should be noted that there is inaccuracy in terms of dates, venues, events and other facts in *Indaba*. For instance, it refers to the Africans' national rugby body as SAARFB as opposed to SABRFB as this was the first name this body was given in 1935. It was only in 1959 that SABRFB changed to be known as SAARFB following Leo Louis Mtshizana's suggestion. Mtshizana was at the time the president of the SABRFB. Further, contrary to Mngqikana's view, Paul Dobson states that 'Border, WP and Natal did not take part in the first interprovincial tournaments in 1936' though they were

¹⁸²Interview Mjo.

¹⁸³See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Glory of Jos Mngqikana', by Gordon Qumza, 23 November 1973, p.14.

¹⁸⁴See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Glory of Jos Mngqikana', by Gordon Qumza, 23 November 1973, p.14.

¹⁸⁵See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Glory of Jos Mngqikana', by Gordon Qumza, 23 November 1973, p.14.

already playing matches as formidable provincial teams at the time.¹⁸⁶ Mngqikana says that the 1937 interprovincial tournament was played in Johannesburg whereas according to Dobson, was played in Cape Town. Also, though he states that the tournament was held in East London in 1939 and that Border won that year, in fact the tournament was held in Johannesburg 'in 1939 and the NED sprang a surprise'.¹⁸⁷ It was in 1940 that it was held in East London and Border earned its first victory, with Brabar Ngozi scoring the tournament record of thirty-three points.¹⁸⁸ This is evidence of the fact that black rugby is so badly chronicled, (aside from media inaccuracies and blatant neglect), that sometimes one cannot even be sure of the basic facts.

However, Josiah Simanga Mngqikana played a crucial role as the Border captain in the 1940 tournament, where he improvised tactically and technically to earn his side a near impossible victory. Mngqikana says that



...towards the close of the tournament we had to meet Eastern Province and Transvaal met North Eastern Districts... A win for Transvaal meant they would have to play Border in the finals but Transvaal lost...At the last moment I discovered we did not have a flyhalf and scrumhalf. Our players were injured. I had to switch Thami Ngebulana from centre to flyhalf and put a forward, Pezisa, at the base of the scrum. Pezisa did not make out and I had to make Cream Sindilima, a hooker, and used him as scrumhalf. He also failed and I moved from flank to scrumhalf and we played and won the match...We won because of the spirit in which the game was played. My fellows were loyal to me and to Border. I do not change a selected side but much against my will I had to that historic day...When I won the cup for Border I decided to call it a day in provincial rugby and give younger players a chance...¹⁸⁹

The 1940 win was followed by a "longstanding" drought in as far as tournament results are concerned and only in 1949 that Border won its second championship, though it shared with Transvaal. In that tournament, the second cup, the knockout, was won neither by Transvaal nor Eastern Province because there was no score at the end of the

¹⁸⁶ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, Cape Town, 1989, p.203.

¹⁸⁷ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, Cape Town, 1989, p.203.

¹⁸⁸ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, Cape Town, 1989, p.203. Here Dobson argues that there is evidence that to him black rugby is badly chronicled that sometimes one cannot even be sure of some of the basic facts.

¹⁸⁹ See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Glory of Jos Mngqikana', by Gordon Qumza, 23 November 1973, p.14.

allotted time, including added time. There were no tournaments in the war years, between the one in Queenstown in 1941 and that held in Cape Town in 1944.¹⁹⁰ The third championship victory for Border was achieved in 1957 in Umtata, by the team captained by Thembu United player, Lapplely Sontshi. See the 1957 Border team below.

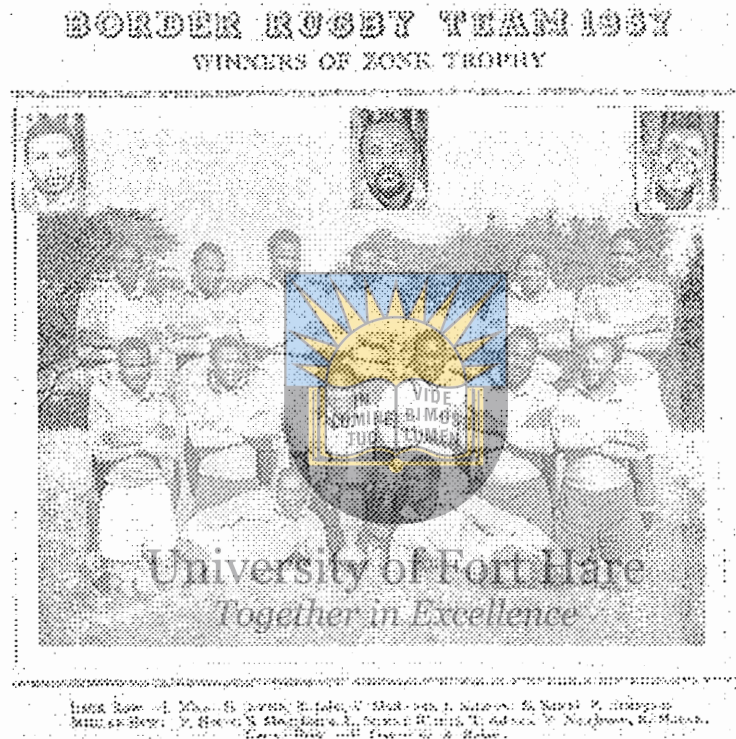


Figure 6: Back Row (L-R): J. Mbiza, S Jamela, R Jobo, V Madalane, J Ndarane, S Saleni, Price Ncunzana. Middle Row (L-R): Peter Ncevu, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Lapplely Sontshi (Capt.), T Adonis, M Nombewu & Ryn Manuel. Front Row (L-R): V Dakamela & A Ralana. Inserts (L-R): Dumile Kondile (team manager), H Maho & Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo.

¹⁹⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.203.

Two years later, the tournament was supposed to have been held in East London but because there was infighting within the GRFU, it was switched to Queenstown, where Border beat EP. The young Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, who at the time captained the Fort Hare University team, captained the Border side.¹⁹¹ Many rugby enthusiasts, especially from the EP, did not give Border a chance of winning the tournament because of the troubled administration within its strongest sub-union, Gompo. Subsequently, the EP officials challenged Border in home and away matches, thinking that Border's victory came as a mere "fluke".¹⁹² Mjo argues that Border's victory in the 1957 and 1959 tournaments should be attributed to Fort Hare's outstanding backline players.¹⁹³ He says Port Elizabeth people were shocked and found it difficult to believe that Border won the champion in 1959. They felt that it was assisted by home "advantage" as the tournament was held in the nearby NED, in Queenstown. These matches were often enthusiastically watched by many people, even whites just as the former 'white Border rugby players such the Edwards brothers, the Godley brothers did in 1959. They would come wearing their Border blazers to cheer us...and in 1959, they publicly acknowledged that "the broader Border white population was not aware how excellent Border Africans play rugby".¹⁹⁴ They asked the BBRFB executive to display the Partons Cup in the East London's 'User and Koo' sports shop and the Border team to play a friendly match against the EP on the Border Rugby Union Grounds [later known as Basil Kenyon – Waverley Park Stadium and currently known as Absa Stadium] in 1959.¹⁹⁵

Mjo says that the EP agreed, however on condition that, Border plays against it in the Port Elizabeth's Ford Grounds first, then a week later, a return match in East London

¹⁹¹Interview Mjo; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, '1959 Champs', 25 July 1959, p.16.

¹⁹²Interview Mjo; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, '1959 Champs', 25 July 1959, p.16.

¹⁹³Interview Mjo.

¹⁹⁴Interview Mjo.

¹⁹⁵The BRFU Ground before this request was solely reserved for whites and its name was changed to Basil Kenyon, named after a long serving establishment Border and Springbok captain. This name was again reviewed in the 1990s, and after the South African rugby was administered under one unified body, and the turn of commercialisation of the game. After Waverley Blankets sponsored the unified BRFU (Pty), with the grounds named Waverley Park Grounds. In the late 1990s, Abas Bank group took over from Waverley Blankets and the grounds also changed to be known as BRU - Absa Stadium.

would be played. The atmosphere was described as electrifying in the PE game between these two, in a capacity packed stadium, with both teams given heroes' welcomed. Mjo says they were shocked by an early try by the EP's Duncan Pikoli, who later on went to play in the Rugby League in England, in the very early stages of the game. He ran past Border wing, Maboy's Mbiza, 'fast like lightning to score'. Mjo says that what worried them most was 'the manner in which he cut through, it clearly indicated that he can do that again anytime he wishes to'. As the Border captain, he 'warned Maboy's, asking him to keep an eye on this troublesome Pikoli'. However, following their successful conversion, taking the score to 5-0, a few minutes later, 'the EP's dynamic flyhalf Eric Majola took a wonderful drop goal. 'The crowd was on its feet and starting to ridicule Border, saying 'we said this, their win was just a fluke, theirs is no danger in these people'.¹⁹⁶ They just wrote Border team off from that instance. What made matters worse for Border was that their hooker, H Pienaar, who was giving the EP tough time on the day was injured. Though in that condition, after receiving some attention, he continued with the game. Mjo says he encouraged his team to "rock them", *kubo*, *masibaleqeni* boys, and soon after that, they got the two tries and a successful conversions, making the 10-5. Border eventually won the game 10-8, the two tries scored by Mbize and converted by Norman Wilson. Following this defeat, the EP officials made surprise overturns, arguing for a second in PE the following day. At worst, they even threatening if Border does not agree, they would not honour the return match in East London, which they subsequently did. The Border officials refused on the basis that EP was breaching the earlier agreement, and in fact they gathered that they had mischievous intentions. The open secret was that 'if Border agrees, it will go back without Mjo, its dynamic, darling scrumhalf, who would be openly targeted to be crocked in that match'.¹⁹⁷ They believed that Border's game was centred on him and if he managed to get the ball out of the scrum to his centres, the whole backline will never matched. It overlaps creatively and always difficult to counter. Mjo notes that there are so many of these such, episodes involving Border and EP teams, thus he 'find it very

¹⁹⁶Interview Mjo.

¹⁹⁷Interview Mjo.

tricky and difficult really, to tell which province is better than the other between these two'.¹⁹⁸

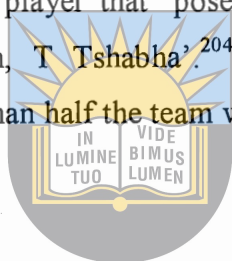
Many black rugby enthusiasts argue that it was always difficult to tell whether EP or Border was the best because both provinces had their own past glories, though, in all fairness, Eastern Province had the edge. Some indicate that both giants, 'yayizintsimb'ezo'.¹⁹⁹ However, many Border rugby enthusiasts cannot forget the East London (Gompo) team that played Port Elizabeth union in 1956 in Port Elizabeth. The 1956 friendly match preceded the interprovincial tournament in June that year, at the New Brighton Oval in Port Elizabeth. Port Elizabeth lost 19-3 to East London, indicating to many that Border would win the forthcoming tournament. During the tournament, most of the Border players were from East London and most EP players were from Port Elizabeth. They met in June 1956 at New Brighton Oval. At the time, young players such as Sobhizana Mngqikana, Sdondi Ceko, CSM Mjo and some others, who were still at high school, attended to watch with courtesy of their keen rugby primary school teacher at United Mission primary school. Port Elizabeth rugby fraternity faced a big problem concerning the selection of their provincial team. The critical issue revolved around the selection of the team's flyhalf. The debate was whether should it be Norman Ntshinga, who was one of Port Elizabeth's best fly halves at that time, or the young Eric Majola? Some openly stated that, "if Norman Ntshinga does not get selected as a flyhalf for Eastern Province, the team could as well just not participate in the tournament".²⁰⁰ Others insisted that, 'if the Spring Rose's young star, Eric Majola does not get selected for the EP side, the can just not withdraw their participation in the tournament. Tension and misunderstanding subsided when a proposal and consensus reached, to play both players in the team, with Majola selected at flyhalf and Norman Ntshinga as a first centre.

¹⁹⁸Interview Mjo.

¹⁹⁹Interview Mjo.

²⁰⁰Interview Mjo.

The tournament programme used to commence at four o'clock in the afternoon and some white rugby enthusiasts would also attend, especially the encounters between Border and Eastern Province because 'they played wonderful rugby'.²⁰¹ Other teams such as WP, Transvaal and Eastern Transvaal were mostly comprised of players originated from Border and EP also played good rugby but these tow dominated.²⁰² The Border team that participated in the Bantu Rugby Board Tourney, as given by Johannes Oomdu Temmers, include: Votile Ntoni, Foreman Skunana, Hlalempini, Njikelana, Bricks, Joe Mtyeku, Price Ncunyana, Thamie Tshabe, Vangqa, Lapple Sontshi, Ryn Manuel, Gqibithole, Fikile Dunga, Dennis Botha, Terra Mabele, Maho, Puta, Johannes Oomdu Temmers, [Philmon] Gqirhana, Momoti, Given Ntlebi, Bittie Phillips, Maqhina and Nkohla.²⁰³ In this team, the player that 'posed a big threat for the EP was the extraordinarily strong eighth man, T. Tshabha'.²⁰⁴ He was respected Border and Swallows player and in fact more than half the team was composed of the Swallows RFC players. See the picture below:



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²⁰¹ Interview Ncunyana; Mnyute; Temmers; Tengimfene, 19 Nahum Road, Albow Gardens, Milnerton, Cape Town, 6 February 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tengimfene); Ncunyana; Sam & Wotshela; Dunga & Magqabi.

²⁰² Interview Ncunyana; Mnyute; Temmers; Tengimfene; Ncunyana; Sam & Wotshela; Dunga & Magqabi.

²⁰³ Interview Mjo; Temmers. Temmers supplied a photo supplied to illustrate this issue. Foreman Skunana was selected and travelled with the team but got in injured, maybe in one of the practise session and could not play in the final game.

²⁰⁴ Interview Mjo; Ncunyana; Mnyute; Temmers.



Figure 7: The Border Team that played against the Eastern Province
 Crouched and seated and from Right to left: Lapple Sontshi (Thembu), Ryn Manuel (Thembu), Terre Mabele (Black Lion), Puta (Winter Rose), Joe Mtyeku (Swallows), Bricks Tshabha (Swallows), Ncunyana (Swallows). Standing: Left to Right: Don Njikelana (Swallows), Mzingeli Hlalempini (Swallows), Foreman Skunana (Swallows), Oom Buti Adonis (Swallows), Denis Botha (Thembu), Joe Mtyeku, Bricks, Oomdu Temmers (Winter Rose), Votile Ntoni (Swallows), Maho (Winter Rose). This photo was supplied with courtesy of Johannes Oomdu Temmers.²⁰⁵

The 1956 Border-EP encounter became 'one of the major games which Eric Majola proved his worth as a brilliant tactician, though small bodied, he had outstanding elusive style of play'.²⁰⁶ It is strongly believed that he had a very strong influence the outcome of a tough close game, unlocking a flood of EP tries. Mjo says

...He [Eric Majola] "side-stepped...dodged" Border players...putting them this side...and that side...getting himself gaps to score "flood" of tries...Border ended up shockingly...lost...22-30...sad day for Border...disappointment was even observed...to the players...blaming each other...the following year a number of the 1956 Border team failed to make the side...opened the opportunity for the young stars such myself [Mjo], Mngqikana and many others...for the provincial side in 1957...we [Border] played so well that we beat Eastern Province and brought the...Zonk Cup...the knockout trophy...Eastern Province won ...the Championship Cup...won by the province with more points "in the league log"...tournaments were played on biennial basis...We progressed well such that in 1959... while we were still at Fort Hare...with...PV Maneli, Mngqikana, Ceko and others we formed the backbone of the Border team...Pat Cossie prophesied that it would definitely

²⁰⁵ This photo was supplied with courtesy of Johannes Temmers.

²⁰⁶ Interview Mjo.

be a strong force in the provincial rugby and Springboks...brought a trophy to Border...In 1959 we as Border won the big Championship Cup, the Partons Cup...it should be noted that in most instance Border lost these cups out of very slight point-differences...this occurred for many years...though small a difference were enough to give Eastern Province cup...in the late 1950s Border got revitalised in a way when we emerged...our presence was felt almost immediately...in 1959...we brought the Partons Championship Cup...I was the first captain to bring glory to Border after a long drought of glory...we did it again in 1961 [1962]...²⁰⁷

Some times poor tactics countered against Border in the tournaments. For example, a player in the 1956 Border team, Johannes Temmers recalls the embarrassment he found himself in 'during that humiliating experience'. Temmers was played out of position, switched from his usual centre position to play on the wing, where he never played before in career. To make matters worse, he had to 'mark the outstanding and dynamic Grey Atwell [Mgubela], who was a well-known threat to all his opponents. Border lost the match very badly'.²⁰⁸ Temmers, a coloured was selected for the black Border team the same year he 'left Rising Stars, a coloured club for Winter Rose, a black club in East Bank Location'.²⁰⁹ He earned his first "cap" in the friendly match against EP at Adcock Grounds in Port Elizabeth in 1955' where they won 19-0.²¹⁰ Temmers says

...EP and Border were the strongest teams in the whole of South Africa...tournament matches would be played for the whole week...The first match that I played for the black Border side was against the EP...we played against Majola...Koki...Eric was his real name...He played...flyhalf...other EP guys like Noqoli on their wing with Grey Atwell [Mgubela] on the other wing...Unfortunately, I must say this, I was selected to play on the wing position that fateful day...I had to play against Grey Atwell who was short well built...the very first try EP scored was scored by that guy. He simply bumped me out off his way...They beat us convincingly...but we had many excuses...though I honestly believe that they were better than us...it was the opening match and lot of people from all over South Africa came over to watch us play...²¹¹

Mnyute argues adamantly that the EP was simply the best province under the SABRFB and even later within the SAARFB. He says

²⁰⁷Interview Mjo.

²⁰⁸Interview Temmers; see also *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'Oomdu - Star of calibre', 20 October 1994, p.11.

²⁰⁹Interview Temmers; see also *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'Oomdu - Star of calibre', 20 October 1994, p.11.

²¹⁰Interview Temmers; see also *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'Oomdu - Star of calibre', 20 October 1994, p.11.

²¹¹Interview Temmers.

... The EP produced an outstanding rugby...no doubt about that and their fly half, Eric Majola. He played the position that I played myself...what was interesting about him was that he was small bodied...but his mind...intelligence...was superb...I still argue that intelligence is important in rugby. The EP centres such as Noqoli...who was just the best...in the wing, Winty Pandle was number one...[Boers] didn't have a chance...guys like Kondile were just big bodied as they were. Maduba was the best flank forward and Kondile was the best eighth man...Boers knew that they were going to be beaten by those guys hence they refused playing them...just as the coloured Springboks were often beaten in the encounters against the African Springboks...these days black people are suffering and they don't have access to balanced diet. Even the kind of food that they get is not sufficient...and is not accessed on regular intervals...²¹²

Temmers concurs that blacks were generally strong and good rugby players. However, sometimes Border made excuses, justifying its defeats by EP. Sometimes superstitious beliefs became immediate scapegoats. Some respondents in this study have noted several accounts where superstitions have surfaced in black rugby. Temmers recalls that

...the story of the "witch bird or *impundulu*" that [Border players] guys blamed when we lost to EP in 1956...denying to give EP the credit it deserved, that they were better than us on the day. Instead we accused them of "planting" *impundulu* around the fields to bewitch us...we were standing behind our poles waiting for EP to take their conversion after the first try...when a big bird flew out of the bush and went over us. The guys cried out..."lookout for *impundulu*, the witch bird"...accusing the opposition [EP] that it planted that *impundulu* there! ...those were just excuses...those guys really beat us...however, all was said and done in the spirit of the game and interestingly, there would be no fighting...²¹³

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Many East London rugby enthusiasts generally believed that both Border and the EP produced the best black rugby over the years but there is no consensus about acknowledging which province was the strongest, there are mixed feelings. Sontshi, Mjo, Dunga, Magqabi and Wotshela say these provinces 'were on par'.²¹⁴ However, Mnyute, Sam, Ngqondela publicly declare that 'without being jealous or favouring our team, Eastern Province was simply the best of all the provinces'.²¹⁵ However, it no doubt that these two provinces provided the rugby enthusiasts a high quality game, demonstrating intense competition. To describe this competition, Mjo says

²¹²Interview Mnyute.

²¹³Interview Temmers.

²¹⁴Interview Sontshi; Ncunyana; Mjo.

²¹⁵Interview Temmers; Mnyute; Tanana.

...Border and the EP were the biggest rivals...if there was...Border - EP...that would be like...South Africa [Springboks] playing New Zealand or Australia ... or Lovedale versus Healdtown...The EP and Border were very strong...without undermining the fact black rugby originated in the EP...²¹⁶

Sontshi believes that the Transvaal and WP, though came later, should never be overlooked when considering the strongest black provinces in the SABRFB interprovincial tournaments. Sontshi says this with experience as he played many matches against all these provinces in the past couple of decades. According to *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the famous Border flyhalf Lappley Sontshi, who represented Border from 1945, 'holds the record of making more provincial appearances in African rugby than any other player'. In 1959 Sontshi was still considered to be 'one of the best attacking stand-offs in rugby...with emphasis on speed and quickness off the mark'.²¹⁷ *Imvo Zabantsundu* declared that fitness was Sontshi's forte.²¹⁸ The 1959 Border team in the interprovincial in Queenstown included players such as L Sontshi, PV Maneli, W Ceko, R Manuel, CMS Mjo (Captain), H Pienaar, C Mkize, K. Mateke, T Plaatjie, V Dakamela, M Biza [sometimes wrongly written as Mbize] (Vice-Captain), D Botha, V Madalane, C Mankayi and ZT Ngcakani, with P Ngcelwane and M Gqirhana as team manger and assistant manager respectively.²¹⁹ With the exception of Manuel and Sontshi, the Border backline within the 1959 team was all drawn from what is arguably 'the best Fort Hare backs ever', including, Maneli, Ceko, Mjo, Pienaar and Ngcakani.²²⁰ EP also had many Fort Hare players in its team.

Border Board and other Provinces

Sontshi's emphasis that Transvaal should also counted as one of the best provinces is prompted by what was viewed as 'a surprise Transvaal win over Border' in

²¹⁶Interview Mjo.

²¹⁷See *Imvo Zabantsundu* 'LL Sontshi, the Border Flyhalf', 20 June 1959, p.16.

²¹⁸See *Imvo Zabantsundu* 'LL Sontshi, the Border Flyhalf', 20 June 1959, p.16.

²¹⁹Interview Mjo; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, '1959 Champs', 25 June 1959, p.16.

²²⁰See also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, '1959 Champs', 25 June 1959, p.16; interview Mjo; Ben "Ta Ben" Tengimfene; Temmers.

the 1948 interprovincial tournament at Rubusana Park in East London.²²¹ This win became 'a real upset to a lot of people including the media'.²²² A similar incident occurred in Queenstown in 1959, where Border and Eastern province lost to Midlands.²²³ Temmers says

...we got a dramatic awakening midweek when we played Midlands...Midlands was one of the weaker teams in the tournament...we as Border...were big guns...But...we struggled to beat Midlands...in fact we suffered a bad loss against them...they gave us a hiding...I remember...Mqomboti playing scrumhalf for that Midlands team...whom I later played with in Winter Rose...after that Winter Rose "lured and or stole" him from the Midlands region...currently [Mqombothi] having two sons...playing for Winter Rose even today...²²⁴

The former forward-line player and Midland's captain in the 1959 tournament, Ben Tengimfene, concurs, adding another dimension in explaining why provinces such as Border and EP lost their important matches against the perceived 'weak' provincial teams. According to the *Imvo Zabantsundu*, the 1959 Midlands team that shocked Border, beating her 11-8 included players such as M Sixaso, S Ncanda, A Cakucaku, A Mqomboti, E Meme, S Gulwa, K Sikweyiya, J Dano (Vice-Captain), W Lupondo, M Cakucaku, I Somdyana (Captain), K Sixaso, S Dyantyi, H Mlandu and G Gulwa (as manager), and A Jantjies, their delegate to SABRFB.²²⁵ Tengimfene explains that

... we would play a mid-week match...Border versus Midlands and we would beat Border because...they used to...rest their key players...for the tough games ahead and that was where we used to get them because they would often play relatively weaker players...we...would capitalise on that situation...In those tournaments the first match would be usually between the two champion teams... EP and Border and...last game and the final would be between them...again. Those were the strongest of the batch and we as Midlands and the others...were sort of just accompanying them...²²⁶

²²¹ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²²² See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Transvaal's Surprise win', 25 July 1959.

²²³ See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Transvaal's Surprise win', 25 July 1959, p.16; interview Sam & Wotshela.

²²⁴ Interview Temmers.

²²⁵ See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Midlands the team which shocked Border', 25 June 1959, p.16

²²⁶ Interview Tengimfene.

However, the reason for Border's loss against Transvaal, in the 1948 interprovincial tournament is different to the scenario described above. Many believed that, though the Transvaal team was strong, it should not have defeated 'the formidable Border side' which according to the *Imvo Zabantsundu*'s report 'should have won'.²²⁷ In this tournament, the East London born and bred Edgar Tyurumaka Miya, the man that had a 'rare honour of representing four provinces, Border, Transvaal, Eastern Transvaal and Griqualand', together with Mzwandile Kota and other players originating from Border, shockingly defeated their "home" province.²²⁸ Miya, quoted in *Indaba*, a *Daily Dispatch* supplement, acknowledges that 'the match was tight and Masiza (Border) outhooked Roy Swanepoel by 35 to 5'.²²⁹ According to *Indaba*:

...Border put pressure on Transvaal and the match seemed destined for a draw or a narrow win for Border as Masiza hooked the ball with monotonous regularity... Then the unpredictable Robert Keta (sic) [Kota, Mzwandile Robert] appeared on the scene. He was playing centre for Miya. In the Transvaal ['25 yard] Keta intercepted and flipped the ball to Miya, who ran for more than 75 yards to score in the corner. Keta failed to convert and thus Transvaal beat Border by three points to nil...²³⁰

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Miya declares that this was a match he shall 'never forget'. He acknowledges that 'the going was tough' and that Border just lost the match because of 'a slip by their backs who were slow in passing'. When the opportunity presented itself they 'grabbed it with both hands'. 'That night there was jubilation in the Transvaal house in Duncan Village' because 'no one had imagined that Transvaal would pull it off against Border'.²³¹ Khumbulele Wotshela agrees that the Border team was strong and it, in fact, played very well though it lost the match. Wotshela says

²²⁷See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 1959, p.16.

²²⁸See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 1959, p.16.

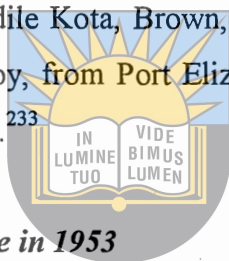
²²⁹See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget,' by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14.

²³⁰See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget,' by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14.

²³¹See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The Match I Shall Never Forget,' by Gordon Qumza, 17 August 1973, p.14.

...that Border team was just marvellous!...in that match there were eighteen scrummages awarded and Border won all of them and the Transvaal team was reduced to defending throughout the match. But that only mistake the Border team committed, where they unnecessarily passed the ball to each other in the three quarter line, offered an opportunity for Kota to intercept the ball and they scored as a result. That makes sense if you consider the fact that the final score became three to nothing...²³²

The Transvaal team was predominantly composed of Xhosas, originating from the eastern part of the Cape, specifically in the Border and Eastern Province, who went to the Transvaal for employment. The other groups such as Sothos, Zulus and Tswana in the Transvaal generally did not play rugby. The Cape boys, the Xhosa speaking group and the Coloureds, influenced the few that played. For example 'Grant Kgomo who played as a centres together with Mzwandile Kota, Brown, their wing, with Miya on the other wing. Their flyhalf was Kaffir-Boy, from Port Elizabeth and the scrumhalf was Jijana "Kleintjie" Nxu from Queenstown'.²³³



The Birth of the Transkei Province in 1953

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In as much as there was a lot of rugby played in the Transkei for many years but it remained one of the Border's sub-unions. It was however established as an autonomous province due to the rapid rugby growth and a place where soccer initially dominated dramatically change. In the 1950s, people from the Transkei decided to fight for their autonomy and this was eventually granted in 1953. The latter was done in grand style, with Transkei chosen to host its first interprovincial tournament in Umtata, which Border won in 1957. In their fight for autonomy, amongst reasons Transkei rugby enthusiasts cited, in fact the most important one, at least according to them was favouritism within the mother body. They argued that their players and in fact all those from outside East London were being overlooked.²³⁴

²³²Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²³³Interview Sam & Wotshela; Sontshi, Dunga & Magqabi.

²³⁴Interview Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi.

Louis Leo Mtshizana argues that by 1953, it became apparent that there was a real need for the Transkei to gain independent status. As one of the proponents of this move, he indicates that his 'area was getting a raw deal from the Border selection committee' to the point where it appeared that they were deliberately overlooked and neglected by the mother body'. He says

...I was part of that move...when Transkei was an affiliate of Border...players from the Transkei were always overlooked. Except one player called Dunana... As a matter of fact, they would come to our tournaments and we knew that they would go away with one name... So we decided...to fight for autonomy...²³⁵

Though there was no resistance to this effect and all welcomed and commended the move. However, the national rugby controlling body initially granted Transkei its provincial status on probationary grounds. Mtshizana says that that did not put them under any pressure because they were confident that they were going to meet all the requirements. One of them was to demonstrate acceptable performance standard in the field of play by winning a given number of matches in their first tournament.

Tanana argues that Transkei's case was made stronger by the fact that there was great rugby development especially amongst the schools in the region at the time. He attributes part of this development to the rapid growth of institutional rugby in the Border region, which influenced Transkei youth. He argues that

...Mostly, Transkei students from schools such as Blythwood went to study at Fort Hare...where they were initiated into a vibrant rugby playing culture. But unfortunately when they completed their studies...they were faced with a challenge of maintaining that rugby playing influence. In fact in the whole Transkei especially in the schools, adopted rugby strongly...because of that kind of "rugby revolution," Transkei ended up having a very huge pool of rugby...They had a lot of rugby material which they felt that they wouldn't be doing justice in developing it if they were to remain a part of Border. Hence they decided to inspire as an autonomous province...²³⁶

Having secured their independence, Transkei Province grew from strength to strength and surprised many people, defeating what were considered strong and respected

²³⁵Interview Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi.

²³⁶Interview Tanana.

provinces. Fikile Dunga, a double provincial player, the former Border and Transkei province and administrator says

...after I had completed my studies in 1949, I played for Thembu United RFC till I left for St. Johns College...1953, the year I was selected for the Transkei provincial team. We were fairly strong...because the teams that we had difficulty beating were Border, Eastern Province and the Western province...We dominated the rest...though some people said we beat Transvaal province by using *iyeza* [or *muti*]...in the 1953 tournament we defeated Transvaal in the morning and defeated the Eastern Transvaal in the afternoon...tournament was held over a single week, so provinces were often loaded with two matches a day in order to finish the competition...²³⁷

Mtshizana concurs indicating that like Dunga, he was in the first Transkei team that participated in the interprovincial tournament in 1953 in East London. He says, 'I was one of its very first side, playing as a flank forward. By 1957, Transkei was already an independent province under the SARRFB...²³⁸ Transkei indeed, proved itself to be a formidable team over the years as it threatened the well-established and stronger provinces. Many rugby enthusiasts in the region claim to have benefited a great deal from its establishment.'²³⁹



Infighting and Prejudices within the Border Board Mirrors the Black Rugby's Challenge in the 1950s

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The Border team had a problem with its troubled technical support systems. At times there were 'conflict of interests and personal differences among the officials eventually 'deprived the team of successes that it could have had possibly secured'.²⁴⁰ Sam, the former club, sub-union and Border administrator says, in reference to this issue:

...Border selectors had some tactical differences. Joe [Josiah] Mngqikana...father to Sobhizana was one of the Border selectors and he had some differences with his technical staff, especially the selection committee...the issue was about Fikile Gaushe...as a result there was a big problem on how the sides got selected...It was unanimously acknowledged that Fikile Gaushe was the best

²³⁷Interview Tanana.

²³⁸Interview Mtshizana.

²³⁹Interview Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija.

²⁴⁰Interview Tanana.

scrumhalf Border can offer...but he [Mngqikana]...unnecessarily played him as a first centre and Foreman Skunana, a very fast fellow, to play as a second centre. This tactical shift damaged the ball distribution in the Border back-line because each time Gaushe passed the ball, Skunana was already in front...therefore could not receive...or else it would be a forward pass...it was this miscommunication between these centres...that Mzwandile Kota...got a chance to intercept the ball, pass it to his wing and they scored... Everyone could realise where the problem was...however, selectors ended up blaming each other...otherwise the Border guys were quite good...²⁴¹

Many Border rugby enthusiasts believed that Lappley Sontshi should have played as a flyhalf with Teddy Gush and Foreman Skunana at first and second centre respectively, to get a free-flowing game. All these players were very fast and could match each other because they were young, as opposed to the already mature and relatively slow, Fikile Gaushe.²⁴² Gaushe who was already a middle aged teacher, was the main culprit but he was 'favoured by administrators because he was a Swallows rugby player. In fact, the selection panel was predominantly Swallows people, thus could not leave him out of the Border team'.²⁴³ These internal toils continued to characterise Border rugby and eventually hindered its progress for many years. Some East London rugby people have noted that there were some apparent tendencies of favouritism especially on the issue of provincial team selection. Some officials dominated others and favoured particular groups. Apparently these tendencies were not only seen in the Border region but throughout the units of black rugby including the Springbok team. Dumisani Mhani, the former Swallows and Border player describes how the cunning LF Siyo, deprived a certain Thembu United player his Springbok selection. In fact Siyo was generally known for his "tricksterism" and debating abilities especially when his club had lodged a protest. Mhani says that

...it was a well known fact...that one could win over Swallows in the field of play but through protest, it would be an almost certainty that it would emerge victorious because of the cunning nature of...LF Siyo...he would always identify a loophole...and capitalise...many protests...succeeded...through his intelligence...a story about Siyo, while...a Border delegate to SABRFB's interprovincial tournaments...were used as Springbok team trials...one Thembu United player...acquitted himself very well for Border and caught the eye of the selected...unfortunately

²⁴¹Interview Tanana.

²⁴²Interview Tanana.

²⁴³Interview Tanana.

the selection committee simply identified this Springbok prospect as “bald headed, *inkqayi*, Border flank”...they didn’t know him by name...but communicated the information...asking his name to one of the Border officials...who happened to be LF Siyo...who however falsely reported to his Border colleagues that “Bittie Phillips, the Swallows player, has been selected for the Springboks”, though, in actual fact, selectors were referring to a Thembu United player... He privately disclosed to Phillips that “*ndikufakile kwi Springbok* [I’ve squeezed you in the Springboks] team, so please, *ungandidanisi*” [don’t disappoint me] ...fortunately, Bittie Phillips impressed many people, including the “tricked” selectors...with his dynamic skills in the Springbok team...that consequently earned him many more caps thereof...²⁴⁴

For many years blacks have enjoyed and valued rugby so much that they successfully fought against all the negative factors that could have had potential to thwart the develop of the sport in the communities. Issues such as bad playing conditions, lack of funds, favouritism and many others were successfully dealt with, with more energy channelled in more productive aspects of the sport. However, favouritism seemed to be the major problem as it nearly tarnished the standard and image of black rugby, especially because of its prevalence in the Springbok team selection. There is consensus amongst the rugby enthusiasts that the EP and Border were the strongest provinces within the SABRFB and the number and quality of players that they produced and contributed to the Springbok team bear testimony to this fact. However, the manner in which the ‘Eastern Province appeared to “monopolise” the national team raised “eyebrows”’. This emanated from the fact that at one point nearly all the national selectors hailed from that province. This became a breeding ground for understandable suspicion to simmer among people from other regions, especially when the team failed to reflect the expected demographics. Though this was left unchallenged for many years, the reality was that it was troubling some sectors of black rugby. This manifested itself most profoundly in 1963 when rugby enthusiasts across the country challenged the selection committee, proposing that it should try and test the players that were generally believed to have a potential to contribute meaningfully in the Springbok team. Mjo says

...in 1963 I was detained and I was released and played for the Springbok side again, at the time the rugby fraternity was heavily criticised for retaining the same tried and tested crop of players in its national side for a long time without giving a chance to the new players...at the time, one would never play for the Springbok side until he has proved himself convincingly and conclusively that he is indeed the best in his particular specialist position that he purports to play...compared to the player that is already in the national team...Springbok players used to retain their caps for a long

²⁴⁴Interview Mhani.

time as long as their respective positions were not in contention and we...respected them because they were really good and deserving to be there. [However] it was in 1963 young players put enormous pressure on the administrators, arguing that they were not fairly considered for the Springbok team...a decision was *made* to schedule a match between them...referred to as "Junior Springboks"...and senior Springbok team...which had long serving players...for example, I [Mjo] had been for the Springboks since 1959...together with Ceko...who...was not selected for the 1963 team...was substituted by Sobhizana Mngqikana...before Mngqikana, I played with Ceko and the late Eric Majola... The match between the Junior Springboks and the Springboks was played at Cheverelay Stadium...*kwa* Ford...in PE...in an attempt to resolve the dispute that engulfed the Springbok selection, on the 24th May 1963. The Springbok side comprised the following players: the fullback was Bafana; the wingers were Maboy's Mbiza...coloured guy...Trom Peter; the centres were Mashiqana and Norman Ntshinga; the flyhalf was Eric Majola; the scrumhalf was myself, Simo Mjo; the flank forwards were Dumile Kondile and Robert Maduba; the 8th man was Lebakeng; the locks were Ben Malamba and Madikana; the front rankers were Joe Mtyeku and Shepard [Macdonald] and the hooker was [Eric] Rhula. The Junior Springbok side had guys like the Port Elizabeth's Themba Ngxabazi, who played as the scrum half [for the "Junior Springboks"]; whom at the time was the Eastern Province's scrum half...and was also Eric Majola's club mate in Spring Rose. The "Junior Springboks" flyhalf was Sobhizana Mngqikana; the centres were Border's PV Maneli and EP's Skumbuzo Oliphant; the wingers were EP's Glen Scott... and Border's Mfana Jekwa, *wase Monti* and at the time also a Swallows player... The fullback was EP's Hlanganyana, and the flankers were the EP's duo: Mbulelo Cyril Twaku and Funny Headbush... That field was packed to capacity, in fact it was overflowing... We thrashed them 30-3. It would be difficult to mention who scored those points but what I can say is that I scored, Majola, Mashiqana scored and Eric Majola kicked the close range penalties and conversions while our main kicker was Bafana particularly for long range balls... Dumile Kondile, who is currently a Constitutional Court Judge...was also a good kicker... We beat those "Junior Springboks" convincingly that all the queries and doubts about the eligibility of the then Springbok players were laid to rest... The rugby fraternity generally got the satisfaction it wanted... and many, in one voice said: "*Ziyeken'ezintwana laba zisafana! ukuba zisidlalele iSpringbok, zisengomangqqa*" [Let these boys continue their Springbok caps...they are still the best...at least for now]... After that... there were no problems about player selection...that surfaced... and this contributed in developing working combinations and understanding among the then Springbok team...²⁴⁵

However, Sontshi, who was a Springbok and later elected into the national selection Committee says that rugby enthusiasts were often stunned by Eastern Province's attitude towards other provinces. In his term as a selector, Sontshi indicates that there was a sort of dominance and sometimes dominance because most of the members of the selection committee were from the EP. He recalls with outrage how the entire EP team often wore Springbok Blazers instead of their provincial colours, though attending the interprovincial tournaments across the country. 'All these guys would literally be on the Springbok blazers and one *uyakuz'buza uzibuz'kuba nene ngene angabu bonke bahudidi lwe Springbok* [would wonder and wonder whether all of them really deserved to be Springboks], or *babenikana njee, kuba yayingab'ababe silecta'itim'*

²⁴⁵ Interview Mjo.

or what?’²⁴⁶ [They were simply giving each other...maybe because they were the ones who were selecting the Springbok team]. It was only late that some selectors from other provinces became involved in numbers within the national selection panel’.²⁴⁷ Among the few national selectors that did not come from the Eastern Province was Gordon Siphon Qumza, who served for many years as the sole national selector from Border, joined by Lappley Sontshi in the late 1960s after he retired from active rugby.²⁴⁸ Sontshi argues that players themselves sometimes put pressure on selectors to include them in the provincial and national teams. He says there were some players that took advantage of his new position, begging him to select them for the national team, saying, “*Kawundifake kaloku bhut’ Swarie*”. Among those, he mentions his own club mate, Sobhizana Mngqikana.²⁴⁹ In his response Sontshi says he advised the correct route so that he should first prove himself in the field of play before including him into the team, ‘the assignment that he did with distinction’. Sontshi, publicly acknowledges with confidence that Mngqikana, indeed proved himself to be one of the outstanding Border provincial and national flyhalf, though he was initially sceptical of his abilities against EP’s Eric Majola.²⁵⁰ However, he insists that EP administration had an agenda to elevate their province, painting a picture of their invulnerability. Mjo notes that in many tournaments Border often lost the championship to the EP by meagre margins. The reason many rugby enthusiasts argues that Border and the Eastern Province were the strongest provinces, ‘*yayizintsimb’ezo*’ [they were iron strong, unbeatable]...²⁵¹

²⁴⁶Interview Sontshi.

²⁴⁷Interview Sontshi.

²⁴⁸Interview Sontshi; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, ‘Highlights at Rugby Tourney - Selector’, 18 July 1959, and *Imvo Zabantsundu*, ‘Correction’, 25 July 1959.

²⁴⁹Interview Sontshi. Sobhizana Mngqikana was at the time East London’s renowned flyhalf, musician and politician. See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Veteran East London Politician Returns Home’, 1992. Sobhizana Mngqikana went to study and furthered his political activism under the banner of the ANC, in exile in October 13, 1965, in England, in the London School of Economics, running away from the South African Security Authorities. He later went to Stockholm where he opened an ANC office in the 1970s and he is currently South Africa’s Ambassador in Turkey.

²⁵⁰Interview Sontshi.

²⁵¹Interview Mjo; Sontshi; Sam & Wotshela; Mtshizana; Ncunyana; Temmers; Tanana; Dunga & Magqabi; Tengimfene.

It was noted that favouritism was also prevalent within the GRFU and Border Board, and as indicated earlier, some rugby enthusiasts feel bitter about many players that lost opportunities. Sam argues that

...favouritism was so entrenched...it was the reason why Winter Rose players took...very long to make provincial breakthroughs...they [Border officials and selectors] were under immense pressure to include them because most people realised and acknowledged that their rugby standard was high...within its camp...that they began to be selected for the Border team. They just could not do otherwise because everyone could realise that the Winter Rose centres were very strong compared to that of the rest within the sub-union...²⁵²

Winter Rose became a threat to bigger and more prestigious clubs such as Swallows, Thembu United, Black Lion and Spring Rose throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Wotshela explains that



...Winter Rose centres were at their best especially when Maboyes [Mbiza] and [Max] Bukashe, with Livingston [Mnyute] on the wing during the 1950's and 1960's...Maboyes and Bukashe, were very fast...with the young Livingston Mnyute joining them as a winger...to make a formidable combination...Glen Scott on the other side of their wing...thought very talented...struggle to get a nod from the selectors...he was a rather small bodied chap... however, dynamic and intelligent...dodging his opponents as cats and dogs chasing each other...Border selectors felt under pressure...and took notice of these young stars...in fact they knew that they could have as well selected the whole Winter Rose three quarter line... fly half, both centres and wings might have came out of one club because they were all very good...they deliberately left Maho at the expense of Ndumiso Lundi [Ndaba], the Swallows' tall fellow. Lundi's selection was justified by that he was a tall fellow...can balance well for the defensive duties...though he was more of a kicking fly half...²⁵³

The problems within the GRFU, such as favouritism and dominance were not confined to team selection, but were also prevalent and entrenched in its administration. It seems that there was a strong tendency to favour players from particular clubs because their members were dominant within the structures of influence. For instance, particular club members mainly dominated bodies such as the East London Bantu Sports Board (ELBSB), BBRFB executive committee and the GRFU. Many respondents in this study noted this tendency. For instance, Mtshizana says that when he joined the GRFU as a

²⁵²Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁵³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

delegate for Bush Buck, he 'found that Swallows was definitely dominating in the union meetings. Chaps like...the late famous *Oom* LF Siyo of East London, [Fanti] Gaqa and a host of others...were definitely dominating...' ²⁵⁴. Sam who served as GRFU and BBRFB general secretary says that 'the most experienced and respected clubs included Thembu United, Swallows then Black Lion...Boiling Water...and Spring Rose, though it didn't have people that served in administration of the structures' ²⁵⁵.

Wotshela says Thembu United, Swallows then Black Lion 'really dominated East London rugby and they all "*hated*" the Winter Rose because it developed strongly and threatened to "*rob*" them "their" positions of influence, damage their winning records and fame. They just didn't want to accept the fact that Winter Rose had changed from being a small naive migrant club' ²⁵⁶. Sam argues that 'that makes sense particularly if one considers Joe Mngqikana's remark, saying, "I didn't know that this young man can pass the rugby ball this beautifully," being amazed by my ball handling skills' ²⁵⁷.

In spite of such problems, "*oppressed*" players, on and off the field demonstrated good sportsmanship. In tournament preparatory matches that the Border team played against the Border coloureds, Temmers recalls that games were characterised by 'high level of sportsmanship, quality rugby, with strong, hard tackling, physical games. But off the field, there will be peace and everlasting respect for each other.' ²⁵⁸ He says that

...there was a certain Black Lion player...Terror...with his team mate...Bafana...who played as a fullback...I befriended...I played with him in the Border team in the first match that I played for it...Those were my great friends but when we were in the field we played a really hard physical game...after the match...we would resume our friendship...We had great sportsmanship...the standard of play was high...I remember the songs that we sung when we were to play a match. My family members laugh at me when I sing these songs in the bathroom...We would sing: *Molo Province siyakubulela siyiBorder*, greeting that particular province that we are entering for

²⁵⁴ Interview Mtshizana.

²⁵⁵ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁵⁶ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁵⁷ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁵⁸ Interview Temmers.

instance when we get to the EP, we would sing...showing respect and appreciation to it...This was the sort of spirit in which the game was played...²⁵⁹

Perceived Black Rugby Standards, Style and Character of Black Rugby, 1950s

Up until recently, ignorance of its history has led some to conclude that blacks played an inferior game compared to their white counterparts. There was a tendency to underrate black rugby and, at worst, to deny that it even existed. Mjo argues that

...our rugby was very much comparable to that of the whites in this country. Some Whites often feel that we play 'petty township rugby', but that is not true because we played and we still play quality rugby...during my time [in the 1950s and 1960s], there were only two whites in as far as I know that were signed by the English Rugby League...namely, Will Rosenberg, a centre, who is currently involved in boxing, and Van Wollehoven who was a wing, and it was far later that Naas Botha and others went over...however...in our era...the nonwhite side, out of our test matches with the coloureds, we can count Goolam Abed who played as flyhalf for the Western province coloureds, Dlambulo who played as an eighth man for the Western Province Africans...We played together in the Springbok team in 1959...there was Pikoli and later Winty Pandle...in 1959 only... three blacks were *poached* by the English scouts. In 1961, one newspaper was believed to have reported that, "English scouts were coming to the country to watch the wonderful SAARFB scrumhalf, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo"...though they didn't come...later...it was also said that Eric Majola was also offered an invitation to join the Rugby League...though "he declined the offer"...or he himself tried to join Rugby League but didn't succeed... what I want to emphasise...is that black people don't play below par rugby but real quality rugby... Mngqikana and Pienaar... went to study in England where Mngqikana played for the second team out of 21 teams in the London University...Titus played in the first team of the Cambridge University. This says a lot about the standard of our rugby...²⁶⁰

Mnyute concurs, arguing that black rugby has been of an indisputably high standard over the years. He says, 'this unity thing should have been achieved long time ago but the whites did not want it because they knew what that would mean to them. Rugby was to be administered and controlled by blacks because they are strong and were stronger at the time. One time there was a black Springbok team that was to be selected to play against the white Springboks but Dr Danie Craven refused to allow that because he knew what would happen'.²⁶¹ Rugby enthusiasts note that black rugby playing style is what makes the difference between them and white rugby. Tanana argues that the key to

²⁵⁹ Interview Temmers.

²⁶⁰ Interview Mjo.

²⁶¹ Interview Mnyute.

black rugby is the natural flair that is imbedded in it as their system of play. He believes that that is what makes the difference between 'black rugby's gap taking and side-stepping' the 'white's physical and power game'.²⁶² Sam concurs, saying that

...I have yet to see a rugby player that dodges his opponents like him! [Clifford Nomngqokwana] ...Foreman [Skunana]...was quite fast...but dodging wasn't important and central to his game...but his pace! ...Clifford Nomngqokwana would dodge you...puts off-balance...using his head, hands and leg movements...fooling his backline opponents...after all that effort...creating space for his teammates...He was just never a selfish...there is a match that I will never forget that he played at number one ground where he got the ball from his own twenty five and cut through his opponents and by the time he got to the centre line he had already passed through all his opponents and he was only facing the poles to beat that he decided to pass the ball to his supporting man, Boyisana to score...Nomngqokwana was funny and marvellous to watch because he was mostly using his arms and knees to dodge his opponents...he had his own style that I have never seen in white people's rugby game...I am yet to see that kind of player...even in Xhosa rugby for that matter!...the white's game is characterised by fierce contact...bumping...using the weight...Yes, whites have played their rugby game because they have a very strong rugby tradition as well...they got the opportunity and platforms to elevate and over-rate themselves but they...didn't play better rugby than *abantu aba Ntsundu*...No, I bet! Xhosas had played the rugby game a great deal with different forms and peculiar styles...there were those who used lots of their arms to dodge...those that manipulated their feet to sidestep...those that were very fast in cutting through their opponents...just as the likes of Foreman Skunana! But whites...*batyhoboza ngebhola*...relied mostly on weight and bumping their opponents...white rugby backline...centres often use heavy bodies to get through...sometimes trying in vain to dummy their opponents...using their heads...²⁶³

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This sort of game was centred on the backline players especially the 'fly halves as the fulcrum of their game'.²⁶⁴ There has been a big debate amongst black rugby enthusiasts, as to who was the best flyhalf since the establishment of the SABRFB in 1935. Recent scholars and journalists seem to have come to the conclusion that Eric Majola is the undisputed flyhalf that Blacks have ever produced. However, very little is said about others that were stars in their right and some might have been better than him. This assumption simply ignores and undermines many players that were seen in the dusty fields of black communities. As this debate unfolds, two views emerge. The first dimension holds that generally the EP, Majola's home was 'somewhat given more attention by scholars and media, whilst others argue that indeed Majola and his Eastern

²⁶²Interview Tanana.

²⁶³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁶⁴Interview Mabija.

Province were indeed the best'.²⁶⁵ However, Elliot Mtshozeni's analysis of Black Springboks helps to guide to this debate. Mtshozeni raises many issues that demonstrate that this is indeed a complicated debate. When analysing the backline, especially the flyhalf position, he acknowledges that

...identifying the best flyhalf would be...difficult...but names like Lappley Sontshi (Border), Eric Majola (E.P), Peter Mkata (E.P) and Roy Williams are the ones to mention. My choice however, would be either Sontshi or Majola with Mkata not far behind...analysing this trio is a puzzling matter because they differed in styles...Mkata was an exciting flyhalf when in possession whereas Majola was a tactician with his tricky and elusive style...while Sontshi was the best on defence, something the other two didn't have though fast on attack. All of them were quick off the mark but Sontshi seems to be the better equipped one with his all round ability and was also solid on both defence and attack...²⁶⁶

In response, some rugby enthusiasts adopt Mtshozeni's analysis. Many emphasise, like Mtshozeni, the different styles of play. Thus, making comparison far more complicated. However, some believe that Mtshozeni's analysis leaves out some strong players that have donned Springbok colours over the years, like Sobhizana Mngqikana, PV Maneli, Sdondi Ceko and many others. Many rugby enthusiasts believe that these should never be left out.²⁶⁷ That Black rugby has a long, however unwritten history, therefore, leaves a large portion of the South African population, knowing very little about these players and this is a major concern. Recent writings have emphasised a few players at the expense of many others. Most notably, more often the contemporary 1970 and 1980 players receive more attention. That eventually left very few *early* players that are remembered and at worst, it's very few that are known. Amongst many that played provincial and Springbok rugby since the mid 1930s and 1950s, Eric Majola has been particularly emphasised. There are various possible reasons cited for this, some argue that because Majola was from the Eastern Province, 'which tended to monopolise

²⁶⁵Interview Ncunyanana; Mjo; Mgwebi; Ngqondela; Sam; Wotshela; Dunga; Magqabi; Mtshizana; Temmers; Twaku.

²⁶⁶See *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'The best of the Springbok bunch', by Elliot Mtshozeni, June 14, 1990, p.2. In this article, Elliot Mtshozeni offers an incisive analysis the Black Springbok players since the beginning of the interracial coloured versus Bantu [African] "tests" in 1950 till the early 1970s, when White authorities decided to reserve the term Springbok solely for white players.

²⁶⁷Interview Ncunyanana; Mjo; Mgwebi.

black rugby, its players including Majola, are overrated'.²⁶⁸ Former Border's long serving flyhalf, Lapple Sontshi reveals that he knew Majola very closely since their school days:

... we were together at Healdtown...I was his captain in our first team...he was my friend...I played for Border...he played for Eastern Province...when playing against them [EP] he would want to make a name for himself by outplaying me because I played provincial rugby and for Springboks before him...I was already well known...widely recognized...respected....we both played flyhalf position...on opposite teams...in our encounters...he would come running...towards me...attempt[ing] to expose me...I usually avoided tackle[ing] him...badly...he was young, small bodied...I would appeal to him to pass the ball before he got to me...he wouldn't dare pass through me! I used to say, "Koki please pass the ball because I won't allow you to pass me"...I was fast and solid on defence...I used to roughly tackle other fly halves...but I didn't to him...Majola was good... that has been noted by many...like [Elliot] Mtshozeni and others...²⁶⁹

Many rugby enthusiasts concur that blacks produced numerous outstanding fly halves over the years. However, they acknowledge that it was always tricky to tell which one was the best because blacks had flair, which further complicated the analysis of their play. Many argue that there could not be one single straightforward analysis of these players. Sontshi, talking about clashes between Border and Eastern Province, says

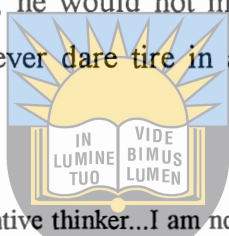
... the *Evening Post* would write, "Come and watch Border and Springbok flyhalf, Sontshi play!" That would be the report from that newspaper that everybody would talk about...whites would also come...and would often standup shouting, "give it top number six". The flyhalf was wearing number six jerseys at the time as opposed to the current number ten. There was no forward that managed to tackle me those days...to prove this, the day when a certain hooker, Masiza, owayelirhawu ngokwenene [who was stiff and clumsy] tackled me...we were still at Welsh High School... the newspapers widely reported that... Masiza boasted in newspapers saying, "I am the only person who has tackled Sontshi!"...I would always come out of the field clean after every match...even if it is a fiercely contested rugby match or what...When the ball is kicked, I would take it and mesmerise my opponents, putting them side by side...I was very fast...I had pace. Most of the time I didn't dodge my opponents much but I made sure that I beat them with my pace... I loved rugby, I enjoyed and I took it as a game, a sport...I was just stylish. I would run ...cutting through my opponents and pass it to the big clumsy man Masiza to score and the crowd would laugh appreciating the gesture. It was when we were playing a tough match that I would usually take blind-sides and dodge my opponents to get through. I would often drop it over or opt to take a gap...some Port Elizabeth rugby enthusiasts like Mvelo Singaphi knew my dynamic pace...they would always be wary of me even if we are losing. They knew that I was just unpredictable. I had a special way of indicating to my scrumhalf when and how he should give me the ball and when I eventually receive it, I would definitely score or if not me my wing or our inside centre...²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Interview Sontshi; Mjo.

²⁶⁹ Interview Sontshi.

²⁷⁰ Interview Sontshi.

People have different views on this question for different reasons. Sontshi argues that Majola had his weak points and his own style of play. However, Sam is not ambiguous about his views and stance as he simply declares that Majola was just number one, *‘uMajola waye ngu “A”*, or first class. He never mentioned Sontshi and Mkata as one of the best fly halves in black rugby. He notes that Mkata was Majola’s understudy. He learnt by copying Majola’s tricks and who played after Majola, were the best three that ever played in black rugby his game just like his mentor. Sam says, ‘I don’t think that there was another chap that has ever reached their [Majola, Sontshi and Mkata] level’.²⁷¹ Wotshela concurs, saying, ‘Sontshi was good and strong himself but Majola was one of his own class’.²⁷² Sam argues that ‘Majola was a good kicker that Sontshi lacked and if he takes a goal kick, he would not make a mistake about it. He had a wonderful punt kick and would never dare tire in a match’.²⁷³ Wotshela cites some features in Majola’s playing style:



...He was never selfish and a creative thinker...I am not...saying others were not...however some would stick on the flyhalf position even if things are difficult...Majola was rather tactically brilliant...if he realises that he is in trouble at his usual flyhalf position, he would sacrifice his position for another stronger teammate because he knows that he will ultimately be given a good ball to use profitably when time arise. He was a wonderful ball kicker and was extremely creative. I remember in 1959 in Queenstown when I was the Transkei captain, I watched him forming a strange horizontal line, turning his whole three quarter line, leaving not a single player behind even the full...the current Australian game...Majola played it long time ago...²⁷⁴

Sam says that though Sontshi was ‘confident and tough... Majola was a genius and was just the best of all’.²⁷⁵ Many rugby enthusiasts note that Majola “‘oozed” confidence and was also strong’.²⁷⁶ Sontshi was very confident and trustworthy however, his self-confidence, did not do enough to protect and make life easier for his teammates

²⁷¹Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷²Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷³Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷⁴Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷⁵Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷⁶Interview Sam & Wotshela.

around him, and this was the fundamental difference between the two'.²⁷⁷ Majola's advantage was that he was always considerate of the players supporting him, centres, wings and fullback. He had an amazing ability to read the situation. For example if he realised that it would be difficult for him to make a breakthrough and unlock the opponent's defence but one of his teammates could, he would not hesitate to switch positions to accommodate the situation. He was a strategic and tactical rugby player who always thought on his feet. On occasions EP selected Majola to play flyhalf alongside the Port Elizabeth Union RFC's flyhalf, Norman Ntshinga. They would constantly swap position during the game when there is a need.²⁷⁸

It is apparent that Sontshi and many other flyhalf players across the country are underrated and in recent times, merely became Majola's shadows. However, some agree that Sontshi 'was tough, "stylish" and a kicker with an amazing ability to place his ball where he actually wanted it to land'.²⁷⁹ He was also a good ball passer and receiver, and was the fittest amongst his teammates and opponents alike. For example, 'if the opposing fullback was to kick a long ball deep into their own fullback territory, Sontshi would often ask him to leave it for him to receive and improvise upon. Wotshela recalls a particular scene where he demonstrated his cunning. He says in one match between Thembu United and Black Lion, 'Sontshi did something very strange in rugby football. He received the ball in the middle of the field, turned and ran towards his own scoring line. The opposing forwards chased him but before they realised what he was trying to do, Sontshi ran back cutting through in between them like a hot knife through butter. In their attempt to stop him, they fell clumsily as he ran towards his wing Winty Mpade, as if he was to pass the ball to him. This further confused Black Lion players, who did not know exactly who was carrying the ball between the two as they both ran in different corners of the field'.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷⁸ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

²⁷⁹ Interview Mjo; Mtshizana; Sam & Wotshela.

²⁸⁰ Interview Sam & Wotshela.

These were some of the episodes that characterised black rugby. There is little doubt that this population, after it adopted the game, loved and enjoyed the game. It adapted it to its own ways of life. More often Black rugby mirrored the experiences, socio-cultural and socio-economic conditions of the communities that it found itself in. Most importantly, exciting, colourful and quality rugby was produced.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the growth and transformation of black rugby with specific emphasis on perceived standards, nature, *early* characteristic features and its ambiguities. That black population has a long rugby history and culture, a thing that is regrettably unknown by many people in South Africa. Specific themes discussed above showed various dimensions of black population's recreational activities. Partly, this chapter, sort to "set black rugby record straight", using oral evidence and content analyses of present documents, though scanty, of the subject, thus, attempting to build a workable historiography. Paramount to this has been the ideal to expose and discuss rugby culture, nature and the standard of the game in the Eastern Cape, especially in East Province and Border areas. Another aspect was to bring to light some of the unknown and perhaps highly underrated stars, though highly gifted and maybe more than the few popular groups that these areas have produced over the years. In achieving this goal, the interprovincial tournaments have been used to illustrate this aspect. Contributions by many institutions of learning to the broader development of the game have been outlined, though there is no doubt that much work still needs to be done in this regard. Through history, black rugby has been shown to have a potential to integrate people and communities. This chapter indicated that positive race relations and rugby, in this case, between Africans and the coloured rugby players, are feasible, a big possibility and can triumph in South Africa as long as people are willing to integrate in mind.

It has also shown that the education institutions in black communities played a significant role in the growth and development of black rugby over many decades. Many notable rugby players and administrators in East London and in other black communities

broadly, indicated that they started playing rugby as young *mbambo*-teams or in the “*naked rugby*”, playing with rolled rags and paper-improvised balls. It was at the primary schools and later at Welsh High and other high schools and secondary schools that these boys’ rugby skills and talents were honed and nurtured. Tertiary institutions such as Fort Hare, Lovedale, Healdtown, Fort Cox, St. Mathews played a crucial role in further developing, nourishing and exposing this talent. It should be indicated that most of these institutions, though they are here referred to as tertiary institutions, they were actually offering combined secondary education and teaching certificates. However, of paramount importance is that they competed together with Fort Hare “Native College”, later changed to “University”.



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PART 3

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CHAPTER V

Black Rugby's Response to South African Politics: Rugby Splits - the Springboard to Non-racialism, the late 1950s to the 1980s

Introduction

This chapter discusses rugby transformation from the late 1950s until the beginnings of conflict between non-racial movements such as the South African Council of Sport (SACOS), South African Non-racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), United Democratic Front (UDF) and National Olympic Sports Congress (NOSC), and the white rugby establishment body, the South African Rugby Football Board (SARFB), later South African Rugby Board (SARB), supported by its black allies, notably the South African Rugby Association (SARA) and the South African Rugby Football Federation (SARFF). The latter represented sections of African and coloured rugby respectively. The themes discussed include: the accelerated growth and transformation of black rugby in the East London locations from the 1950s to the late 1970s; early calls for and futile attempts to unify black rugby in South Africa in the late 1950s and 1970s, and the birth of the South African Rugby Union (SARU), Kwazakhele Rugby Union (KWARU), East London Rugby Union (ELRU), Mdantsane Rugby Union (MDARU) and other non-racial structures. This is analysed against the background of the prevailing political, cultural and economic challenges. These included the persistent splits within black rugby, the impact of forced removals on black rugby in these communities, and the adjustment and adaptation strategies that removals generated in the new location.

However, it should be noted that this chapter, like previous ones, is not documenting the chronological order of events through this period but is rather aimed at conceptualising rugby transformation within the context of defined themes. An attempt at analysis of these themes is made to augment the scant literature on this subject. Thus, this chapter aims at outlining chosen themes including: the splits that ravaged black rugby over the years, with the 1958 Border Bantu Rugby Football Board (BBRFB) split as a specific case; the growth and transformation of East London rugby in comparison to other areas throughout the country; the South African Bantu Rugby Football Board (SABRFB), and later South African African Rugby Football Board's

(SAARFB) early interactions with the South African Coloured Rugby Football Board (SACRB), and their apparent ambiguities over the years, and concludes by discussing the route to unity negotiations in the early 1990s.

The 1958 Black Rugby Split

In organisational terms, the late 1950s were a bad era for black rugby within the SABRFB. The board nearly collapsed following what appeared to be personal differences within and between the Border Bantu Rugby Football Board (BBRFB) and its sub-union, Gompo Rugby Football Union (GRFU) in East London. The problem started in 1958 within GRFU and this rapidly entrapped the mother body, the Border Board, leading to a major split in Border rugby. This adversely affected the entire SABRFB. Ntandazo “Jujuju” Mabija, Gordon Qumza, Louis Leo Mtshizana were at the time administrators of the GRFU executive as respectively Secretary, Chairman (thus ex-officio to the Border Board) and Vice-Chairman (and also the General Secretary of the BBRFB). Mabija says the 1958 GRFU ‘had dynamic chaps and mature guys, who some of them were working in legal firms and some later practised as lawyers’. He says he learnt the tricks of debate from them when he was the Secretary of the Union, the position he held for three consecutive years. Mabija says 1958 was the year that ‘turmoil and silliness emerged within the union’.¹ These problems forced the Gompo executive to resign. He says

...We decided to resign from office in 1958 because some other guys became silly...because of [inferiority] complex...they tax[ed] our tolerance as administrators. We felt that because we were simply serving the interest of the local rugby, we better give them their thing. Most of the old rugby people within the community got very disturbed about our move to such an extent that some even approached us...“tongue lashing” us, questioning why do we allow *irugby yase Monti if’ilanga lihlab’umhlaba?* (...East London rugby to die in broad daylight?). Our response was simply: these guys were unruly and silly, so, the better way is to allow them to show us what they can do”...I still remember the last sentence in the annual report which Gordon Qumza read to our last general meeting: “.... May the electorate get the type of government it wants”...²

¹Interview Mabija.

²Interview Mabija.

Sipho Tanana, the former Bush Buck player and administrator concurs, saying, the split started within Gompo, with the sub-union 'sabotaging' the Border Board, the provincial structure, because there was misunderstanding between the officials. S Xiniwe was president of GRFU and they made certain demands, which Border turned down.³ Vukile Magqabi, recording secretary of the Border Board since 1956, says 'there were simmering tensions within Border rugby and that there were signs that a split could erupt'. This eventually occurred and the board ended up divided into two sections.⁴ The problem started when Gompo administrators lost a vote in the Border meeting, which made them bitter. They then broke away. Magqabi says

...Sir Bash [WSM Bashe], our president was very strong and strict and if a man proposes *umswane* [something off the mark] in a meeting he would treat that with contempt it deserves. If one talks *umswane* [i.e. nonsense] in a meeting, he would definitely be dealt with accordingly. The Xiniwes and the Siyos undertook a walkout in the Border meeting...and later established their "provincial" rugby structure. And they used the old LF Siyo as their President and Xiniwe as secretary to form *lonto* (that thing)...they named the newly formed structure named "Border Rugby Football Union" (BRFU)...and some other clubs broke away with them, for instance, the Xiniwe's Black Lion... Dez Makhatala's Vusumzi...⁵

Ntandazo Mabija says the newly formed BRFU administrators that defied the legitimate Border Board included S Xiniwe as Secretary, LF Siyo as President, Njoloza of Bush Buck, Dez Makhatala of Vusumzi and others. According to Mabija, the 1958 split marked the beginnings of major strife within Border rugby, with the new Union enjoying support from the East London sport controlling body called East London Bantu Sports Board (ELBSB). The Sports Board's main responsibility was to manage all African sports facilities and resources and to maintain East Bank Location's (EBL) only field, Rubusana Park. Rubusana Park was an enclosed multipurpose facility catering for rugby, soccer, cricket, tennis and netball and was one of the main revenue-generating sources, through gate takings, with ELBSB entrusted with the responsibility of managing these funds for the benefit of all sporting codes in the area. This structure was led by old men such as TB Lujiza, who was well respected within the community, Mhani Kotobe who was also involved in tennis and cricket administration, Fanti Gaqa of Swallows, Mutefu Jiya and Kholisile Tanana, the latter two life presidents of Bush Buck RFC

³Interview Tanana.

⁴Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

⁵Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

and others over the years.⁶ Mtshizana says, 'more often than not, administrators of the ELBSB would be either members of Swallows or Black Lion...old man Lujiza, its long standing president, ran the Sports Boards as his own board. He was keeping the Sports Board Account as his own personal account'.⁷

After the split, clubs chose to affiliate to one of these 'provincial' rugby bodies and with the exception of LF Siyo's Swallows, Xiniwe's Black Lion, Spring Rose and Dez Makhathala's Vusumzi, all the clubs within the GRFU, including Thembu United, Breakers, Bush Buck, Winter Rose and Boiling Water, remained aligned to the Border Board, led by WSM Bashe of East London (EL) as President, Gqibithole of King Williams Town (KWT) as treasurer, Louis Leo Mtshizana (EL) as General Secretary, Vukile Magqabi (EL) as recording secretary, and delegates to the SABRFB such as Zukile Gcilishe (KWT), Sipho Gordon Qumza and Thamie Don Njikelana of EL, ironically a Swallows member. Spring Rose allegiance to the splinter group is believed to have been motivated by the influence of Swallows. Fikile Dunga says, 'Spring Rose at the time would invariably follow suit whatever Swallows does because of the said relationship between *amaNtinde* and *amaNdlambe*. They always argued that *amaNtinde* and *amaNdlambes* are one'.⁸ Mabija says, 'Swallows and Black Lion were what could be referred to as, in political terms, "comrades"'.⁹

However, some players from these clubs individually decided to be for or against the splinter group regardless of their own club's affiliation.¹⁰ For example, Tanana and his teammate Njoloza, and Dennis Botha, uBokwe of Thembu United were part of the renegade group. Mtshizana says, 'in our own club, we had this [Sipho] Tanana fellow and Njoloza, who in fact, happened to be our captain [in the Bush Buck RFC] at the time but got himself sucked in

⁶Interview Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija; Mtshizana; Ngqondela; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Good Prospects for EL Soccer', 1959, p.16.

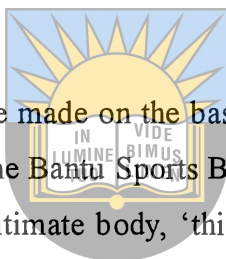
⁷Interview Mtshizana.

⁸Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁹Interview Mabija.

¹⁰Interview Mtshizana; Mabija; Mjo; Magqabi & Dunga; Tanana.

by the other side [S Xiniwe's Border Rugby Football Union]. Mtshizana says emphatically that 'Sipho Tanana was running around with these chaps'.¹¹ Tanana's surprising allegiance to the East London BRFU is complex and difficult to explain. It could be assumed that this was because he was born and bred in East London and played for Bush Buck solely because his father was one of the club co-founders and his family was originally from the Transkei. However, many young men like him remained loyal. Magqabi says Dennis "Bokwe" Botha, joined the splinter group because he was a good friend to Smiths Xiniwe. 'He was one of our best players at Thembu United but decided to go over to the union fellows. *Wayengumxaxhi*, [he was, in a way a traitor]. He was a good 'buddy' to Xiniwe and in fact they were also together in ballroom dance club. *Bamgqiba*... he was indeed won over and manipulated by the union guys'.¹²



Mabija argues that choices were made on the basis of 'the *politics* of the day'. He says the Border Union had the blessing of the Bantu Sports Board and that the Border Board was not recognised even though it was the legitimate body, 'this was due to the local "*rugby politics*" which prevailed at that time, that is, the contest between "*Imbhokotho neKhonco*".¹³ He argues that this manifested itself through the evident difference in opinion of members of the same clubs. Some members of different clubs defected to the newly formed Border Union while their clubs remained within the Border board. Some clubs chose to deregister under Border board to secure affiliation to the new union, while some of its members remained loyal, supporting the old Border board. Mabija argues that personal principles and political allegiance played a crucial role in this regard. For instance, Swallow's Bashe and Don Njikelana supported Border board while Siyo, Lujiza and Fanti Gaqa supported the newly formed union.

¹¹Interview Mtshizana.

¹²Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

¹³Interview Mabija. For Ciskei Politics, see Gitywa, *LLW Sebe: Biography*, 1988, p.27; p.33; *Daily Dispatch* Supplement: *Indaba*, 'The Opening of the Stadium at Mdantsane', July, 27, 1973, p.15. At one point, politics of this area were influenced by "*Imbokotho* and *Ikhonkco*", led by Chief Thandathu Mabandla, Lennox Wongama Sebe respectively. In this case, *Ikhonkco* members were the Border Union members. Chief Mabandla is still alive and resides at Krwakrwa Village in Alice while Sebe died in the late 1990s.

There is evidence that Bashe was a member of Chief Justice Thandathu Mabandla's *Mbokotho* or Ciskei National Party, (CNP) while Siyo was a member of Lennox Wongama Sebe's *Ikhonkco* or Ciskei National Independence Party (CNIP).¹⁴ Tanana, Siyo, Bashe, (later a member of the Ciskei Legislative Assembly for Mdantsane), and Chief DM Jongilanga featured actively in Ciskei politics over the years. In fact, Tanana, Gecelo Curnick Mdyesha, Grant Kgomo, AZ Lamani (of PE Board, Eastern Province, SABRFB administrator and later a Minister in the Ciskei Government), Pat Cossie, Gwili, Sonwabiso Geleba and Chief DM Jongilanga of Swallows and others within the SARA, together with its Coloured counterparts, the SARFF, collaborated with the apartheid government's policy of Multinational Sports of the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁵ These are the people who changed SAARFB, and aligned it with the white establishment's SARFB, respectively forming the collaborationist structures SARA and SARB. Lappley Sontshi says he was offered a Ministerial post by the Sebe Government but refused it on the grounds that he was comfortable with teaching and had no interest in politics. However, he declared his support for the Sebe regime because he 'could not fight the hand that feeds him'.¹⁶ Mjo indicates that to access important resources and enjoy privileges such as owning businesses in the Ciskei during the Sebe regime inevitably meant supporting *iKhonco*, which he rejected outright.¹⁷ Sebe's obsession with absolute power and total hegemony within Ciskei was evident in many aspects of life, rugby included. This issue is discussed later.

Mtshizana adds another dimension in explaining the sources of the problem between the Gomo Union and Border Board. He argues that a problem of this nature had been threatening

¹⁴Interview Mabija; see Gitywa, *LLW Sebe: Biography*, 1988, p.27 and p.33; see the *Daily Dispatch* Supplement: *Indaba*, 'The Opening of the Stadium at Mdantsane', 27 July, 1973, p.15.

¹⁵See Peires, JB, "'Facta non verba": Towards a History of Black Rugby in the Eastern Cape', paper presented at the History Workshop, Witwatersrand, 1981, p.4; see also Dobson, P, *Rugby in South Africa: A History 1861-1988*, 1989. The following: Sipho Tanana; Gecelo Curnick Mdyesha, Grant Kgomo, AZ Lamani, Pat Cossie, Gwili, Sonwabiso Geleba and Chief DM Jongilanga are the former administrators of the SAARFB, which they later changed its name to SARA, changing even the name of the national team, the Springboks to Leopards, at the instigation of the Whites, who insisted that Springboks should be reserved solely for their use. SARA together with its coloured counterparts, the SARFF were to later align and collaborated with the establishment's body, Danie Craven's SARB and the apartheid government's policy of Multiracial and Multinational Sports.

¹⁶Interview Sontshi Lappley. Sontshi was at the time a successful principal within the Ciskei.

¹⁷Interview Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo. Mjo joined the ANC and was sentenced to Robben Island and other subsequent prisons, for a period of six years.

when he joined GRFU as a Bush Buck delegate in the mid 1950s. 'I found that Swallows was definitely dominating in the meetings. Chaps like LF Siyo, the famous *Oom* Fix Siyo, Fanti Gaqa and many others' and therefore, it was possible that anytime opposition could emerge.¹⁸ In the interprovincial tournament in 1957 in Umtata, Mtshizana and Don Njikelana attended as Border delegates to the SABRFB, with Sipho Siwisa as President. Mtshizana says their initial plan was to propose Victor Siwisa to lead SABRFB but it collapsed. Their proposed president, showed up in the meeting completely drunk.¹⁹ The two Siwisas were comics. Mtshizana says Victor Siwisa

... was quite a strong chap... but weird at times...I remember in one tournament, in a meeting...there was a heated argument over something...he quarrelled with one delegate... from the Transvaal. Victor drew his firearm and the chaps duck for cover! ...That became the joke of the week! It was quelled thereafter of course...On the day when we wanted to oust Sipho Siwisa...we had him in our minds as...Acting President until the next tournament and the general meeting is held. In fact, we wanted to have him as the president...[Victor and Sipho] were cousins...during...the first business meeting...in this opening meeting...an attempt *coup [d'etat]* would be made to oust Sipho Siwisa...we planned and planned and on the day when the scheme had to be put into operation, he came to the meeting...this fellow was so drunk *maan...* Before we were through with the meeting he was fast asleep! Our scheme collapsed... That was Victor Siwisa, a brilliant chap, otherwise...later left Western Province for Border...²⁰

Mtshizana notes that it appeared in the 1957 tournament that most provinces were disenchanted with the autocratic manner in which the president, Siwisa, handled issues. Thus an attempt was made to depose him by the provinces, including Border, but they failed. Mtshizana says, 'Oh! That fellow ran the Board as if it was his own board and his executive members as his ministers and him as its Prime Minister. He was a real "Prime Minister"'.²¹ Having learnt that Border delegates were involved in attempts to depose him, Siwisa, though he was based in Port Elizabeth in Eastern Province (EP), infiltrated Border to undermine the BRFB executive. He did this by going through the GRFU executive, advocating that an attempt must be made to dislodge the provincial executive. Thus led to the turmoil that was experienced within Border rugby. This, according to Mtshizana, was how the conflict within East London rugby emerged. He

¹⁸Interview Mtshizana.

¹⁹Interview Mtshizana.

²⁰Interview Mtshizana.

²¹Interview Mtshizana.

argues that the manoeuvres in Gompo Union were really directed at the provincial body. Subsequently, a rival BRFU was formed led by the biggest clubs in East London: Swallows, Black Lion and Spring Rose. The splinter group held its own meetings and when the Border Board called meetings, 'they did not attend but had their own, inviting the president of SABRFB, Sipho Siwisa, who in fact engineered the strike, to come and arbitrate the dispute'.²² Mtshizana says

...Siwisa wrote a letter to me as the General Secretary of the Border Board saying, "I have been made to understand...and advised that there is a split...and I have been invited by the other group to come and arbitrate". I wrote back to say, "...to me this is most surprising, as the Border Board Secretary, the affiliate of the SABRFB, which you are its president, that when there is trouble in this area, you get it from the splinter group...the trouble makers and you are already telling us as BBRFB that you are coming to arbitrate. As far as I am aware of rules and procedure, it is the fighting parties that must decide on the arbitrator. It is not one group that invites somebody to arbitrate. Any arbitrator must be agreed upon by both groups...I don't expect you to come...and in any event we are still the legitimate affiliate to your board and you should have got all this information...in fact from, the secretary..."...The next letter that we received stated that..."I am going to be at the Peacock Hall in East Bank Location and I am expecting your group to be present and I have also invited the other group because I want to arbitrate there". That was that, finish and *klaar*. I passed the letter to president of the [Border] Board...as we were to arrange for that meeting...the arrangements were already underway...organised by the other group not by us...we just went to the venue...the splinter group was there and he [Siwisa] arrived...accompanied by Alfred Dwesi, of the PE Rugby Board, Mvelo Singaphi and Mpondo. Those were the stalwarts of the Eastern Province African Rugby Board and at the time, all was not well with the PERFB...they had just ostracised Spring Rose RFC...²³

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This conflict occurred just when Border Board was preparing for the 18th interprovincial tournament to be held in Cape Town. The situation was further aggravated by Sipho Siwisa's disregarding the advice by the Border Board to halt his visit and controversial arbitration. Mtshizana says, 'this fellow came in with his old autocratic way, saying, "I have come here as the president of the SABRFB. I have come to arbitrate on a dispute that is going on in this area, in the Border board". He continues:

...Border executive asked him, "[W]hat dispute and who told you that there was a dispute here?" He says, "You didn't tell me but this other group, (Xiniwe's splinter group) have advised me and I come to arbitrate here". We said..."but we don't know how this has been reported to you?"...Then these chaps, Xiniwe's started lamenting all sorts of queries and accusation, "we are dissatisfied with the manner in which Border is run. We never got any financial statements...dissatisfied how Border selections are done...by almost one man... other selectors are just his tools" ...referring to [Sipho] Gordon Qumza who was one of the selectors for Border...we easily dealt with these accusations easily, pointing to the administrative channels that they

²²Interview Mtshizana.

²³Interview Mtshizana.

had had to follow in registering their queries... However it was the first time we were hearing of these... we said, “these are mere flimsy excuses for wanting to break away...”. The autocratic Siwisa, much to be expected of him...says, “As far as I am concerned, these...are not flimsy at all and I rule here, here and now that the Xiniwe’s Border Rugby Football Union will be the only union that would affiliated to the SABRFB and that your board Mr Mtshizana and Mr Bashe hereby dissolves!”...Just like that! “...we shall only be inviting Border Union... for tournament in Cape Town...”. We asked him, “Are you the SABRFB or just its president? Isn’t it procedural for the decision of this nature to be taken by the board itself, but not you and you alone?”...He responded...“I am the President of the SABRFB and as such I am the Board! I am telling you that you have been dissolved”...He closed the meeting! ...²⁴

Magqabi argues that as the turmoil in Border rugby continued the Border Union administrators unilaterality invited the SABRFB president, Sipho Siwisa to East London. It was apparent that he was ready for the Xiniwe-Siyo splinter group. Fikile Dunga says, ‘that was to be expected because in actual fact, Siwisa was a friend to these guys anyway, and their relationship was not new. Siwisa used to constantly visit these guys in East London with his club Union from Port Elizabeth, to watch “Blues”, Swallows-Union annual matches’.²⁵ Thus, the controversial arbitration meeting to be organised by the Border Union did not come as a shock to some people. Many East London rugby enthusiasts believe that Siwisa was behind this Border turmoil. Tanana says that SABRFB had a constitution but ‘things would happen regardless of the rules stipulated and enshrined in it’. In Siwisa’s case, it became clear that he had a preconceived position on the issue, ‘that of supporting the newly formed Border Union. At worst, he was prepared to promote the split rather than solving it. He viewed this as the perfect and opportune time to relish, carryout his long lasting agenda, that of “bulldozing” the troublesome Border Board executive out of office’.²⁶ It was apparent from the last tournament in Umtata in 1957 that Border Board delegates and others provinces were not towing the line Siwisa was setting them to. Thus, an urgent attempt by him and his supporters to topple them before the 1958 tournament is held was crucial. Whether Siwisa, personally, orchestrated the split within the Border rugby or he pounced on the opportunity as it presented itself, is debatable. However, his intervention had was intended to oust those he perceived to be his enemies. In this case, the Border Board was going to be the victim because they were part of the failed 1957 *coup d’etat* attempt in Umtata, an issue that could not have eluded his attention.

²⁴Interview Mtshizana.

²⁵Interview Dunga & Magqabi; Bunga Price Ncunzana.

²⁶ Interview Dunga & Magqabi; Mtshizana; Mabija.

According to Magqabi, Siwisa showed no respect for democratic processes during the arbitration meeting at Peacock Hall. He says

...he [Sipho Siwisa] came with his usual arrogant attitude, saying: "I am here in my capacity as the president of the SABRFB...I am here to arbitrate the dispute in Border ...ntoni ntoni ntoni" [this and that]... one of our guys, Sizani asked..."Mr president, you are claiming that you are here to arbitrate...but you know the principle of the arbitration process is that both parties in dispute must agree as to who should act as an arbitrator...have you got the consent from the other party in this case?"...wanga uphathw'emanyeni [just like a provoked wounded lion]...he said, "I am the president, so I am not going to be told by you what to do". He brushed that question aside without answering it and he threatened to give a ruling even before the parties present their cases. He asked the two parties as to "who was in control of the rugby fields in the region between them". The Siyo-Xiniwe were in actual fact in control of the fields because Oom Fiks Fikile Siyo, the newly formed Border Union executive member was also the president of the East London Bantu Sports Board which was in control of all the fields in East London in African communities. Thus, had an invariable claim to be in control of the fields...and Siyo, "well we are in control of all the fields here"...Siwisa concluded the case saying "in that case, the matter is settled... in my capacity as the president of the Board I declare that the new Border Rugby Union will be *thee* Border rugby structure that would run rugby affairs in Border...". There was however, an apparent controversy and confusion in appellations in this regard...the national body was South African Border Rugby Board and all its provincial affiliates were called *Boards* too...Western Province African Rugby Board; EP African Rugby Board; Transvaal African Rugby Board...the emphasis on the word "*Board*" but this newly formed Border body was to be the only one referred to as a *Union*...²⁷

Border Union immediately exercised the powers bestowed on them. They began by barring all Border Board affiliated clubs from using Rubusana Park. The situation became so tense that the union administrators called-in *amaBhaca*, the municipal police, to close the gates.²⁸ It was a big blow to the Border Board that nevertheless decided to prepare for the tournament, despite being declared as dissolved. At the time the Border Board was preparing to hold its trials and the banishment from Rubusana Park meant they could only access the Welsh High School field. Border Board was under no illusion as to the task they were setting themselves. They were motivated by the fact that they still commanded a large rugby constituency, with five clubs from the Gompo sub-union, a handful from King Williams Town and all the tertiary institutions such as Lovedale, Fort Hare, Fort Cox and St. Matthews. In addition to all it had to deal with, the board could not secure funding from the ELBSP as it was said to have been dissolved.

²⁷Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

²⁸Interview Magqabi & Dunga. *AmaBhaca* is a one of the most respected *Xhosa* tribe mostly from the Transkei, specifically at Mount Frere. They have a rather distinct accent, most very dark in complexion and popularly known to be good traditional doctors, specifically *amaXhwele*. Many feared them because they are a strong and brave tribe but mostly of they strong and often deadly medicines.

However, it had a lot of support from both the community and some businesses. It managed for instance to hire a truck to fetch the Alice students for the trials.

With the Welsh High School field as their hope, the board was hit by a big surprise, finding the field flooded with “*isitamkoko*”, sewerage, the morning of the trials.²⁹ It was later established that this sabotage was carried out by their rival splinter group, the Border Union who opened the drains around the field, allowing the refuse flow over the whole pitch. Dunga says that Gwebile and Dez Makhathala were the ones who carried this out on behalf on the Border Union. Dunga says Dez publicly swore at them before that incident saying, “*sokhe sibone! sokhe sibone!*”[we will see, we will see!].³⁰

The situation was so bad that the board had to hold its trials on an unmarked open field at “Kitchenberg”, near Duncan Village police station and around the old bus depot. Since there were just few days before the tournament, Magqabi says, ‘*Sasi gxabha-gxabhisa*’, things were done in extreme hastiness.³¹ However, the board’s trials proceeded successfully and the provincial team was selected. Through the generosity of local businesses and the community, though not enough to cater all needs, a truck was hired to transport it to Cape Town. The ELBSB declined the board’s application on the grounds that money was already given to the Border Union, recognised as the legitimate provincial body in the area. The board was aware that its funding proposal would be declined, but it forwarded it anyway for formality. Magqabi says they secured funding from ‘good Samaritans’ though some big businessmen were advised, though in vain, against making contributions to the board by the Border Union. Some yielded to the Union call believing that the Board was indeed the troublemaking splinter group, because Union allies such as Siyo, Lujiza and others were influential amongst local businesses and other structures. They were also recognised even by white East London businessmen. Subsequently, in contrast to the old truck that the Border Board hired cheaply, the Border Union was able to hire “*inkanyamba*”, a luxury coach, as the Radio Bantu presenter, Theo Mcinga, referred it to.

²⁹Interview Tanana.

³⁰Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

³¹Interview Magqabi & Dunga. “Kitchenberg”, a place near the Duncan Village police station and the old bus depot, there was a soccer field, towards Lloyd’s. Since there was virtually no time as the tournament was just close.

When talking about the Border Union's bus, he sarcastically said, "*igqith'apha inkanyamba isus'amapheph'ishiy'icardboardi*" [A luxury coach has just passed in full flight putting aback its worn-out truck counterpart in a tortoise like pace]. Many rugby enthusiasts across the Eastern Cape were aware of the Border Board's plight including the media.

The Border Union group got to Cape Town first. Anticipating that they might be delayed on the way, the board decided to leave as early as possible so that it would not miss the important first business meeting on the Friday evening. It was essential for them to attend this meeting because it was where their fate was to be decided. Their lorry was travelling at 30 kilometres an hour but morale was high and players were not troubled.³² When they got to Cape Town after a tedious journey, Border Board players were faced with an accommodation nightmare.³³ But they 'understood conditions, *zaziziqonda ukuba zisedabini*, [they were aware that they were in a warlike predicament], and accepted that ordeal'.³⁴ Mjo and Sontshi say that their conviction that they were a stronger team to represent Border in the tournament motivated them a great deal.³⁵ Mjo says that he went representing Fort Hare. He says their lorry

... travelled three days to get to Cape Town...often struggling to move up the steep routes, especially the mountain passes... *sasihamba ngostzi, ngoelimi*, [we were in a shameful situation...a makeshift...very difficult...]. We would often resort to get off the truck and walk next to it as it climbs the steep routes...and get on at the top...we laughed at all that...we got the opportunity to see baboons and other wild animals...near by forest begging for food...Sometimes it seemed compelling that some of us had had to get off because the lorry was really struggling to move with all of us on the steep routes...we understood that...importantly we managed to endure till we arrived...seating on the truck benches...as if on horseback...however we played fairly well...we came second on the log table...runners-up to Western Province but...given all the hiccups that we endured...we were happy with the result...³⁶

Sipho Gordon Qumza, TW Gqibithole who taught at Forbes Grant Secondary School and Thamie Don Njikelana, led the 'impoverished but legitimate' Border Board's delegation to Cape

³²Interview Mjo; Sontshi; Dunga & Magqabi, Mtshizana; Sam & Wotshela; Twaku, Mabija; Mgwebi; Tanana.

³³Interview Tanana. Mtshizana was supposed to have been part of the delegation as well but he could not because at the time he had to open his office to practice as a lawyer.

³⁴Interview Mjo; Sontshi; Mabija; Mtshizana.

³⁵Interview Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija; Mtshizana; Ngqondela.

³⁶Interview Mjo.

Town.³⁷ Njikelana was a Swallows member but he did not accept what his clubs was doing and remained loyal to the Border Board.³⁸ Mtshizana was due to be part of the Border delegation but at this time was opening his attorney's office in East London. A traditional procedure in these tournaments was that a business meeting was held the first day delegates arrived in the hosting province, with a second business meeting at the end to evaluate the tournament proceedings and the elect the new executive.

Mabija says delegates in the 1950s and 1960s 'were generally very bombastic and technical ' when arguing constitutional matters in meetings and that these were tricks to confuse those less informed about laws and authorities governing rugby bodies and voluntary organisation generally. Magqabi concurs, saying, 'rugby people can be very difficult'.³⁹

The fact that the President of the SABRFB controversially dissolved Border Board compelled the latter to lobby other provinces even before they left for Cape Town. In doing this they formed alliances with several provincial delegations, which viewed the President's actions as unfair. Magqabi says, 'a lot of lobbying work was done and we knew exactly whom to lobby because we were aware of the Siwisa's friends and acquaintances...we wouldn't dare approach EP, Siwisa's home province...but lobbied those that he doesn't have strong allies in, for instance, the WP, Transkei, Transvaal and others...'.⁴⁰

In an attempt to depose Siwisa, other provinces were organised, for instance, Griqualand, especially Mflathela, Sondlo's Transvaal and others. Border drew their attention to the fact that at the first meeting of the SABRFB tournament, an attempt would be made to dislodge the president of the board, dislodging him because he was irregularly elected. All provinces

³⁷Interview Mabija. Mabija adamantly argues that though the "impoverished" Border Board was unrecognised by both the ELBSB and Siwisa's SABRFB, it was "legitimate".

³⁸Interview Mtshizana. Mtshizana was due to be part of the delegation for Border but just at the time, he had to open his office as an independent attorney in East London.

³⁹Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁴⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

supported this move and they were informed that they were to meet the delegates from the WP who were to lead the processes of dislodging Siwisa in the first board meeting.

The plan was that in this meeting Western Province delegates would propose a motion that 'Siwisa is not a President of the board on the basis that he was not properly elected in Umtata, thus should not preside over the meeting'.⁴¹ Authorities would be quoted, forcing him not to preside over the meeting. Mtshizana says that except for EP, all other provinces supported the motion. Signs of this disillusion were in fact apparent even at Umtata in 1957. A well-calculated investigation on the leadership election processes in volunteer organisation such as the SABRFB and a thorough plan to oust Siwisa were put in place. Mtshizana says, 'it was quite clear that this Siwisa was *persona non grata* with all the provinces because of his autocratic management style'.⁴² When presiding over meetings, he would overrule any motion he did not like. 'He would just rule against it. He would often say, "I have ruled as the president of this body". Just like that!'⁴³ Mtshizana says Siwisa was always supported in this by EP, with supporters like Dwesi, Mpondo and Mvelo Singaphi.

The idea of leaving for Cape Town in advance assisted Border delegates a lot as they used the time to consolidate their lobbying before the tournament got underway. They used the opportunity to deploy more 'agents to lobby around all the other provincial camps, selling the idea and methods' of how Siphos Siwisa was to be ousted. Magqabi says

...we had a plan to challenge him immediately the meeting starts even before he could take the stand to preside in the meeting...not to allow him to take the presiding officer's seat...to allow him would have been disastrous on our part...to allow him to preside and to let the meeting start hoping to raise our case later was going to be problematic because in as far as the letter that he instructed Pat Cossie, his general secretary to write informing us that we shouldn't attend the very same tournament, would have posed a major problem. The argument would be...about... Border delegation on the side of the Border Union...thus we would be seen as intruders...⁴⁴

⁴¹Interview Mtshizana.

⁴²Interview Mtshizana.

⁴³Interview Mtshizana.

⁴⁴Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

In negotiating with other provinces, Border Board used a “loophole” that it noted in its communiqué with the SABRFB’s General Secretary, Pat Cossie. Cossie found himself in a dilemma because he had to serve the interests of the Border Board and that of his controversial board president while in the process protecting his own reputation as secretary of the same structure. He had to carefully analyse the situation because no one was sure of the outcome of the board’s first business meeting. Magqabi says, ‘Cossie was indeed a very wise and tricky guy, who wouldn’t commit himself in a controversial thing that he is aware that is bound to back fire’. This was seen in the communiqué to Border Board and other provinces during this period of crisis. Cossie consistently wrote: “I am instructed by the president to...” without omitting this phrase in all his correspondences to us; and never say he is acting on mandate as the General Secretary of the SABRFB’.⁴⁵ He was playing safe, guarding against possible future trouble. Mtshizana says, ‘Pat Cossie was a very sly man. He was...scheming...honestly...*uhamba nabahambayo*, [literally, he goes with the tide or swims with the stream]...That was what people used to say about him. Otherwise, Pat Cossie was a very good secretary, but...he didn’t have a backbone, that was his weak point’.⁴⁶ Magqabi argues that ‘by saying, “I am instructed by the president”, Cossie was trying to extract the whole board from the controversy and leave the president to sort it out alone’.⁴⁷

At the first Business meeting in 1958 the *locus standi* of the controversial president was challenged. Victor Siwisa, supported by almost all the provinces except Siphos Eastern Province and the North Western Districts (NWD), represented by Mpondo and the security policeman Mabhun, argued against his cousin, Siphos, reminding him that he acted as the returning officer during the presidential election in 1957 in Umtata though he was a presidential candidate in the same election. This rendered his election null and void. This point was accepted and Siphos Siwisa was ousted as SABRFB president. Though the Siwisas were cousins,

⁴⁵Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁴⁶Interview Mtshizana.

⁴⁷Interview Mabija; Dunga & Magqabi.

Mabija and Mtshizana note that there were no personal conflicts between the two but it was just a matter of principle.⁴⁸

The earlier ostracised and dissolved Border Board was reinstated and participated in the 18th interprovincial tournament. According to Mtshizana and Mjo, the Border team 'performed exceptionally well' given the whole turmoil. It lost in the final of the Zonk Cup, the knockout competition. 'We played in the finals with Eastern Province and they beat us because that Border team was depleted without doubt'.⁴⁹ Some officials of Border Union offered their players to the Border Board team but the offer was refused as 'a matter of principle'. Magqabi says they

...felt interested to beef up our side after they realised that they were not going to play...their officials came to us and offered us their players...but we couldn't take any...on principle...we brought a complete and formidable team of committed, dedicated players that have sacrificed a lot to get to Cape Town under trying conditions...we didn't play badly too in the tournament...we competed very well...those guys had to go back home though they didn't actually return because the newly elected tournament officials became sympathetic to them and said those that want to remain over there in the duration of the tournament could and a place for them to stay was arranged...but they decided to get back...maybe because they felt humiliated and disappointed...some remained...they became a laughing stock to guys like Boy "Biza" Mandla and other naughty guys...⁵⁰

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Having been officially disbanded by the national board, the Border Union and its members simply asked 'to pack their bags and go away'.⁵¹ They arrived in East London on a Tuesday, the tournament having started on a Saturday in Cape Town. 'That became Theo Mcinga's joke of the month on Radio Bantu'.⁵² This was to mark the death of the Border Union though things did not really go as expected, as will be discussed below.

⁴⁸Interview Mabija; Dunga & Magqabi.

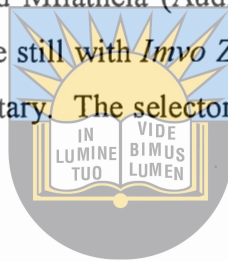
⁴⁹Interview Mtshizana.

⁵⁰Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

⁵¹Interview Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija; Tanana; Mjo.

⁵²Interview Magqabi & Dunga.

The highlight of the tournament was the 'election of Louis Leo Mtshizana, who could not attend the tournament due to his legal commitments'.⁵³ Mabija says Mtshizana was the 'real jewel in his legal field and a "workaholic" within rugby structures'. Mtshizana's election was 'an arrangement Siwisa did not take kindly of' because he thought of himself as invincible. Siwisa would often say, for instance, since he was from Port Elizabeth, "to say EP is to say Sipho Siwisa". The tournament continued as planned until the end. Mtshizana says, 'I was elected in absentia as the president of the SABRFB in 1958 and a telegram was sent to me just after the election, giving me that information with the list of the executive members and that I had to call a meeting as soon as possible'.⁵⁴ The new executive comprised LL Mtshizana (President), Skwinja Nkosi from Kimberley (vice-president), King Williams Town's TW Gqibithole (treasurer), Hlatshaneni and Mflathela (Auditors). Pat Cossie remained the General Secretary, Charles Nqakula, at the time still with *Imvo Zabantsundu*, and later Communist Party Leader, was elected as Assistant Secretary. The selectors were Gordon Qumza, DD Koloba and Nonkwelo.⁵⁵



Transformation and Resistance

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The Border team returned from the 1958 national tournament with pride though it did not win the major trophy. However, the election of the new board executive that year appeared to have 'brought a new lease of life to black rugby', especially within the SABRFB administration. The lifting of the long lasting bans on some provinces for participating in the tournament was acclaimed 'as a step forward and a sign of sincerity by the officials and delegates. The atmosphere was described as 'warm, clear and promise[d] to end that way'.⁵⁶ *Imvo Zabantsundu* states that

⁵³Interview Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija; Tanana; Mtshizana, who did not attend the tournament due to -his legal commitments. In that week he was opening his first office as a lawyer in East London.

⁵⁴Interview Mtshizana.

⁵⁵Interview Mtshizana; also see *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'National Rugby Officials', 18 July 1959, p.15.

⁵⁶See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'SA Bantu Rugby Tourney opens in earnest: Ban on Transvaal is lifted', 25 July 1959.

...all has not been well in rugby and there has been a bit of incredible scenes on the field of play and at meetings. Many splits have been engineered, and a few have been successful. At least some positive steps have been taken to ameliorate (sic) [ameliorate] the strained relations between the South African Bantu Rugby Board and the Transvaal Union. EP are still rugby Champs, this they did during the national tournament - Mowbrey, Cape Town in July 1958. The most improved side was Western Province, EP and Border had been weakened in recent years by internal strifes (sic). The sooner these are settled the better for the rugby fans who will be...this July in the interprovincial tournament...⁵⁷

At the time, Border was already nominated to host the 19th SABFRB's tournament.⁵⁸ Things seemed promising though the reality was that tensions were still evident between BBRFB and the disillusioned remnants of the splinter group from the then Border Union. It was apparent that the split was to continue within Border rugby with the Border Union representation in the name of LF Siyo and S Xiniwe suing SABRFB for £175 incurred as travel expenses to Cape Town only to be sent back without participating. They took the case to court, though advised against that by the national board. This complicated things and a decision was taken to change the venue from Rubusana Park, East London, to Queenstown only three weeks from the 1959 tournament. It was nearly twenty years since the last tournament was held in the area. 'The NED's thirst for a tournament after a break of 18 years helped to boost it and rugby fans came from afar and wide despite the short notice afforded the catering centre. It was a gamble if not an unprecedented adventure on the part of the NED to prepare for a national tournament within three weeks. Should the tourney be a financial success, it will prove to all, that if sincerely and trustworthiness is attached to any undertaking there can be no misapprehension or faultfinding'.⁵⁹ Concerned about the continuing differences within Border rugby, in *Imvo Zabantsundu* Mtshizana, on behalf of the SABRFB, warned his subordinates saying

...In recent years, the administration of African sports has suffered serious setbacks attributable mainly to the tendency that has of late become too common a feature of our administration namely the recourse to expensive litigation to resolve internal differences which themselves may be attributed mainly to ...[the]... selfish desire to remain in power at all costs. African rugby is the worst victim of this Malady...There is a general tendency within the official circles of our sporting organisation to abhor and detest settling internal administrative differences by peaceful means...Embarrassing though it may be my official position makes it imperative for me to touch on the question of the recently settled matter between the Border Bantu Rugby

⁵⁷See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Sport Highlights', 10 January 1959, p.15.

⁵⁸See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Sport Highlights', 10 January 1959, p.15; interview Mtshizana; Dunga & Magqabi; Mabija; Mjo; Sontshi; Sam & Wotshela.

⁵⁹See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'SA Bantu Rugby Tourney Opens in Earnest: "Run of play in early matches"', 25 July 1959.

Union and the South African Bantu Rugby Board. I have from the very outset to warn the SABFRB and those that still owe allegiance to it that there is no cause for jubilation (sic) [jubilation] over its success for no court of law is capable of resolving administrative difficulties and differences of a sporting organisation. Resort to litigation to resolve or solve administrative difficulties besetting a sporting organisation is merely an artificial expedient but never designed to provide effective and genuine settlement. South African Bantu Rugby Board has won the contest but it is a technical and artificial win for the two factions are still not reconciled...I am...authoritatively advised that the executive of Border Bantu Rugby Union has unilaterally decided to issue fresh summons and forge ahead with the matter. There is a duty incumbent on me as the President of the SABFRB to warn those that are charged with the obligation of managing the Border Union affairs to halt for a moment, retrace their steps and take stock of their following and further consider whether or not the proposed action will be in the interests of those that have elected them to the positions they now hold. The positions that we hold as officials we hold in trust and what ever we do and say, is in the name of those that have elected us in office...⁶⁰

Mtshizana issued this statement following the disbanded Border Rugby Union's LF Siyo and S Xiniwe's attempt to sue SABFRB on 17 February 1959 with PR Schneider as their lawyer. The defence comprised L Kaplan of Marshal & Kaplan featuring LL Mtshizana. Magistrate JG Pike concluded that 'the plaintiff's case is weak (*izimangalo zindyengendyenge*) and there is no substantial evidence of any wrongdoing, by the defendant. And in fact, it's only "Africans fighting each other"'.⁶¹ It was apparent that these two were willing to fight their case at all cost. The disillusioned Border Union officials lost the case and were asked to pay all the court charges. They were embittered by the verdict and intensified their fight. Their allies in ELSB maintained their stance, refusing BBRB and the SABRFB access to Rubusana Park. Thus Queenstown secured hosting rights, as indicated earlier.⁶² They apparently took a decision to fight from within by forcing their way into the leadership of Border rugby as delegates to SABRFB in the 1959 tournament.

The disillusioned Border Union officials took up the matter again with the SABRFB at the 1959 tournament in Queenstown. According to *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'the representation made by the splinter body in the Border camp, styled Border Union', was not entertained:

...The SAARFB advised them in no uncertain terms that the Board deals only with Provinces and that if they had any complaints, such...should be brought through the Border Bantu Rugby Board, the only

⁶⁰See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Rugby Chief Warns Against Resort to Litigation', 7 March 1959.

⁶¹See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Balahlwe Lityala abe Border Rugby Union phaya kwa-Gompo [Border Rugby Union have lost the case at Gompo]', 7 March 1959, p.11.

⁶²See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 27 July 1959, p.14.

province recognised by the SAARFB in the Border. ... it was further decided that until such time as the Border Bantu Rugby Board advised the SAARFB that the split had settled, no clubs, unions or sub-unions directly or indirectly connected with SAARFB may engage in matches with the splinter body in the Border, namely Border Union...⁶³

Magqabi says it was apparent that far into 1959, following the 1958 differences, the balance of forces in terms of leadership was to change fast. With many Border Board administrators now serving in the national board with others resigning from Gompo Union and from Border Board due to internal pressures, the Border Union group seized the opportunity.⁶⁴ Clubs that supported the Border Board continued to play at the Welsh High field even after the tournament while Border Union used Rubusana Park as before. The situation continued till Union clubs felt the pressure and initiated a move to normalise the situation. The main problem was that there were few clubs on their side compared to those in the Border Board. Only Swallows and Black Lion were established clubs, and another blow to the Union group was that it lost support as most people came to support the larger portion of location clubs under the Border Board at Welsh High grounds.⁶⁵ What made things worse was that Board clubs were not charging gate fees to spectators because they were using a school field. That made people flock to Welsh High School grounds. Other matches were played on an open field near the Lloyd section, around the old age women's home. This field was converted to suit rugby, though it was used mostly by Coloureds to host soccer tournaments, indicating the good relations between Africans and coloureds in the area.⁶⁶ It was on that field and at Welsh High School that these clubs played for a long time during the split.

However, it became apparent that the situation had to be addressed because there were problems on both sides. For instance, on the Board side, there were more clubs to be accommodated in only two fields, and the loss of support for the Union created a big problem in terms of raising the annual rent for Rubusana Park. There were moves to sort out the problem

⁶³See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Rugby Board makes vital decisions and changes its name', 18 July 1959, p.15.

⁶⁴Interview Mabija.

⁶⁵Interview Mabija.

⁶⁶Interview Mabija. In fact, the field was just in front of Coca Cola around the traffic department, directly on its back yard. This was, in fact, the field that Border Board held its trails when it was preparing for the Cape Town tournament in 1958.

and a committee was elected to handle the matter. Vukile Magqabi, “Sir ” Gun of Bush Buck and other local rugby enthusiasts, with Victor Mazinyo Siwisa, having relocated to East London, comprised the committee. Siwisa and Gun lead it.⁶⁷ This structure was to negotiate with the splinter side. These two bodies met ‘but it became apparent that the Union group wanted to attach specific terms and conditions as negotiations unfolded’.⁶⁸ Magqabi says

...Mazinyo said we couldn’t allow any form of condition...because we felt that after that problem [split], we were simply going to get together as before and they tried to beat around the bush...being tricky. But in time they gave in and there had to be elections so as to get a joint Gompo Union structure...we were all under one Border Board...but the problem was within its affiliate, Gompo Union...there were no problems with clubs outside East London...the fuss was only in East London...there was even a meeting that was held [by Border Board] to discuss this Gompo Union split trying to solve the matter...held jointly as the two groups...the split was then solved and we got back together again...⁶⁹

Ironically, during the period of the split, clubs such as Thembu United and Bush Buck had some of their players intermingled with the splinter group, and actively participating in efforts to frustrate their own clubs and Border Board. However, after the splits, these clubs accepted them back within their midst, some even got to administrative positions within club structures, Gompo Union, Border itself and also within SAARFB. Mtshizana says, ‘we did nothing, after said and done; we beat the Border Rugby Union hands down. We won the tussle and we decided as Border Rugby Football Board and clubs that we shouldn’t touch them. We said we should just let them where they were because we knew them all the same. Even players that betrayed us in a way continued with the membership in their respective clubs. Tanana remained there in the Bush Buck RFC till I left East London’.⁷⁰

The 1959 tournament was held at Queenstown, a year after Sipho Siwisa was ousted. ‘*USiph’uTolo, uDlangamandla’omkhulu* [his clan name] Siwisa attended with the intention of ousting Louis Mtshizana from his position just as it had happened to him’.⁷¹ But he failed and

⁶⁷Interview Mabija.

⁶⁸Interview Mabija.

⁶⁹Interview Mabija.

⁷⁰Interview Mtshizana. In fact Sipho Tanana went on to become the prominent SAARFB and later SARA.

⁷¹Interview Mabija.

earned himself embarrassment. The Queenstown tournament continued well with Louis Mtshizana presiding.

Even in the 1959 Queenstown tournament, there was much lobbying. Not only did Sipho Siwisa try in vain to oust Mtshizana, but the latter's group seems to have been wary and planned to counter accordingly. Before coming to East London, Mtshizana played for the Transkei province and his own local club, Wallabies, before joining East London's Bush Buck RFC. He therefore had his own strong contingent in that part of the world and in fact, it is said that he always had firm support from his own club members. 'Even in the Queenstown tournament, we had to "strategise" and I was made one of the Transkei delegates so that we can be sure that in any situation that might require voting, there could be no delegates that would be anti-Mtshizana what so ever in our group'.⁷² But nothing sinister happened except Siwisa's failed coup, and Mtshizana was re-elected as President. As a bonus, Border won the tournament beating Eastern Province in its last match. Border versus EP has always been the grudge match.

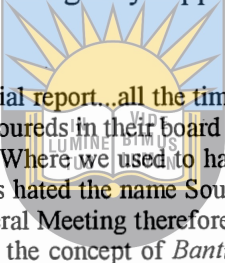
A general conclusion about the numerous splits that adversely affected black rugby is that most did not really hinge on matters of principle, such as political reasons, as many grew to believe. More often than not, mal-administration, corruption, jostling for power and opportunism, were the major factors that brought about divisions in this section of the South African rugby population. There is little doubt also that they were the major stumbling blocks to the unification of rugby over the years, because each split left a residue of bitterness and also produced some position of power which was not always readily relinquished. Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela declares that 'we would often split for petty reasons, that we could have otherwise avoided or internally solved, but later seek noble reasons to justify our cause'.⁷³

⁷²Interview Mabija.

⁷³Interview Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela, Education District offices, Gladstone House, Gladstone –Street, EL, 11 April 2001, (Henceforth, interview Ngqondela); also see Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.209.

SABRFB “Transforms” to SAARFB

It should have been expected that with administrators such as Louis Mtshizana, the attorney at law, underground politician under the auspices of the Unity Movement (UM) and Robben Island detainee, and Charles Nqakula, who was at the time attached to *Imvo Zabantsundu* and later became one of the prominent leaders of the ANC and SACP, the national board would take an abrupt political direction. Mtshizana says Charles Nqakula, as the assistant secretary in his executive, ‘was very good in his work’ and they ‘worked very well together in the board since 1958’. Interestingly, within a year in office, in 1959 in Queenstown in the board’s annual general meeting during the nineteenth interprovincial tournament, Mtshizana suggested that the SABRFB change its “derogatory” appellation. He says



...I had to present my annual presidential report...all the time I always hated this idea that we must be kept in separate compartments, with the coloureds in their board and Africans or Bantus as they were referred to at the time...in their different board...Where we used to have tournaments and would play matches called “tests” against the Coloureds...I always hated the name South African *Bantu* Rugby Football Board...in the my report in the Board’s Annual General Meeting therefore, I came up with the suggestion that we should change it... in this report I dealt with the concept of *Bantu* and outlined what it meant... “I said that our Board should now be called the South African African Rugby Football Board”. The emphasis being on *African*...African being anybody who owes allegiance to Africa...further... “we should tell the white board that the time has now come...that we must have one rugby controlling body in South Africa...and the “tests” and tournaments against the so called Coloureds...be completely discontinued...we also had to tell the coloured board that what we are interested now is that we must have one rugby body and to start with...Blacks should have one rugby union...” That resolution was widely accepted and approved, with the exception of the Eastern Province...the Dwesiz, Siwisas, Singaphi...together with...the North Western Districts delegates...in fact...[its] executive...comprise the likes of Mpondo, Mabunu, who was the chief CID [Criminal Investigation Department], the security man...Myataza...his friend...these were dead against the motion...though we adopted it...we proceeded and wrote to the coloured board informing them that “we will no longer be party to these tournaments. Therefore, steps must be taken that we merge from our racial kraals and approach the white board that the time had come to form a united rugby body”...*Wahouw!* I started trouble for me because from that day, Eastern Province and North Western Districts were most uneasy...⁷⁴

Mtshizana’s stance ironically was good news to his EP and NWD enemies who saw him as slowly digging himself a deep grave. To them, non-racialism and noncollaboration as advocated by Mtshizana meant bringing the board into disrepute and they thought they had identified an argument to oust him. They were strongly against the changes the board was

⁷⁴Interview Mtshizana.

undertaking arguing that Mtshizana was 'introducing politics in their rugby'.⁷⁵ However, Mtshizana was not to be deterred and argued for major changes within the newly named SAARFB. He argued for non-collaboration with the system:

... to be divided in these compartments as sportsmen, is definitely collaborating with the policy of apartheid and this [SAARFB] board should declare the policy of non-collaboration...They said...I was talking politics in rugby...in 1958/9 season, we had a tournament in Queenstown, where everything went on smoothly...in the tournament in 1959 where I submitted this paper of my annual report...we went on, in 1959, 1960 and 1961, the tournament was held in Port Elizabeth and nothing sinister happened...⁷⁶

In his annual address Mtshizana explained explicitly why he felt that the appellation SABRFB was not politically correct for his board any longer. He says

...I held the bull by the horns. I started with the concept of Bantu...our sport in South Africa is as it is, in-line with the apartheid system of the government...Blacks play alone, coloureds play alone. Blacks...have their own unions and coloureds...have their own... and whites their own union...and yet, as far as I am concerned, we are all South Africans. It is time that we fashion our own rugby football clubs, our own rugby provincial sides, our own national sides and organisations...as South Africans but ...it is time that we come into one...same fold, and we have our own organisation...our organisation should be completely non-racial...I expounded the principles of non-racialism...We must meet as sportsmen and play as sportsmen...then for that reason, there is no longer any place for the African Board to exist as a separate entity...coloured board and the white board as well...I know whites are mostly dead against the idea of mixing with us in sport. But the so-called coloureds and the so-called Indians have no course not to come together and form a non-racial organisation...form a non-racial organisation, then we can challenge the whites...it is time that we have an organisation of firstly human beings and secondly, an organisation of South Africans. Hence I was advancing the name of this organisation, South African Bantu Rugby Football Board shall be known as the South African African Rugby Football Board. The emphasis is on African, the second African... I regard anybody who owes allegiance to no other country or countries, to no other continent but Africa to be an African...whether you are black, green blue or whether you are white you are an African as long as you owe allegiance to Africa. And as such this Bantu appellation must be completely dropped. And it was dropped that day...⁷⁷

It was these principles that made the SAARFB send back the Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) Cup to its donors. Mtshizana says, the policies of the mines oppressed black people: 'We dare not glorify the mines and accept the trophy from an organisation that is exploiting black labour, so, we decided to do away with that one'.⁷⁸ Apart from being the

⁷⁵Interview Mtshizana; Mabija.

⁷⁶Interview Mtshizana.

⁷⁷Interview Mtshizana.

⁷⁸Interview Mtshizana.

president of the board and acting in that capacity, it is apparent that his political beliefs played a crucial role in how he led the board. Mtshizana says that this political influence was from the UM. He says he was a member of the UM since his days at Fort Hare, where IB Tabata often visited the institution to offer public lectures and recruit them into the movement, whose policy of non-collaboration was its focal point. Mtshizana says the Western Province board and some other provinces had some UM members to whom, he believed, the idea of non-collaboration with the status quo would appeal. This political influence shaped the manner in which he governed and guided him throughout his tenure as president.⁷⁹

During the period before sport unification and even in the post-unification era after 1992, calls for keeping sport and politics separate were made through the print media and all other forms of public communication. Many whites, particularly white rugby administrators and politicians, when addressing issues such as transformation and sport development, made these calls. They persistently argued that blacks are “mixing sport and politics”, thus spoiling the image of the South African sporting fraternity. However, they failed to understand the inevitable connection between the two within the racially troubled South African society.⁸⁰ Ironically, some black people also shared this view in the late 1950s through to the 1980s.⁸¹ Apparently, those who shared it were uneasy with the new developments within black rugby because they threatened their power-base. Responding to the call by South African anti-apartheid politicians against the planned West Indies tour to South Africa, organised by the South African Non-European Cricket Board of Control (SACBOC), Gordon Qumza opposed the idea outright acknowledging that he was

...not very much surprised. Some of the leading speakers in this meeting of the South African Sports Association were politicians who have not fulfilled the glib promise they made years back. They failed to

⁷⁹Interview Mtshizana. According to Mtshizana the UM initially started as an All African Convention (AAC), that existed side by side with the ANC. And at the time the ANC found itself hooked up in governing structures such as Advisory Boards, territorial Authorities, ‘Amabunga’, hoping to influence and use them to black people’s advantage. The Unity Movement however adopted the politics of total non-collaboration. The AAC eventually evolved into the so-called Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) after it took over members that were in coloured organisations and those who were in African organisations. Then they merged into one organisation called the NEUM.

⁸⁰ Interview Mtshizana; see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, pp.1-5; p.59.

⁸¹See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, Gordon Siphon Qumza, ‘Why did this politician condemn cricket tour?’; “Mixing Sport with Politics is Bad”, 21 March 1959.

get political rights they promised Non-Europeans and now that Non-Europeans have hit on the right path in sports. They tell them that that path is going west. Let politicians hands off from our sports (sic). The tour of the Union by the West Indies Cricket towards the end of this year is now on. Hats off the SANCBC (sic) [SACBOC] for managing to bring Caribbean cricketers to the Union...⁸²

The SACBOC was praised by some, for rejecting the request by thirty Treason trial suspects and five congress organisations, namely, the African National Congress, SA Coloured Congress, SA Indian Congress, SA Congress of Democrats and South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), to abandon the proposed West Indies Tour to South Africa at the end of the year (1959), in its meeting in Johannesburg in March 1959.⁸³ Others argued that the formation of SASA in January 1959 was a serious step towards non-racialism in sport. This body aimed at coordinating “nonwhite” sport, to advance the cause of sport and the standards of sport among “nonwhite” sportsmen, ensuring that they and their organizations receive proper recognition here and abroad, and pursuing these aims on a non-racial basis.⁸⁴ Important in SASA’s operations was its close link with the progressive liberation movement. Amongst its patrons were prominent antiapartheid leaders from the ANC, Natal Indian Congress and the Liberal Party.⁸⁵

It was only realised later in the 1970s that some of the people who were earlier against challenging the country’s apartheid policies in fact supported the NP government long before they went public about this. In the 1970s many such people moved closer to the establishment rugby body, the SARFB, which, the leadership of Danie Craven, changed its name to the SARB when it assimilated some black rugby structures.⁸⁶ This will be discussed in detail in the later part of this chapter. However, to rugby administrators such as Mtshizana, mixing politics with sport was the inevitable result of government politics.⁸⁷ He argues that

⁸²See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, Gordon Siphon Qumza, ‘Why did this politician condemn cricket tour?’; ‘Mixing Sport with Politics is Bad’, 21 March 1959.

⁸³See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, Gordon Siphon Qumza, ‘Why did this politician condemn cricket tour?’; ‘Mixing Sport with Politics is Bad’, 21 March 1959.

⁸⁴See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.53.

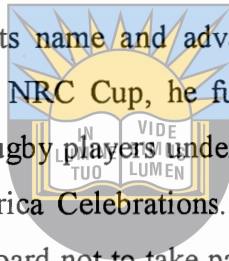
⁸⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.53.

⁸⁶See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.208.

⁸⁷Interview Mtshizana.

...Whites have always said to our sportsmen, don't mix politics with sports and my reply has always been: it is not us who are mixing politics with sport. It is the whites who have dictated that they shall play their sport in the posh sporting grounds of Ellis Park, Newlands...and the like...whilst blacks would be confined to the so-called sporting grounds in the *bundus*, in the locations. Compare our sport grounds with that of the whites...and it is the politics that dictate that, that blacks shall not have stadiums of this posh nature...in the locations...those locations they themselves being in the *bundus*, being in the *rhetus* [ghettos]...is as a result of the policy of the government of the country that dictates that... White sport is governed by the whites with their policy of the country which favours whites...so long as we play as separate entities, with whites in their own sporting grounds and blacks in the *rhetus*...politics shall be the tool. Because we shall always politically agitate to have the sports grounds as good and as posh as those of the whites. Contrary to the policy of the country...we are not...dictating the sports policy...it is coming from above, from the government...⁸⁸

It was apparent that when he accepted the position as the SABRFB president, Louis Mtshizana had a mission. He gave black rugby a political direction similar to that of many sporting codes in relation to the broader national and international political developments of the day. Having successfully changed its name and advanced non-racial and non-collaboration principles, and having sent back the NRC Cup, he further agitated apartheid proponents by instructing all his provinces and the rugby players under his jurisdiction within the SAARFB to boycott the 1960 Union of South Africa Celebrations. Mtshizana says that this was but one aspect of the broader policies of his board not to take part in such activities. He issued a public statement on the matter. He says



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

...I said, we shall not be involved in those celebrations. The question was: what shall we be celebrating as blacks? Declaration of the Union of South Africa! We were not part of that. We were never regarded as the citizens of this country...celebrations run on the basis of apartheid may not be supported by an organisation that rejects apartheid in principle. What are we to celebrate? To the European folk it is 50 years of prosperity that they have to celebrate...to us what is neatly termed as the 50 years of prosperity has been nothing else but the 50 years of oppression. We have no cause to celebrate an era of poverty and oppression. We have no cause to celebrate, as we have nothing to celebrate...⁸⁹

This was a problem for the authorities because they could not really do anything to deter Mtshizana from issuing such statements 'because he was actually not breaking any law'.⁹⁰ However, he was eventually banned and he insists that the reason was because of these statements. After it adopted non-collaboration and non-racialism, SAARFB informed the coloured rugby board that it would no longer be party to racial "tests". Mtshizana says he

⁸⁸ Interview Mtshizana.

⁸⁹ Interview Mtshizana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.208.

⁹⁰ Interview Mtshizana.

...wrote to them and at the time the coloured board president was a man called Abdullah Abass and his secretary was Ebrahim Patel, the man who eventually became the president of SARU. They were both based in Kimberley. I wrote to them and informed them that we in the African Board have taken the decision that we do away completely with these so-called test between coloureds and Africans...And that we were now urging them that we must come into one union. They never replied to that, though. And eventually when I was suspended I know they went back to those tournaments. The African board went back to play with the coloureds in those tournaments. But not for long...⁹¹

However, according to Paul Dobson, there were two tests played during Mtshizana's presidency, one in 1959 at Green Point Track in Cape Town and the second one in 1961 in the same venue.⁹² In fact, the SAARFB was reprimanded by SASA, and 'shamefully apologised'.⁹³ Dobson's report indicates that Mtshizana himself expressed his apologies 'that these tests continued'. But Mtshizana refutes this saying, 'No, they didn't [continue] and I didn't [apologise]. I didn't at all. Not whilst I was the president of the board. They continued when I was already not a president. Definitely, not when I was the president. At the time I was a president, we didn't play any...I am telling you honestly, we joined SASA after putting an end to these tests...It was still under Denis Brutus...'⁹⁴

The two tests in 1959 might have been played before Mtshizana and his board adopted the policies of non-racialism and non-collaboration and communicated with the coloured board about the board's new position. But it is difficult to explain the 1961 test. However, in analysing the presidential annual report presented by Louis Mtshizana to the general meeting of his board on 1 July 1959, one cannot miss the commitment made in as far as non-racial and non-collaboration is concerned. In his report as reported in *Imvo Zabantsundu*, Mtshizana says

...the word "Bantu" has now become repugnant (sic) [repugnant] to many thinking people because of the connotation that has been given to it by the powers that be...what used to be a harmless appellation has now assumed a derogatory sense in the hands of the rulers. ...Bantu University, Bantu Laws, Bantu Education, Bantu Authorities and Bantu Soul (sic)... Bantu *ad nauseam*... It would therefore be somewhat invidious for us to join the forces of progress in clamouring for international recognition and removal of colour bar in the field of sport if we still regarded ourselves as Bantu...To me the adoption of the word "African" is more

⁹¹Interview Mtshizana.

⁹²See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.208.

⁹³See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.208.

⁹⁴Interview Mtshizana.

in line with our clamour for international recognition...This move...may sound like a pipe-dream and something that cannot be attained in a word vitiated with colour prejudice...No harm can be done by clamouring for what is good and worth seeking after. If our Board decides to join forces that are pledged to fight this deal that act can only have the effect of strengthening the forces of progress "that are already well on the forward march."...[Mtshizana warns] against falling for the "Sweet Overtures" of those who would like to meet us on a basis of inequality...⁹⁵

It may not have been possible for the report to take an explicit stand on the campaigns to fight for total removal of apartheid in sport by SASA that were unfolding at the time because it was yet to be adopted and endorsed by the general meeting of the board. The closest that the report could go at the time was to show support, saying 'it is a welcome move'.⁹⁶ Further, the problem on the issue of the 1961 tests could be attributed to the general human weakness, forgetting certain facts. The reliability of Mtshizana's memory at this instance should be understood and be viewed on the above-mentioned light. It is apparent that during his reign at least one racial test match was played though he strongly feels that this never happened.⁹⁷



The Early Calls for Unity in Black Rugby

In almost every split within black rugby, there seemed potential for *recurrence*. Obsession for power and opportunism seem major factors in these divisions. Critical was that these splits left long standing bitterness and hatred, with inevitable motivation for revenge. This was evidenced on several occasions but the 1958 Border split was an excellent example. It seems that throughout his presidency from 1958 to 1962, Mtshizana was under constant threat of being overthrown by his enemies and he and his allies, had to guard his sometimes fragile kingdom. They did this successfully until 1962 when the balance of forces within the leadership of Border rugby, where conflict had started, somewhat tilted to the other side. Mabija, as indicated earlier, says he and his colleagues with GRFU and Border Board executives had to resign due to what he calls the 'silliness and inferiority complex' of some East London location

⁹⁵See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Bantu Rugby Board Chief "Bantu" Derogatory', 27 June 1959, p.6. The "Sweet Overtures" Mtshizana is referring to the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association, which is affiliated to the Southern Transvaal Football Association, the European or white establishment body.

⁹⁶See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Bantu Rugby Board Chief "Bantu" Derogatory', 27 June 1959, p.6.

⁹⁷See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989; see also *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 1961.

club administrators.⁹⁸ This left space for the former Border Union splinter group to assume strategic positions offering them an opportunity for revenge. They were now able to forward delegates to the SAARFB and push their agenda. This change occurred slowly without some noticing.

According to Dobson, in his Christmas message in 1961 Mtshizana regretted the tardiness along the road to integration and the continued existence of racist sport, and he expressed the hope that the SAARFB and the SACRB would meet and unite at a conference in Kimberley the following Easter. He declared: 'I cannot see our salvation in insisting on the status quo. It is time we realise that unless we emerge from our racial kraals and form a truly representative organisation, an organisation open to all racial groups on this basis of equality, we can never hope to acquire international recognition. No affiliation to a White organisation will achieve the desired goal and in fact to affiliate to an all-white organisation would be tantamount to stabbing our cause on the back'. Mtshizana, ironically, ended his message wishing 'one and all...a bright and prosperous New Year'. For him, this would not be the case.⁹⁹

Early in 1962, 'arguments and bickering enjoyed the floodtide'.¹⁰⁰ The SACRB led by John Kester made sudden overtures to the SARFB, trying to secure a match, 'treacherously' according to the SAARFB, against the Wallabies team that was to tour the country in 1963. Also in 1962, during the interprovincial tournament, held in East London, Border won both Zonk and Partons Cups. However, with all this success, problems continued to quell development and stability in the area. Mtshizana was served with three banning orders, in terms of the Suppression of Security Act by the justice minister, BJ Vorster, confining him to the magisterial district of East London, thus barring him from attending meetings.¹⁰¹ Border's success in the interprovincial tournament was overshadowed by squabbles over missing gate-takings. The problem emanated after TW Gqibithole, at the time board treasurer, mysteriously 'lost' money in

⁹⁸ Interview Mabija.

⁹⁹ Interview Mtshizana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.210-211.

¹⁰⁰ See, Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211.

¹⁰¹ See, Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211; interview Mtshizana.

his possession. When the president tried to enquire, he only said that there had been a burglary in the house where he was temporarily residing in town.¹⁰² Mtshizana says, 'it was quite clear that some mischief had taken place'. Therefore after the tournament a board meeting was called where this issue was to be discussed. The meeting was to be held in Queenstown and all provinces under the board were invited. EP, Border and North Western Districts (NWD) attended though most did not because some believed that the matter did not really merit a board meeting. S Xiniwe and Dez Makhatala, the men who were initially the members of the defunct Border Union splinter group of 1958, led the Border delegation. Mtshizana says

... just when I entered Queenstown...coming through from East London...I was stopped by the security police...They waved to the side and I stopped...they said to me, "You are Mr Mtshizana?"...I said, "yes", "You are the president of the South African African Rugby Board"...I said yes... gentlemen what is it that you want? They said "look, we want to warn you, we know that you are having a meeting with your board...Please don't talk politics in that meeting...". I said, "Hey guys, wait a minute! What are you trying to say? Are you now going to tell me what I have to say in my board meeting?" They said, "all we are saying is that you must not talk politics!" I said to them, "but this is most surprising". ...and they said, "you can go"...I said to them "what I have to say in the meeting of the board will not be dictated to by you, security..."¹⁰³

According to Mtshizana, this was a plot and in fact at the time the security forces already knew a lot about his activities. 'They have been advanced by these chaps [Xiniwe, Makhathala, Siwisa, Mpondo, Myataza, Mabhunu, Dwesi and others], and by any event, by that time I was already *persona non grata* with security in East London region'. It appears that that was but one part of the drama that was to unfold later. When Mtshizana and Charles Nqakula, the president and the assistant secretary, completed the agenda, instead of discussing the agenda, the motion was raised by the NWD delegate that, 'Gentlemen, ever since this man, our president took over the presidency of this board, nothing constructive has been discussed. Its only politics that have been discussed and it is time to rid ourselves of this politician'. Mtshizana says the proceedings of the meeting were short and all the delegates supported the motion 'just like that and that was it! They promptly moved a motion to have the president suspended and the EP duly supported them. That was all and that motion was carried with Border and EP delegates in support as expected'.¹⁰⁴ In the three provincial delegation groups that attended this controversial board

¹⁰²See, Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211; interview Mtshizana.

¹⁰³Interview Mtshizana.

¹⁰⁴Interview Mtshizana.

meeting, Border Board and EP were not fully represented; the motion was nonetheless carried, by nine votes to six.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, the issue of the missing money which the meeting was called to discuss 'was never even touched. Immediately after the motion was carried the meeting was declared closed'.¹⁰⁶ The noticeable issue in this meeting was that security police attended like they never did before, being evident both inside and outside, peeping through the windows, taking advantage of the policy that board meetings were open to anyone who was interested. Following Mtshizana's suspension, Myataza of NWD was elected to serve as the acting president until the president was elected. Soon afterwards, Mtshizana received a banning order, barring him from attending meetings. It seemed clear that this was a plot between his rugby opponents and the security police.¹⁰⁷ After that the board immediately reinstated the "tests" with the coloured board'.¹⁰⁸



SAARFB-SACRB's Relationship: Responses to Rugby Unity and Non-racialism, 1960s

After Mtshizana's suspension, the SAARFB and all its subsequent presidents seemed anxious to continue with racially-based playing though they were aware that they were being "betrayed" by the coloured board, which found Danie Craven's offer too alluring to ignore.¹⁰⁹ John Kester, the leader of the coloured board convened and chaired a conference in Port Elizabeth in 1962, which was to mark the end the racial tests, though that in fact did not happen. According to Bhunga Price Ncunzana, the coloured board desperately begged SAARFB for the 1963 test in an attempt to 'show-case' to Craven, whom Kester invited to watch the match, 'who was the best in black rugby'.¹¹⁰ Faced with the problem that they did not hold the usual interprovincial tournament that year, SAARFB reluctantly succumbed to the request of the

¹⁰⁵Interview Mtshizana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211.

¹⁰⁶Interview Mtshizana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211.

¹⁰⁷Interview Mtshizana.

¹⁰⁸Interview Mtshizana.

¹⁰⁹Interview Tanana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211.

¹¹⁰Interview Tanana; Ncunzana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Kona's Day' 1963.

coloured board. The fact that only three provinces, Border, Transvaal and Eastern Province sent their players for trials for that test bears testimony that 'Africans were disorganised and ill-prepared for the encounter of that magnitude'. It was generally believed that this was to benefit the coloured board. However, unfortunately for them, Africans appeared excellent on the day. In his debut, Kona scored two tries and in fact shone throughout the match, stealing the limelight with *Imvo Zabantsundu's* Gordon Qumza, describing the occasion as "Kona's Day" with the most 'meticulous Springbok team', winning 9-3.¹¹¹ See the 1963 African Springbok team below.



Standing Row (From L-R): P Mbilini, S Scott, **P Kona** (EP); M Bize (Bor.); J. Nomo (vice capt.), P Lubambo (EP); W Qontsi (WP) & B Malamba (Man) Middle Row (From L-R): BRP Ncunyanana (Bor. & capt.); S Sokutu, M Madikana (EP); T Botha (Bor.), (with one unidentified man). Front Row (From L-R): F Headbush, SM Twaku (EP); B Mandla (Bor.). This photo was supplied by courtesy of Bunga Richard Price Ncunyanana.

Though Danie Craven, a big friend to Kester, denied any intention of using the 1963 test invitation as an opportunity to discuss the coloured board's affiliation to his establishment board, it was not to be very long before that mission was accomplished. Ironically, these incidents unfolded coincidentally with the birth of the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) under the presidency of Dennis Brutus and pressure on South African sport was soon to mount as never before. It seems that the coloured board had some other interests other than

¹¹¹Interview Tanana; Ncunyanana; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.211; *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 'Kona's Day' 1963.

the true unity of black rugby as they constantly resisted calls from the African board to unite into one non-racial body. In fact, as early as 1952, these two boards had formed a kind of federation. The SABRFB and SACRB elected Sipho Siwisas president and John Kester as vice-president respectively. In 1953 a combined Federation was selected to undertake an internal tour, though it was cancelled 'because of racial tension in the country.' This federation, apparently formed on the initiative of the Bantu Board, was short-lived and the reluctance of Kester and the coloured board to cooperate was a major reason for its collapse. The coloured board was still rejecting African unity overtures in the 1960s.¹¹² For instance, in 1961, John Kester informed the SAARFB that his board would not form a federation though later these two executives met in East London on this question. Not surprisingly, though the SAARFB was keen for integration, Abass, Kester and Freeman, leading the SACRB 'felt that time was not right for unity' between the boards. At worst, there were reports that coloured players were even unwilling to share change rooms and showers with Africans.¹¹³ Having spurned the suggestion of merger, the coloured board was accused of being opportunism, treachery and power mongering at the expense of others. A quotation by Dobson summarily outlines this view, 'It must NOT always be the African who has to "yield"... Whilst conceding the axiomatic fact that blood is thicker than water, the African knows from the past experience that essentially the Coloured, Indian or Malay is not a sportsman at heart. He always be interested in a thing so long as he holds the *whiphand*.'¹¹⁴ This statement is harsh, especially in making sweeping generalisations about a particular race or racial groups' interests in sport. Sport participation, like any other physical activity, is an essential and natural adventure for all races. It in fact transcends racial barriers. However, the SACRB's behaviour in this regard indeed seemed cynically beyond comprehension. Hence, out of frustration some individuals felt pushed beyond their limits, thus bursting out in this manner. And it was apparent that despite growing antiapartheid struggles, ethnic feelings and an awareness of "the other" were still deeply embedded in both population groups. This however, should be understood, especially considering the context where

¹¹²See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.52.

¹¹³See *Imvo Zabantsundu*, 1963; Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.210.

¹¹⁴See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.209.

segregation and race were imposed by law and projected as a historically given reality. Non-racialism was a goal to be struggled for and self-consciously constructed.¹¹⁵

However, it is striking that having opposed merger with Africans, John Kester, the president of the SACRB, and Abdul Abass, his secretary, decided to approach Craven on a possible merger with the SARFB. The same men secretly requested a match against the Wallabies in 1963. This followed a dramatic split within the SACRB in 1959, with one group led by Cuthbert Loriston forming the SARFF and seven years later, the SACRB's residue naming itself the SARU. At this time, SACRB decided to drop the racial designation it had carried since its establishment in 1896. SARU's seriousness in upholding the non-racial stance was seen when it replaced the Rhodes Cup in 1969, which it viewed as a symbol of colonialism, with the SA Cup competition.¹¹⁶ In 1967, these two bodies, SARU and the Loriston's SARFF tried through the SARB to negotiate a tour, but when the latter actually secured it, the former refused to participate. Subsequently, SARFF and the SAARFB's residue, SARA following a big split in the EP, moved closer to Craven's SAARFB whilst the distance between all these groups and SARU widened further.¹¹⁷

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It seems that the dramatic move by the SAARFB to affiliate to Craven's SARFB was prompted by more complicated reasons than appear on the surface. According to Tanana, having been 'disappointed' and 'betrayed' by the coloured board, at least in as far as they were concerned, circumstances and material conditions at the time compelled the SAARFB to affiliate to the SARB. Whether this decision was reached by continuing negotiations with the coloured rugby players for a united front or by directly approaching Craven on their own seemed immaterial. It appears that they had a rather uncertain commitment to non-racial rugby in the country and lacked adequate understanding of the radical political climate that was emerging. Having suspended its progressive president, Louis Leo Mtshizana, accusing him of 'bringing politics to their rugby', SAARFB seemed to have compromised even the small level of understanding of what non-racialism meant and how it might be realised. For SAARFB to have

¹¹⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, pp.52-53.

¹¹⁶See Grundlingh, Odendaal & Spies, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.57.

¹¹⁷See Imvo Zabantsundu, 1963; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.209.

thought that affiliating to Craven's SARFB was the only way to salvage and advance the cause of non-racialism in rugby indicates its limitations in understanding the contemporary political situation. Subsequently, they ironically earned themselves the 'sellout' stigma, leaving SARU as the only recognised progressive non-racial rugby body in the country.

This situation was complex, fragile and difficult to deal with and rugby administrators often found themselves caught-up within this paradigm shift. Many had had to improvise ways out of the diverse issues facing them. The strong wave of non-racialism was led by SASA and SANROC, structures that were dominated by Coloured and Indian administration. This rendered their 'authority and authenticity suspect and susceptible to defiance among the SAARFB circles'.¹¹⁸ The whole country was in political turmoil, with the state of emergency declared. The SAARFB itself had to deal with its own internal problems, especially the KWARU split, the leadership crisis within the national board and in relation to the treacherous moves of its coloured board counterpart. The relationship between the SAARFB and SACRB continued in its fragile way to the extent that some members of the board felt that they should not play against the SACRFF, the splinter group from the SACRB, though they ultimately succumbed, playing against both coloured rugby bodies. Tanana says

...in 1969 when I was the Secretary [of SAARFB], I argued that we shouldn't play against the splinter group, that is the Loriston's SARFF but we were to play one coloured national side. So that led us to play only with SARU. For instance that year (1969) we decided, while in Cape Town, that we should stop the racial test and go for the non-racial sides. We had a meeting in PE in 1969...we met with Abass of SARU and us as the SAARFB to discuss the issue of forming one ... body. ... After establishing this body, we were to confront the white Board about the non-racial sport in the country. We called a meeting in Port Elizabeth between us together with the white's SARFB and Danie Craven himself attended together with a certain...Fourie from EP...their CEO [Chief executive Officer], Mr Calahmann [Cunningham]...We indicated to them that we need one non-racial rugby body in this country. Dr Craven accepted that proposal saying international isolation has long been a major problem to the country's sport especially rugby because the nation need a single South African side...What amused me and the rest of us as SAARFB in that meeting was that just before it started Dr Craven said, "I am worried about you Mr Abass because we have been discussing this issue for some time now. We have already held two meetings with you guys, we had one in Kimberly and the other one in Cape Town... there was supposed to be a third one that we were to hold in Kimberly but we waited for you there but you didn't pitch up! We were to discuss this very same issue"...¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸Interview Tanana; Mhani; Mgwebi.

¹¹⁹Interview Tanana.

Tanana described this as an embarrassing situation on the side of the coloured board because the long-standing belief and suspicion that they were betraying the African folk was again coming to light very strongly. For the first time SAARFB realised that the coloured board was holding secret meetings with Craven's board. 'The big question was what was their motive? We didn't know that all along they have been negotiating a deal to play against the whites behind our backs'.¹²⁰ However, the SAARFB, dismayed as it was, requested Craven and the rest of the delegates to proceed with the meeting as planned. To them what was fundamental was to work out the future for South African rugby and 'the Coloured Board's attitude' would not deter them from moving towards that goal.¹²¹ However, 'another drama surfaced, when Dan Qeqe, [Cheeky] Watson together with other three black men, gate crashed into the meeting. They called me outside and I got out to attend to them. They said to me they want to be part of the negotiations as well. I asked them on what capacity would they be participating. They claimed to be KWARU members. I regretted their request on the basis that we as the SAARFB, were still handling their matter together with the EP Board, and we were in fact representing them in the meeting'.¹²² According to Tanana, the meeting agreed in principle that a non-racial rugby body should be formed and what was left was for the delegates to report to their respective constituencies and get a full mandate. In the meantime, a decision was reached between the SAARFB and the coloured board that the two boards should unite forming a single national rugby body within 30 days. However, like many agreements between these two bodies, that also evaporated with the stipulated period lapsing with nothing achieved. 'The coloured board members again were nowhere to be found as usual. What followed was that SARU chose to house the 'homeless' KWARU within its ranks as an autonomous and fully-fledged province'.¹²³

Tanana says

...I got upset because I felt that the coloureds were betraying and dividing us. They are weakening our position as Africans...we realised that if SARU accommodated KWARU within its ranks...and goes to join or merge with the SARFB, we as the SAARFB were to suffer dearly in terms of resources. We felt that it would mean that it would be very difficult for us to secure resources from who ever because we shall be

¹²⁰Interview Tanana.

¹²¹Interview Tanana.

¹²²Interview Tanana; Geleba.

¹²³Interview Tanana.

operating for none. We would be severely weakened while the coloureds would simply secure resources because they would be joining the SARFB [South African Rugby Football Board, the SARB's predecessor] with some part of us [African within KWARU], thus being strengthened...that was how they [the coloured rugby players] rocked us and destroyed, black rugby...KWARU sold out our rugby to the coloureds. That is why you will find that the coloureds have more resources and better facilities because everybody went down to play in the coloured areas. The coloureds took over our rugby and in that way they got their facilities developed in their areas. Further, Africans went over to join the coloureds and yet the previous strategy was not to join anybody but to merge systematically and strategically...¹²⁴

It is apparent that having suffered betrayal on several occasions, SAARFB was not prepared to lose everything that it could have otherwise secured in joining the establishment forces. However, the complexities and ambiguities surrounding SARU's earlier position were a cause for concern. It is of interest to assess motives behind SAARFB's sudden change into talking the politics of non-racialism, though it had opposed Mtshizana's early calls for the same cause, even deciding to suspend him on the basis that he was 'bringing politics into their rugby'. If the politics of resources or sheer opportunism had dominated, as appears to have been the case with SAARFB, SARU and SARFF, it is apparent that black rugby would have had a different trajectory today. Assessing SARU's sudden strong turnabouts to non-racial sports, in the early 1970s, is essential. It should be remembered that in 1964, SAARFB changed its name to be known as SARA; while SARFB's splinter group, SARFF, leaving the residue of the former group calling itself SARU by 1966 and interestingly, pronounced that it was then adopting the non-racial principle. SARA and SARFF together with Craven's SARFB joined to form SARB, which was to uphold multiracialism of in South African sport. Ironically, there is evidence that the newly formed SARA continued to play both SARFF and SARU from its inception till 1970, a solid four years after it mooted non-racialism in sport.¹²⁵

However, there is little doubt, given the ambiguities and controversies that SARU successfully grew to represent the true and credible non-racial sports forces in South Africa. However, the position adopted by the SAARFB's successor, SARA, together with SARFF, to affiliate in a subordinate status within the establishment SARFB, the long standing oppressors, forming the SARB, made itself many enemies amongst the majority of the oppressed and their political cause in South Africa. What made matters worse was that this occurred at a very

¹²⁴Interview Tanana.

¹²⁵See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.212; interview Tanana.

critical stage in the history of South Africa's political struggle, though an analysis of the underlying pressures that they faced indicate that the situation compelled them to do this. SARA, however, chose to endorse the 'sellout' stigma because it supported and remained in cooperation with the oppressors for many years following their first association with the establishment body. At worst, they sabotaged every effort to advance struggles for non-racialism and the broader liberation of the oppressed, as orchestrated by the progressive forces of the time such as the UDF.¹²⁶ In fact, these opposing forces found themselves engaged fiercely as rivals.¹²⁷

These black dissidents, Craven's new allies, committed themselves to defending and justifying their controversial cause at all cost. However, many former SAARFB unions and clubs consolidated the non-racial cause, joining the SARU ranks. SARB seemed determined to craft its propaganda. SARA's Ciskei Rugby Association (CRA), mostly dominated by the Ciskei Securities Forces, with unconditional support from its government, fought against all the progressive forces. The newly built Mdantsane and later named Sisa Dukashe Stadium was used as a battlefield by Ciskei police and soldiers, fighting against all the progressive forces in the area.¹²⁸ Charles Sebe, a relative to the president of the then Republic of the Ciskei, Wongama Lennox Sebe, backed by his government, constantly harassed and at worst murdered various people throughout the 1980s. Apparently, a mandate was given to 'destroy all the non-racial

¹²⁶The UDF came to being as a structure to mobilise people while its leaders and political organisations such as the ANC were banished with most of its leaders either in exile or in prison. This structure comprised of all progressive racial groups in the country. However, at one instance, once the most popular youth leader within the ANC ranks Peter Mokaba, a man acclaimed to possess a raw, strident, populist militancy was regarded with some distaste by elements of the UDF. In return, Mokaba voiced his opinion that 'the movement was being hijacked by Indians, Coloureds and Whites, with Africans playing a secondary and compliant role'. Further fuelling animosity and distrust between Mokaba and the UDF was his close alliance with Madikizela-Mandela, from whom the UDF had publicly dissociated itself. See Sunday Times, 'Obituary: Peter Mokaba – King of the young lions had a reputation for enjoying the good things in life', 16 June 2002; for more on UDF see, *Mayibuye* November 10 & 11 1984, many articles on UDF have been collated in *Umrabula* [Lets talk politics], '20 Years Later: The Legacy of the UDF', number 19, August 2003.

¹²⁷What should have been the main enemy at the time was the establishment structures and the apartheid systems at large, as opposed to the mis-channeling of energies as it became the case with these two bodies.

¹²⁸Interview Tanana. Tanana indicates that while he was the treasurer of the SAARFB, he made a proposal to the apartheid government through the department of Native Affairs to fund a Stadium where the first international match was to be played in the Homeland. The SAARFB team called *Amahlosi*, the Leopards were to play an English Team in 1973.

persons' within the Ciskei homeland.¹²⁹ However, the UDF also retaliated and even initiated moves to destabilise the collaborators. It also gained support from rugby structures such as the Port Elizabeth Rugby Union's (PERU) sub-union and Zwide Rugby Union (ZWERU), which moved to align themselves with the UDF, condemning the 'multinational' sport played by SARA. This was also seen at national level with SARU aligning with the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM) as against the South African Council of Sports (SACOS) with its non-affiliation and non-collaboration approach, arguing that there could be 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'.¹³⁰

There are many incidents that SARU and UDF allies were accused of instigating, for instance, Mdyesha's controversial resignation as SARA's long standing president, and the burning of Dolly Ntaka's house at Bedford, when he was thought to be at risk for playing for the Leopards, SARA's Springboks equivalent, in the 1980s.¹³¹ Such incidents were also witnessed at Mdantsane, especially with the fall of Sebe's regime in 1993. Tanana, Matyeshana, and many SARA-Ciskei government aligned individuals suffered damage to property and other losses. Deliberate demolition of buildings such as burning shops was prevalent at the time. It was generally known that such burnings were associated with the UDF's underground operations. It was widely believed that burnings were central to and characteristic of UDF. It was also the case that most of if not all SARA members were also prominent CNIP members or *amaKhonco*. Therefore, they also fell victim with the collapse of their 'masters'. As the old Xhosa expression says, '*yakuf'intak'endala, amaqand'ayabola*', meaning: when the mother-bird dies, its eggs rot also.¹³² At the time it became clear that rugby payers had to make a choice between the struggle against the apartheid government and its sport policies or against it. This manifested itself in

¹²⁹ Interview Puzi; Ngqondela; Mhani; Tengimfene; Twaku; Bishop Mgwebi, former Bush Buck RFC player and later, administrator; also see *SACOSPORT FESTIVAL '88*, 'A Commemoration Volume', Buchu Books, n.p; see SOCOSSPORT, 'Sebe and Ciskei: Hope to destroy Non-racial Sport Persons', volume 2, September 1982.

¹³⁰ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.216; interview Ngqondela, Mgwebi; Puzi; Mhani; see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, pp.57-59.

¹³¹ See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.216; interview Ngqondela, Mgwebi; Puzi; Mhani; see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, pp.57-59.

¹³² Interview Puzi; Ngqondela; Mhani; Tanana; Twaku; Mgwebi; Matyeshana; Mjo; Geleba. This idiom can also be translated to say: when a mother-bird vanishes or abandon the eggs it was hatching, they rot].

numerous ways. But 'undoubtedly best-kept secret of the 1980 British Lion's tour was the struggle of SARA to find fifteen "African" rugby players willing to participate in the token international match. The provincial affiliations of SARA trialists make interesting reading in this regard. The traditional strongholds of black rugby such as the EP, Border and the WP were virtually absent, while provinces previously unheard of, such as Free State and Natal - hastily organised by the local Administration Board - make their first appearance'.¹³³ Peires states that in the event, 'SARA could only find eight black players to pit against the Lions, although they could easily have fielded an army of administrators'.¹³⁴

However, the intense harassment by the Sebe regime, encouraged instead of deterring people from joining SARU. Virtually all the East London clubs, the core of Border rugby, followed EP's KWARU, forming their own Mdantsane Rugby Union (MDARU) in 1972. Tanana argues that founding and naming this union MDARU was indicative of the influence of 'certain boys who broke away in the outside EL areas and came with changes in rugby'. It is known that young Fort Harians within the clubs such as Boiling Water, Winter Rose, Thembu United and to a certain extent Wallabies, made an important contribution in taking black rugby in East London rugby towards the non-racial fold. The first three clubs even left MDARU for the non-racial East London Rugby Union (ELRU), which was initially a predominantly coloured body, because of its pronounced political position, of course a SARU affiliate.¹³⁵

However, the initial moves to join the ELRU by some clubs are debatable. Some view these moves as merely prompted by personal differences and other reasons. Part of the reason that MDARU was formed was to respond to the forced removals that left the old East London locations and its recreational amenities in ruins in the early 1960s. This will be briefly discussed below. Tanana believes that the move towards joining SARU was 'not a wise one because it destroyed and disturbed growth of black rugby because the resources and administration were

¹³³See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p.9.

¹³⁴See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p.9.

¹³⁵Interview Puzi; Ngqondela; Ndondo, the former Winter Rose player and later administrator, at Amatola District offices, Commissioner Street, EL, 09 November 2000; Mhani; Tengimfene; Twaku; Mgwebi.

always centred in the hands of the coloured people, yet blacks were in the majority'.¹³⁶ This greatly weakened black rugby in its Border and EP strongholds. He argues that

...The fact of the matter is that we as the Africans were far stronger than the coloureds obviously. For instance here in EL we had about ten rugby clubs and the coloured rugby players had about three or four clubs. And again rugby was not that important to them, to such an extent that, in EL for instance, most of the coloured chaps used to play with us in our clubs. You can name guys like Alexander, Naidoo, and the other guys that all played for our clubs because they couldn't survive as separate entities. They were just not strong enough...¹³⁷

Mjo believes that the interprovincial tournaments formed the cornerstone of black rugby for many years. Their collapse denied the game an opportunity to develop and grow as it had in the past several decades. Mjo argues that the decisive moment was the provincial tournament held in Umtata in 1969. He says



...I was selected for Border...while working at Cyril Lord... We went to Umtata where the tournament was to be played... but unfortunately...we waited and waited and the tournament didn't start because the EP had a biggest split in the history of black rugby. We wanted to know what has happened and we were told that six (sic) [10] clubs have left the PEARB, which was led by Singaphi. We then wanted to know why was the reason exactly? We were told that when Eric Majola was going to be buried, the weekend fixtures were supposed to be called-off...to honour him...for his sound contribution to the rugby development in the EP and the whole of South Africa...Majola's funeral was a really a big thing...after he died tragically in a car accident. The Spring Rose RFC asked the PEARB to suspend its weekend fixtures but its request was turned down. Then they decided to terminate their affiliation to the PEARB, which therefore meant that they are terminating its affiliation to the SAARB as well, to join the coloured union, SARU...¹³⁸

Many like Mjo believe that the KWARU split had a big impact in black rugby. East London Rugby was also adversely affected and in fact, it later also jumped the SAARFB ship for SARU. However, it is apparent that in most cases where black rugby split, justifications were often entirely unrelated to what was actually cited as the source of conflict. At worst, this was 'apparently becoming accepted as a normal phenomenon that when people split from one group to another and or forming a new one, for any particular reason, they would quickly seek noble reasons to justify their cause'.¹³⁹ Ngqondela argues that in most cases splits occurred as a result

¹³⁶ Interview Tanana.

¹³⁷ Interview Tanana.

¹³⁸ Interview Mjo.

¹³⁹ Interview Ngqondela; Tanana.

of petty reasons. Later, sterling reasons will be sought to justify the breakaway. He cites Thembu United RFC that at one point 'had some complaints on how MDARU was administered and abruptly decided to join SARU's affiliate union called ELRU'.¹⁴⁰ At the time, the principle of non-racialism was beginning to gain ground and people were maturing in political nationalism. Thembu United therefore exploited this opportunity, arguing that they are leaving MDARU 'as a matter of principle and the non-racial cause'.¹⁴¹ When referring to the split in the Eastern Province in relation to the to non-racial sports, Tanana says

...the EP had a big influence into *this*...because its standard of rugby was evidently higher than all the other provinces...the community of Port Elizabeth was very excited when KWARU was formed...and later joined the coloureds...They were in highly jubilant state, they literally shouting and chanting..."Hhah! Hhah!"...dancing to "their liberty" so to speak...But unfortunately, it seemed as if they were unaware that they were destroying the EPARB...thus killing the entire African people's rugby...their breakaway from the EPARB... was apparently prompted by a cold war between the Union [RFC] and [Spring] Roses [RFC] in Port Elizabeth. They became groups and that destroyed our rugby...¹⁴²

This was a difficult time in the history of black rugby. The political climate of the day posed numerous challenges to administrators and players alike. An analysis of the merits and demerits of this past is perhaps valuable in as far as it may indicate a sustainable recreations.

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Black Rugby's Responses to Forced Removals

Apart from the many internal challenges that black rugby had to contend with, the country's broad political landscape had its fair share in effecting these developments. Following its success in the whites-only general election in 1948, the NP inaugurated the era of rigid institutionalisation of apartheid. 'Racial discrimination was extended and legalised in a way, which was unique in world politics. The new government passed a barrage of "segregatory" legislation, including the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Group Areas Act (GAA) and the Bantu Education, until eventually there were more than three hundred laws controlling every aspect of people's lives from cradle to the

¹⁴⁰Interview Ngqondela.

¹⁴¹Interview Ngqondela.

¹⁴²Interview Tanana.

grave'.¹⁴³ The NP government intensified the implementation of its apartheid policies in the early 1960s. The in particular, passed in 1950, became a major influence in the lives of black South Africans. There was an abrupt destruction of black communities across the country. People were scattered and divided according to racial lines in an attempt to create further development of white society. The old East London locations were also affected as has been shown earlier. This had direct implications for the life of people, with black rugby being one of the aspects affected by this process. The only sports field for blacks at EBL and WBL, Rubusana Park, was demolished in 1963. This occurred when the entire location was bulldozed with people forcefully moved to Mdantsane and other surrounding areas, making way for what the government declared as an area reserved for Indians. This was just the beginning of what Blacks were to face. They were to be subjected to total removal from East London to the homeland of Ciskei.¹⁴⁴

One of the fundamental losses in this process was that of the former tightly knit community. EBL was home to both Africans and the coloured people that had lived together harmoniously for many years. The sense of acceptance and trust built over many years was suddenly destroyed as the community was broken down and people scattered. This community also lost its colourful recreational culture.¹⁴⁵ Sports activities at Rubusana Park and other social gatherings that were part of many people's lives soon became a thing of the past.¹⁴⁶ By 1965 Mdantsane had expanded and time, distance and cost made it difficult for people to commute between the city and township for training sessions and matches and for spectators to watch.

Establishing acquaintances and friendships and building a new community was a mammoth task in the new township. It was generally believed that this new environment was difficult and in many ways hostile. People tended to be violent as they looked upon one another

¹⁴³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.50.

¹⁴⁴See Nel, EL, 'The Spatial Planning of Racial Residential Segregation in East London, 1948-1943', Johannesburg: University of Witwatersrand, 1990, as quoted by Landiswa Maqasho in 'East Bank Location Restitution Claim (EBLRC): Social History Report', 2000, on behalf of Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER): Rhodes University.

¹⁴⁵See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, pp.27-28; interview Temmers; Ngqondela; Mgwebi; Twaku.

¹⁴⁶Interview Temmers; Ngqondela; Mgwebi; Twaku.

as strangers. Mdantsane expanded fast with families scattered throughout the township. People had had to adjust and cope within an alien environment. They did of course start to extended social networks. However, it was a slow process, and rebuilding the value system that had been characteristic of their lives in the old EBL became almost impossible for a number of decades.

The “depersonalisation” on the side of government during the process of forced removals manifested itself in a number of ways. It appeared that the only thing the apartheid government was concerned with was provision of houses, though even that proved to be gigantic project for it to adequately fulfil. According to Nel, government overlooked provision of important public facilities vital to people as social beings, with only a handful of infrastructural facilities supplied in the eighth year since the first group was relocated to Mdantsane.¹⁴⁷ Basic facilities such as schools, medical centres, churches and recreational facilities were neglected.¹⁴⁸ A new field was built at Ziphunzana where some Africans were moved. There they played rugby. After more people moved to Mdantsane, Native Unit number one (NU 1) Ground was built a couple of years later. However, the biggest stadium in the area, Sisa Dukashe, came as a result of people’s own initiative. Mdantsane stadium was built in 1973, a decade after first resettlements, in preparation for a controversial international match between Leopards, a team representing a section of African rugby players under the auspices of the SARA, and the British Lion’s team that was to tour the country in 1974.¹⁴⁹ Ambiguous though the origins of this stadium were, it would not have been built if Africans themselves had not agitated for such facilities. Tanana says

¹⁴⁷See Nel, ‘The Spatial Planning of Racial Residential Segregation in EL’, 1990, p.265.

¹⁴⁸This hospitals name changed several times in its existence. At some point it was known as LF Siyo Hospital at the time, under Lennox L Sebe’s rule, as the minister of Health Siyo, named it after him. But tater this name was changed following Siyo and Sebe’s political conflict, leaving Sebe to change it to Cecilia Makiwane in honour of the first black trained nurse in this region.

¹⁴⁹Interview Tanana; Matyeshana. Tanana says he and his colleagues like Sonwabiso Geleba, Gecelo Mdyesha and others made it possible for Sissa Dukashe Stadium be built at Mdantsane, and Charles Mgweba who was a Fort Hare student at the time, ignored and disobeyed the non-collaboration stance that his Fort Hare team adopted and proceeded to play in the racial tests together with his former teammate Patsa Matyeshana, a former Swallows player, Border and SARA-Leopards and who played in that game against British Lions. This test was supposed to be held in Port Elizabeth, but because gate takings were misappropriated in 1973, in a match between Africans and Italians in PE, prompting a decision to defer it to East London at Mdantsane township, the first to be played within the Homeland; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989.

...when I was in the SAARB executive as treasurer together with guys like chief Jongilanga...The EP at the time had already broken away...have formed the KWARU while the other group remained as the EP. I offered and committed myself to my executive that I will see to it that East London secures a stadium to host a test match against the international touring sides, which were to be hosted by Port Elizabeth. "*Ndawafumana amaBhulu, ndisebenzisa la-apartheid yawo*" [I manipulated the *Boers*, tapping to their apartheid mentality and practises to our advantage]...I asked the SAARFB executive to pursue that the match must be played here in East London...capitalising on the fact that there was a split in the EP, thus...unstable compared to Border...we didn't have a problem...The executive asked me to give them a guarantee if they were to support me in my move. I asked them to grant me just two months to prepare...which they did...I approached the department of Bantu Administration and Development Department...I told them that "if the planned British Lion's test match is not played at Mdantsane, we as the SAARFB will not allow it to be played anywhere". ... Fortunately, money was made available...what was left of us was to identify a piece of land where the stadium was to be built. Construction commenced soon after that...working twenty-four hours a day...we wanted it to be in Border where there was unity...in East London, I was the treasurer and there was no money lost...In fact it was for the first time that for the SAARFB had money to put in the fixed deposit account, our surplus! When I talk about money you're talking about the sum of 18 000 plus in our surplus account...¹⁵⁰

To Mdantsane people, the availability of these facilities after a long gruelling experience brought relief. However, it was apparent that 'things would never be the same again'.¹⁵¹ There were constant cries that they had lost almost everything that they had aspired for in their community. The NU 1 and later Sisa Dukashe stadiums could never bring back the sense of community that Rubusana Park offered over the years. At worst Johannes Oomdu Temmers argues that 'there was a marked decline in the standard of rugby since the relocation and further decline since amalgamation with white rugby'.¹⁵² The dispersal of families was in fact the dispersal of a community that was otherwise bound together by the philosophy of *ubuntu*.¹⁵³

The main contradiction with the GAA was that though it advocated total removal of blacks from the places referred to as 'white areas' both these populations needed each other in

¹⁵⁰ Interview Tanana.

¹⁵¹ Interview Temmers.

¹⁵² Interview Temmers; Mgwebi; Sontshi; Mjo; Tanana; Ngqondela; Mabija; Twaku; Ndondo. It worth noting that most respondents interviewed for this study, especially the aspect of removals, shared the same sentiments, narrating this aspect of their history word to word as if they were grouped together in mind and as though they were single unit!

¹⁵³ Interview Temmers; Mgwebi; Sontshi; Mjo; Tanana; Ngqondela; Mabija; Twaku; Ndondo. It has been indicated that the old East London black community was, apart from its apparent squalor, was characterised by tranquility, togetherness and high sense of community.

many ways. Many blacks removed from EL were still heavily dependent on the city economy for a living and the new township became a mere 'dormitory'.¹⁵⁴

Ngqondela argues that club rugby continued to grow well throughout the Gompo area until people were relocated to Mdantsane. When people got to the new township, things changed dramatically. There was chaos because some people were still in the location while others were already residing at Mdantsane. There were problems, especially concerning transport and playing fields. People had had to rely on public transport from Mdantsane to East London, at Ziphunzana, where an alternate field was built. This brought lots of difficulties to people's lives generally, not only in rugby. 'In fact removals and the process of relocation marked the beginning of a bad wave of change in our rugby. Things started to go wrong in our rugby'.¹⁵⁵ Given the numerous relocation problems and disruptions, club rugby was generally viewed as dormant. This created a big vacuum as far as recreational life is concerned. Subsequently, a much-needed intervention was initiated in an attempt to deal with the situation.

The Birth of the Industrial Rugby Union and Industrial Rugby League

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The East London forced removals of the 1960s marked a dramatic change in community life within the EL locations. The old EBL and WBL were demolished. East London rugby suffered adversely as a result of this ordeal. Forced removals were the brainchild of the central government and were supported and supervised by the East London City Council (ELCC). The removals came as a shock to the community. Much as they were aware of the unhealthy conditions and degradation under which they lived, they never expected to be removed. Respondents in this study demonstrated that they were conscious of the obvious ills within their rugby fraternity that manifested themselves in splits and club-breakaways.

¹⁵⁴See Maqasho, 'EBLRC', 2000, pp.27-28. Ironically, while black people were forcefully removed the white business greatly needed their labour and human resource. This created a big setback and gross inconvenience to these populations. Situated some 25 kilometres out of the city centre, Mdantsane people had to travel to and fro for EL almost all their daily operations, especially for employment purposes. This commuting and its associated costs became a heavy economic and physical burden to many former EBL residents who, by and large, were used to walk to their various destinations in and around the city. For those used some form of transport, distance was comparatively shorter and thus cost less.

¹⁵⁵Interview Ngqondela.

By 1965, many people had already been moved to Mdantsane. Thus the decision was taken to move rugby headquarters from Ziphunzana to Mdantsane, bringing it closer to the people. Removals heavily effected livelihoods. For example, in accordance with the border industries policy, factories relocated from the city centre and WBL to Wilsonia Industrial area, relatively close to the Ciskei homeland. The first of these was Cyril Lord, now known as Da Gama Textiles, and its management demanded accommodation for its employees. Many such factories emerged in the area. Workers from these factories decided to form their own rugby clubs, with such success that they even started Industrial League (IL) matches. In fact they not only formed rugby clubs but a whole range of cultural and recreational clubs. One of the pioneers of these cultural bodies, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, argues that the main aim of himself and his colleagues was to bridge the gap in terms of recreation and cultural activism in the area following the ravages of forced removals.¹⁵⁶ Having completed his sentence in Robben Island and later in other prisons, coming with strong opinions on cultural activism, especially on choral music with which he occupied himself during his prison life, Mjo furthered his cultural convictions within the township. He established Cyril Lords African Sports and Social Clubs (CLASSC) that comprised rugby and netball clubs, a choir and other social clubs. This influence spread fast across other factories and in fact many of them supported the initiative with each firm having its own club competing in the IL fixtures. Mjo says

...There was madness and a hell big disorganisation there [Mdantsane]...rugby was nearly destroyed altogether, in fact there was no rugby at all at Mdantsane as people had to travel to East London to play rugby at Gompo. At the time I was working at Cyril Lord I started the Industrial Rugby...I started that myself...at Cyril Lord in 1972. That was when rugby regained some lifeline at Mdantsane, rugby got a real resurrection and rejuvenation...all the other firms such as Mercedes-Benz; Wilson Rowntree...followed suit...I was its secretary. The industrial rugby promoted Mdantsane rugby a great deal to such an extent that the long lost capacity crowd at NU 1 Grounds...the main rugby field that was used at that time, was again witnessed...people coming in numbers to watch rugby...their old culture and tradition for many decades. That is where I again revived my rugby...¹⁵⁷We also challenged the Alice clubs such as Tigers of Ntselamanzi...and Fort Hare 'Blues'...and others...

This socio-cultural initiative came at the right time as the whole society was undergoing gruesome experience in almost all facets of life. Coming late to work was a big challenge for

¹⁵⁶Interview Mjo.

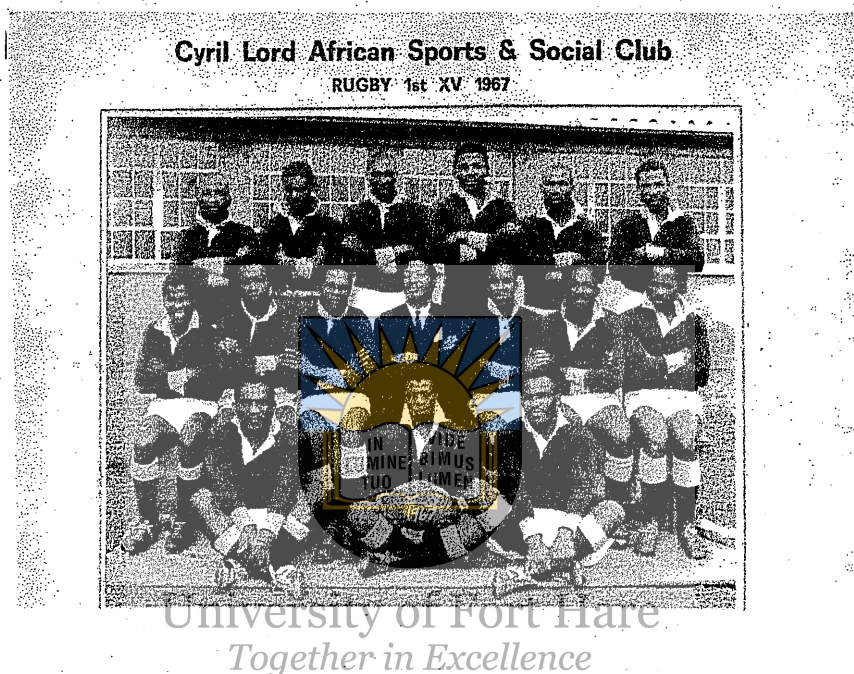
¹⁵⁷Interview Mjo.

employers while employees had to contend with consequent wage losses due to the transport crisis in the new settlement. It is apparent that there was no peace and happiness in the area and these recreational activities were meant to get people together and to bring a sense of life and tranquillity. Mjo argues that the emergence of the IL is an important story that adds another dimension to the development of EL rugby at the time. Industrial Rugby Union and Social Clubs (IRUSC) was formed at the time Mdantsane rugby was 'in the doldrums'.¹⁵⁸ IL came to the rescue and grew from strength to strength. This union not only revitalised rugby in the area but also contributed immensely in giving hope and relief to a troubled community following the hideous forced removal experiences. Weekends brought life to the newly established township, with entertainment brought about by rugby and other activities offered by the union. Factories felt it was imperative to contribute to the betterment of the community from which they drew their workforce. Various objectives for this move could be debated and theories developed, however, the question of social responsibility seems to have been the most prominent factor. It is known though, that in every sponsorship offered, something is invariably expected in return. If, in this case, workers are content with the status quo, there is a possibility of increased production. By supporting these activities, factories possibly had similar motives and were not only aware of this fundamental contribution that they were making in the social life of their employees, but also of the possible effects on their labour relations and profitability. It is interesting to note that a relatively small-scale industrial area like East London adopted what major metropolitan centres, and especially the mining sector, were also practicing at the time.

The IRU launch was made a big event and local rugby clubs were understandably somewhat jealous, as they felt that the IRU was taking over rugby in the area. Mjo says that the IRU had to assure clubs that IL existed to revive rugby that was more or less dormant in the area at the time. Hence they 'always reminded players within the union that they mustn't abandon their clubs for the IRU. I want to believe that if we didn't intervene in the form of the IL, the whole Mdantsane could have played soccer without even a slightest trace of even a single

¹⁵⁸ Interview Mjo.

rugby club, not to mention people's interest in the game'.¹⁵⁹ See the picture of one of the early Industrial League teams below.



Back Row: (L-R.) S Mfafa, C Ntsonkota, I Sikalo, G Mambushe, H Dlova, AA Mdingi.

Middle Row: (L-R) M Dayizana, L Makaluza, CMS Mjo (Capt.), WSM Bashe (Manager), JN Ngubane (V. Capt.), A Bokuva, T Manga. Front: (L-R) A Dlamini, M Kula, M Tyagana.¹⁶⁰

Fikile Dunga, a former IRU administrator and a Consolidated Mills worker concurs, stating that many players were developed in the IL over the years. Many remember that IU had strong and entertaining competitions hence some players left their home clubs to play full-time for IU. Dunga says

...as one of the IU officials and we had other codes apart from rugby. For example the union also had netball, boxing and other codes though some didn't become successful. In fact this was a transformation process from Gomo to Mdantsane. The IU came into being at the time there was more less no proper

¹⁵⁹ Interview Mjo.

¹⁶⁰ Picture by FA Stakemire, Addington Studio, EL Courtesy of Simo Mjo.

sports activities, thus coming as a sort of a sports-life-line to Mdantsane people. It contributed as a phase where sport was moved from Gomo to Mdantsane and filled the gap, keeping people active as usual...¹⁶¹

Another dimension in explaining the contribution that the IL brought to EL rugby was that for the first time, rugby was played on Sundays with the NU 1 grounds and numerous schools fields utilised for this purpose. Mjo says

...we used the NU 1 Ground and we played our matches on Sundays. In every Sunday, township people would be looking forward to these games. We played on Sundays because some people worked even on Saturdays and we didn't want to interfere with the local club rugby fixtures at all...even those there wasn't much rugby played at that time. However, we always encouraged and reminded players that their first priority should be their respective clubs. In fact we nursed and respected club activities and programmes a great deal...we were fond of them so much. But unfortunately most of them were already nonexistent. They were just not playing at all, it was just dry in the rugby world and in fact the rugby fame was just a dream. The rugby sustenance in the greater East London area was actually provided, maintained and promoted by the industrial rugby. The forced removals were a serious problem indeed because of a number of reasons. For instance, grounds were not laid before the first group of people arrived at Mdantsane...only the houses that were erected before...without the supporting infrastructural systems like roads, schools, playing grounds, post offices, clinics, schools, community halls and other necessary and basic support systems, which were actually provided years later. As a result, people suffered and a lot of things were destroyed: lots of clubs, social groups and sportsmen and musicians lost their careers due to that... and s against the emergence of numerous alcoholics, drug addicts and criminals. ...because people didn't have entertainment and were just not positively occupied in their leisure time, drinking places like Jabulani at NU 1 and many other shebeens emerged and outnumbered the recreational facilities...¹⁶²

However, in the initial stages, there was a possibility of conflict of interest between the local clubs and the IL organisers. IL organisers curbed this early before any serious confrontation surfaced because players were always prompted not to abandon their clubs for the IL. Achieving this however meant that players were to undergo a mammoth task for some time because they would play for their own clubs on Saturdays and then be expected to play for his firm club on Sunday. Ngqondela says sometimes serious decisions had to be made and 'at one point it became a question of allegiance. Players sometimes had had to choose between the two league fixtures'.¹⁶³ Mjo argues that this was made easier by the fact that the IL from the beginning advised their players that they were being kept busy while club rugby was inactive. In fact, he had his own club, Swallows, that he did not forsake.

¹⁶¹Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁶²Interview Dunga & Magqabi.

¹⁶³Interview Ngqondela.

The Industrial Leagues were popular and drew large crowds on school fields such as Hlokomla and Mzomhle. The latter was the most favoured venue. There is no doubt that the IL played a crucial role in maintaining rugby interest, participation and development of the game in the area. It offered an ideal opportunity for new players that doubted their rugby-playing prowess to break into big township clubs. The Industrial League unearthed great rugby talent.¹⁶⁴ Ngqondela says 'the ups-and-downs in community life owing to the forced removals were somewhat neutralised and cushioned by these IL fixtures. Apart from many day-to-day life challenges, community people were for a long time longing desperately to watch rugby, which was nearly destroyed by the relocation. They got the much-needed entertainment from these IL matches'.

Following the resettlement at Mdantsane, EL rugby and players had to contend with many challenges. For example, players were expected to attend practise sessions and play for their firm team in the Industrial Leagues while at the same time having to travel to and from Ziphunzana, honouring his club's matches. This had a bad effect on the development of the game and in fact various problems arose. Time and money became a major factor as not all players were working and thus failed to honour practice sessions, with rugby suffering severely in the process. Those who were working struggled to secure adequate time to succeed considering their tight working and rugby schedule, transport delays and shortages and unbearable costs. Subsequently, in 1972 a decision was taken on the initiative of administrators like Skolo and Dubula of Black Lion RFC that rugby should be played at Mdantsane township. Ngqondela feels that Black Lion must be credited for their bold proposal that apart from the old GRFU, a new union, MDARU, should be formed.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴Interview Ngqondela.

¹⁶⁵Interview Ngqondela; Tengimfene.

Rugby Transforms Decisively, 1970s-1980s: The Birth of Non-racial Sports in EL and in the Border Region

The birth and naming of the new union, the MDARU, came in a highly politically sensitive era both in terms of black rugby development and in the country's politics.¹⁶⁶ Apartheid gave rise to its antithesis: a powerful national movement in favour of non-racialism and democracy in the country.¹⁶⁷ The early 1970s saw the great paradigm shift as the principles of non-racialism in sport took centre-stage. As it was to be expected, there was noticeable reluctance and at worst serious resistance to this change amongst the old administrators. However the tide was too strong to contend with as clubs and sub-unions defected to SARU in large numbers. Sport, especially rugby, became a vehicle for demonstrating the people's anger and mobilising the masses. Pro-SARU administrators such as Skolo, Tengimfene, Metele, George, Caga, Tyhulu, Fonte, Tyamazhe, Nyondo, Qeqe, Badela and others became prominent targets for harassment and repression by the apartheid government and its agents. The big split and other related events that were unfolding in Port Elizabeth and across the rest of the country became a catalyst for the intensification of this fight against "non-racialists". These events were to have a major impact in the turn of events in black rugby. Strong waves of change since the split in PE marked the direct emergence of intense political consciousness in sport. Many became increasingly aware of South Africa's segregationist governance that severely oppressed the black majority. More sport people got directly and practically involved in the broader political struggles. The central theme of the day was SACOS's view that "there could no normal sport in an abnormal society". This was the initiative driven by South African political leaders fighting against the apartheid regime. This was mainly pioneered and led by the predominantly coloured rugby clubs under the auspices of Abdullah Abass and Ebrahim Patel's SARU. At the time SARU was one of the affiliates of SACOS. Following the stormy events in PE, this wave of change ultimately reached EL as well.

¹⁶⁶Interview Ngqondela.

¹⁶⁷See Grundlingh et al *Beyond the Tryline*, 1989, p.51.

Background: The Rugby Split in Port Elizabeth

It seems that the prevailing circumstances and material conditions at the time rather than its own convictions compelled African rugby to adhere to non-racialism in sport. The change in this section of the black population emerged under rather bizarre circumstances. It seems to have been prompted by factors with little or no political relationship as might have been assumed. The big split in Port Elizabeth that shaped the new direction that the entire black rugby was to take from the 1970s onwards, illustrates this.

The non-racial move started as a result of infighting and conflict of interest between the administrators. This started within the PEARFB led by WM Singaphi. This says a lot about the nature and character of some of this section of the black population. For instance, WM Singaphi is described as a man who never enjoyed universal admiration within African rugby circles. Peires states that Singaphi was described by his political opponents as 'doubtless unfair, always after money and the sort of man who would threaten to physically assault you at a public meeting'.¹⁶⁸ He is also the man who together with WL Dwesi, who coached the 1979 South African Barbarians during the British Lions tour, and Gecelo Curnick Mdyesha, the former president of pro-Craven SARA, held their own tournament in PE countering the official national tournament in Umtata in 1969. Thus Singaphi created many problems for himself within the PEARFB. His vice-president, Mono Badela, who was at the time the PE correspondent of *The World*, led his critics. The problem started after Singaphi's board refused to suspend weekend matches that were to be played during Eric Majola's funeral, the famous legendary black rugby player, *ichungechunge lomdlali*, who died tragically in a car accident. Suspension of matches was expected especially in Port Elizabeth, his home. However, Singaphi decided otherwise, declined Majola's Spring Rose club's request to suspend matches, perhaps because he hailed from a rival club, Union.¹⁶⁹ Spring Rose, supported by nine out of twelve PE first league clubs, subsequently left PEARFB to form the KWARU in 1971. This incident was to have a major impact on the development of black rugby. PE clubs and the entire PEARFB were a major force

¹⁶⁸See Peires, "Facta non Verba," 1981, p.4. In 1969, Singaphi was the secretary of the SAARFB and president of the PEARFB. He later in his life became the Port Elizabeth Community Council in 1981.

¹⁶⁹Interview Ngqondela.

as far as EP rugby is concerned. They played a crucial role in the development of rugby in the entire province and in the country at large. The 1971 split therefore signalled a major setback within the PEARFB, EP, SAARFB and the entire black rugby community.

This split meant that the 'cream' of African rugby was going to be marginalized especially after KWARU's requests and appeals to be recognised as a separate union by the EPARFB and SAARFB were rejected.¹⁷⁰ The EPRFB comprised delegates from Uitenhage, Grahamstown and Singaphi's PEARFB was in fact expected to turndown KWARU's request owing to the reasons explained earlier but its backing by the mother body, SAARFB, led by Grant Kgomo, seems difficult to explain. The SAARFB decided to reject KWARU's plea on the basis that it was bound by a 1965 resolution prohibiting the recognition of 'mushroom' unions, and was pressured by the EPRFB to implement that ruling. This was also consistent with the earlier cited SAARFB's 1959 ruling on the Border Rugby Union of Smiths Xiniwe and LF Siyo. This happened though some provinces attempted, to no effect, to show their dissatisfaction with Singaphi's board through the national body.¹⁷¹ Thus KWARU, on the advice by Eastern Province Coloured Rugby Union (EPCRU) subsequently applied successfully for affiliation to SARU.

It was unfortunate that a small personal conflict caused such a dramatic split in PE, EP, SAARFB and the entire African rugby fraternity. Though later a Spring Rose led splinter group took a lead in advancing and spreading non-racial sport, it is known that they got involved at this stage by sheer desperation and absolute chance. Peires argues that the birth of the KWARU was not primarily motivated by *political* considerations, but by the desire of the clubs to escape the corruption and maladministration of the PEARFB. The fact that in the initial stages of its breakaway, KWARU's executive committee did not contemplate abandoning the SAARFB, which was still committed to the official government policy of multinational sport but rather opted to beg their local province, EPARFB and later appeal to the national body for recognition,

¹⁷⁰See Peires, "Facta non Verba," 1981, p.5.

¹⁷¹Interview Mtshizana.

buttresses this point.¹⁷² Analysing KWARU's split and the nature of black rugby in the late 1960s and 1970s, Ndimhle Ngqondela argues that

...KWARU got a scapegoat to align its with the SARU's non-racial rugby...a number of things that have happened in our rugby...that split was the most dramatic move that has ever occurred to us and at worst, it was the main cause that our rugby dramatically declined in standard...changed to the worst, *iphenduk'ibenguqulukubhode*. Though there were of course some who felt that they couldn't mix politics and rugby...that led to a situation where our rugby got severely divided into two major camps. In fact rugby in South Africa ended up governed under four bodies that included the white apartheid board...In our side there was the SAARFB...led by Grant Kgomo, Lamani, Dwesi, Tanana, Geleba and others...there was also another national rugby union called SARU which some people referred to as the coloured rugby...*irabhi yamaLawu*...this subsequently led to a situation where some people somewhat felt ridiculed and discouraged to join SARU because it was viewed as a "coloured thing"..."how come people all of a sudden allow themselves to be led by the coloureds?" There was an apparent ethnicity or rather reverse racism...since SARU leaders were mostly the coloureds, Indians and or Malays of Cape Town at the time...There was also another coloured federation...the SARFF led by Cuthbert Loriston...which was a "national" body as well but the difference with it was that it aligned itself with the white board... which believed that it was a right thing for South Africans to play rugby in their own racial groups and residential areas...however, I want to point out that these coloureds also played a real good rugby... We in the SAARFB used to play the so-called "tests" with the coloured federation and that contributed in the division of people according to races...something that Boers enjoyed seeing happening...¹⁷³

These splits were a major challenge within and between the SAARFB and SACRB. A series of splits within these bodies between the 1950s to the 1970s made it difficult for black unity to be realised. Paul Dobson described at length many cases in which disagreements within the African board led to personality clashes, physical confrontations, disorderly meetings, suspensions, court cases and breakaways. The SACRB also experienced serious internal problems during this period, with the rift between the leaders of the Western Province League and the Kimberley-based leadership of the national board. The end result of this was the birth of SARFF in 1959, led by Cuthbert Loriston. Just as with most other splits, Dobson declared that it was the power struggle between Loriston and Abdullah Abass, Kester's predecessor, not political or religious differences, that were responsible for the formation of the new body.¹⁷⁴

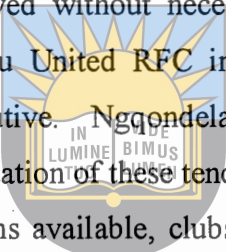
¹⁷²See Peires, "Facta non Verba", 1981, p.5.

¹⁷³Interview Ngqondela.

¹⁷⁴See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.176-7.

The Birth and the Birth of MDARU

Black rugby suffered a substantial blow during the 1970s and 1980s. This turmoil spread through the country such that traditionally strong rugby centres like Border, in particular its Gompo and later MDARU sub-union, was greatly affected. Subsequent to the 1970s PE split, some MDARU clubs also deserted MDARU for SARU's East London Rugby Union (ELRU), which was at the time predominantly coloured based at Vergenoeg. ELRU was the sub-union of the non-racial Border Rugby Union (BRU), all affiliating to SARU as its mother body. However, as has been indicated, this move was also prompted by factors with very little to do with the non-racial principle. This move, as in PE, was also characterised by flimsy excuses that some believe might have been resolved without necessarily initiating a split.¹⁷⁵ The main concerns that were raised by Thembu United RFC involved operational and administrative challenges within the MDARU executive. Ngqondela's earlier assertion about the Thembu United RFC's split is a typical manifestation of these tendencies. In 1975, instead of raising their concerns through the relevant platforms available, clubs opted to break away. The same year that Thembu United moved to SARU, Fort Hare RFC, 'Blues' also sought affiliation to the same body.



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This change became difficult for some to comprehend. It should be said that Winter Rose's split and its decision to ultimately join SARU's sub-union was however evidently a matter of principle as opposed to Thembu United's case. For example, the Winter Rose RFC got divided into two sections, with one section retaining its affiliation to MDARU while the other moved to join ELRU. The Winter Rose's group that decided to join ELRU included Fort Hare students within the club. These students, as individuals and an institution made an immense contribution to the general political awareness and instilled the principle of non-racial sports amongst rugby enthusiasts in EL, Mdantsane, and Victoria East and even in the country at large during this time. The students were central to the quest to transform African rugby. Those within Winter Rose, fought for the principle such that the club divided into the said two sections. The critical issue at hand was the decision to remain at Mdantsane, continuing to support racial

¹⁷⁵See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.176-7.

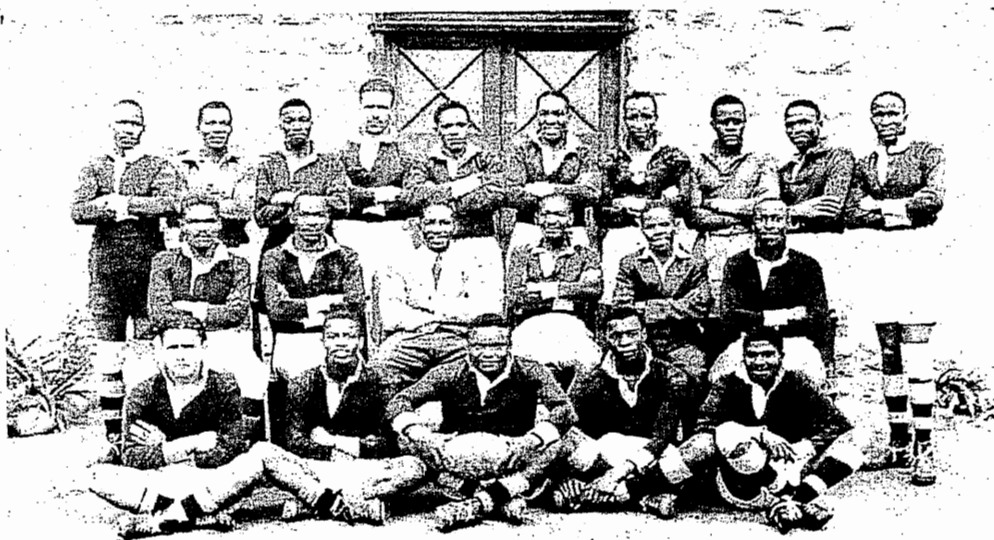
rugby and the apartheid multinational sport policy under MDARU, or join the non-racial ELRU. The older and conservative club members were sceptical of 'mixing sport and politics'.¹⁷⁶ Following long deliberations, the club's youth, realising that they were being undermined, decided to join the non-racial fold. These young men felt that they were not afforded their rightful opportunity to express and practise their views by the old stalwarts, and thus decided to leave for ELRU.

By the time MDARU decided to endorse the non-racial principle and affiliate to SARU in 1977, some of its traditional clubs such as Thembu United, a section of Winter Rose and Boiling Water were already playing under the ELRU sub-union. Without underestimating KWARU's vigorous contribution and the manner in which it approached the issue of non-racial sport in South Africa, there are other forces that also made their mark. These forces also made an immense contribution to the spread of this principle in the region. Fundamental to these was the influence of Fort Hare rugby and its branch the Victoria East Rugby Union (VERU), established in 1974.¹⁷⁷ Things were beginning to take a political tinge in the early 1970s as already mentioned. The disturbances within the SAARFB and the influence of the Black Consciousness at the time made a major impact on black rugby. The Fort Hare rugby team has been loosely affiliated to and in fact, 'misused and exploited' by BBRFB, later Border African Rugby Football Board (BARFB), and its mother body, the SABRFB and later SAARFB alike.¹⁷⁸ For many years, Fort Hare players earned provincial and national colours through the BBRFB/BARFB; BCRB; Midlands and the EP, the affiliates of SAARFB and SACRB respectively. The revolutionary politics of Fort Hare did not, at this stage, permeate sports. In its long history, stretching for about seven decades within the SABRFB, Fort Hare produced many provincial and Springbok players. Players such as these in the 1947 Fort Hare Team as shown in the photo below:

¹⁷⁶See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.176-7.

¹⁷⁷See Booley, AM, *Forgotten Heroes* 1998, p.121.

¹⁷⁸See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125; Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts in the former player's Honorary Ceremony, held at Sport Centre, Fort Hare, 29th March 2002.



In the front row, from left to right: DD Siwisa, Koloba, Burgess, Lujabe, Mayekiso, Manjezi, Mogale, Phukwana, Makhene, Yanta, Mzimba, Mpamba, Van Vught, Yanta, Zondeki, Qunta, Mrwetyana.¹⁷⁹

Players such as Pat Cossie, KB Tabata and many others featured prominently in the Fort Hare team throughout the 1940s. Sipho Siwisa, Victor Siwisa, Grant Kgomo, Dumile Kondile, Reverend Tokota, Mono Badela, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Ray Mali, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Sdondi Ceko, PV Maneli, Norman Wilson, H Pienaar, Zola Ngcakani, Tinny Siphuka, Andrew Masondo, Hendricks, Titus, Terror Mtwaphi, Mazwi Mzamane and a many others during the 1950s and 1960s. The 1970s and 1980s saw players such as Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, Mzobanzi "Mzobs" Mboya, Monde Ngada, Ronnie Cebisa, Liston Ntshongwana, David Mnwana, Mpumelo Makhunu, ^{Mabunu Sexuza} Sotuzza and many others. This generation was followed by players such as Xolile 'Kid' Nojoko, Mbulelo Ntshokoma, Yonana, Terror Longca (sic), Ashes Mbebe, Mphuthumi Damane, Sarge Sabani, with forwards including Thobile Mahlakahlaka, Pumzile Mahlakahlaka, Lunku Gaxamba, Mazizi Guwa, Dumalisile ^{Ngwenka} Ngenka (Fundi), Sizwe Kondile, Joseph Tshume, Ntsiki Ntweni, Smuts Ngonyama, ^{Tim} Tom Tukani, Mtheleli Kondile, Mongezi Vika, Thobile ^{Makhamba} Makhwabe, Zola Yeye, and numerous others. The likes of Vuyisile Qunta, Silumko Sokupa, Ben Ntonga, Singatha Mafanya, Ronnie Cebisa, Gideon Sam, Reverend

¹⁷⁹This photo was supplied courtesy of Ms Yolisa Khambule-Soul, the Fort Hare University, who indicated that DD Siwisa's daughter and now the wife of the current Eastern Cape Premier, Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, Mrs N Stofile, donated this photo to UFH Library.

MA Stofile, GN Stofile, D Jobodwana, R Currie, M Tyamzashe, M Mana, GX Ponono, MN Balfour, S Sintu, G Sam and others as hailed administrators from the institution over the years.¹⁸⁰ These men were so dedicated that they would pay their own expenses to attend meetings irrespective of where they were held and would do the same with transporting the team to any provincial match. VERU delegates at SARU meetings were respected for their debating skills and diligence in handling sensitive issues. This earned them long lasting respect in SARU. Reverend Makhenkesi Stofile says, 'the nature and character of our administrators and the entire administration was outstandingly disciplined such that where ever were go we were taken seriously. Even today, we are still taken seriously'.¹⁸¹

Fort Hare rugby started taking on a political tinge during the 1970s. Possibly due to the influence of black Consciousness and the arguments within the SAARFB, the students were beginning to make a significant impact on rugby. Under the leadership of Vuyisile Qunta, the 1970 season laid the foundation for change. As they began to earn respect on the field, they also sought to achieve the same at organisational level. The primary aim was to seek affiliation to the Border African Rugby Board through its sub-union, Zwelitsha African Rugby Union (ZARU). However, that effort failed mainly due to what is referred to as 'lack of vision of the Gordon Qumza's leadership. At the time Border provincial administration mainly focussed on poaching good players from the rural areas and neighbouring institutions like Healdtown, Lovedale and Fort Hare'.¹⁸² Nurturing of rugby talent and leadership at these peripheral areas did not seem to matter to them. In fairness to these early administrators, this was how rugby was organised at the time. 'Selfish interests superseded anything else, with Border, EP and Midlands happy to secure match winning combinations without developing their home clubs and areas of origin'.¹⁸³ These tendencies continued with tension simmering over the use of Fort Hare players for the SARA - Leopard matches against the touring England team. Most chose to boycott them but

¹⁸⁰See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, pp.120-124.

¹⁸¹Stofile, speaking in the VERU Veterans Anniversary Ceremony held at University of Fort Hare, March 2002.

¹⁸²See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125

¹⁸³See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125. Stofile, addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts in the former player's Honorary Ceremony, held at Sport Centre, Fort Hare, 29 March 2002.

Liston Ntshongwana, Cebisa, Mnwana, C Mgweba, Mtyongwe honoured their selection. Others became an anti-SARA lobby, led by Vuyisile Qunta, Ben Ntonga, Silumko Sokupa and Peace Ngquba. Arnold Stofile joined the group in boycotting SARA matches despite being constantly selected to play.¹⁸⁴

It was through the influence of students such as Sokupa and Simon Mlonyeni, who linked up with activists like Mluleki George, Albert Tyhulu and Robert Fonte, that a new King & District Rugby Union (Kadru), the then SARU affiliate, was born in the 1970s. This union immediately contacted the SARU's BRU sub-unions, King William Town and East London, and strengthened the latter. It was at this time that the tendency to split caught up with some of the clubs within the SARA's MDARU in the area. Simon Mlonyeni's Winter Rose split into two sections as mentioned earlier. By this time former Fort Hare students such as Slabbert Mbiza with reinforcement from Healdtown and Lovedale's successor, Lennox Sebe Teachers College, linked up with rugby administrators like Daba in strengthening the newly established union. A similar move was witnessed amongst students hailing from the greater Queenstown area who worked with people such as Six Nxele, Titus Oom Teys, Sondlo and Rodolo in establishing the Frontier Rugby Union (FRU) under the auspices of SARU. Sondlo, the 1950s Johannesburg activist, a cofounder of the SABRFB, later had a remarkable influence on Frontier rugby and SARU. Fort Hare students from the Western Cape also worked hard and managed to lure Western Province Board to the ranks of the non-racial SARU.

In 1973 VERU, with just a handful of clubs emerged and immediately, and successfully, sought affiliation with the South Eastern Districts Rugby Union (SEDRU) of Grahamstown. The pillar of strength within the newly formed VERU was the University rugby team. At the time, SEDRU had recently secured its affiliation within the SARU non-racial family. The SEDRU was itself a newly formed body under the leadership of Denis Siwisa in the Albany area, who didn't hesitate to welcome VERU within its ranks. Central to VERU's move to seek affiliation to SEDRU were the former Fort Harians such as Ronnie Cebisa, and Gideon Sam. The VERU officials continued to seek ways to achieve their main aim of being an autonomous province with

¹⁸⁴See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125. Stofile, addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts in the former player's Honorary Ceremony, held at Sport Centre, Fort Hare, 29 March 2002.

direct affiliation to SARU. This it achieved and in fact, at the time things were not really well between them and their hosts, SEDRU. By 1975 VERU had managed to attain provincial status from the mother body, SARU, with Fort Hare already one of its fully-fledged members. From its initial four clubs, VERU grew to thirty clubs by 1981 with its new boundaries stretching from Middeldrift in the east to Somerset East and Cradock in the west. Subsequently, through the student influence, the SARU-aligned Transkei Rugby Union (TRU) was also established. Fundamental to these achievements were the intensive mass mobilisation drives and serious interventions within the local communities. With rugby playing students increasing, more teams were formed at Fort Hare and to constantly occupy them, various levels of club competition were undertaken. This saw 'for the first time, the university buses and students penetrating the local surrounding villages to play and raising the standard of the game'.¹⁸⁵ Fort Hare students travelled throughout the country playing against highly competitive clubs and sub-unions or even unions, which the students had assisted in establishing. Local schools also reaped good fruit from these programmes, seeing their rugby standard rising, as many Fort Hare senior players empowered them by adopting some for training and coaching. As rugby developed so did human relations amongst these groups. To a certain degree it could be said that the latter was no new practice and culture within Fort Hare rugby. The seasons between 1958 and 1961 are believed to have made some strides in terms of contributing to the socio-cultural life of the Alice communities though that was limited to entertainment and individual assistance from the students of the time. Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo says

...While we were still at Fort Hare, all four of us, myself, Simo Mjo (scrumhalf), Sobhizana Mngqikana (flyhalf), Sdondi Ceko (first centre) and PV Maneli (second centre), used to be invited by the rugby clubs outside the university such as Fort Beaufort's Winter Rose and Ntselamanzi Tigers. We used to set these whole villages alight with our rugby...all the villages would come out to watch us in action. We used to travel as far as greater the King Williams Town... Zwelitsha people still vividly remember one of our matches that we played there against their club...We were recruited by Tiger RFC of Ntselamanzi to play for them against the Malusi brothers' clubs called Swallows a t Zone 6, Zwelitsha...those people still "quote" that match as if it was a provincial encounter, only because we were there displaying excellent rugby skills...¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, pp.120-124.

¹⁸⁶ Interview Mjo.

This was in fact the era that Fort Hare rugby was at its highest levels ever. Mzwandile Caga asserts that the 1959-1960 season produced the most powerful Fort Hare team over the years, with the East London trio dominating black rugby. Mjo says

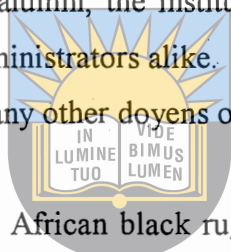
...Rugby fans would come as far as Ntselamanzi, the surrounding villages and the Alice town itself...we played good rugby such that everybody took note of this and as a result some soccer guys came over wanting to join us in rugby. There was another guy called Tinny Siphuka who was from North West [Province, as newly demarcated in the democratic SA, and formally Bophuthatswan] who wanted to play rugby, and he played wing, and another guy called Andrew Masondo who also joined us in rugby. In fact, he once described rugby as a "wonderful" game. Since then, whenever we play, our field would be packed to capacity. The interest grew so much that people would from time to time enquire about our following match...looking forward to it with zeal...We even played our matches outside campus, in Alice and other places and all the time I played as first teams' scrumhalf. When I arrived at Fort Hare for the first time in 1958 the scrumhalf was Reverend Tokota, who unfortunately had to be relegated to the second team. PV Maneli, played at fly half then the centres were Titus, a coloured guy and Mono Badela, Hendricks, a coloured guy from Western Cape and Terror Mtswaphi and the full-back was Mazwi Mzamane, who was originally from East London...¹⁸⁷

Following passage of the 'SACOS Double Standard' resolution 1978, things were to change in non-racial sport. Non-racial clubs were prohibited from using apartheid facilities. However, with the intervention of Reverend Arnold Makhenkesi Stofile, Gideon Sam and Toby Titus of SARU, the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and the University of the Western Cape (UWC) rugby clubs were accorded special exemption from the application of the resolution in recognition to their using these facilities without compromising the principle of non-racialism. Their argument was that black communities like Alice had no alternative sport facilities and thus, without that arrangement, rugby could have probably entirely died with non-racialism the casualty.¹⁸⁸ From that position of strength, Fort Hare imposed her influence on intervarsity programmes for black universities. Following the 1978 intervarsity events at Fort Hare's Davidson Grounds, there was no looking back, even for noncommittal codes like soccer, tennis and softball. Many of those who were involved in these activities acknowledge that this was indeed a tough journey. For instance, on many occasions personal resources were utilised though some players did not readily understand why they had to play in barren fields parodying rugby fields. Some players were from comfortable urban area and clubs and had no commitment

¹⁸⁷Interview Mjo. Note that Andrew Masondo went on to be a member of MK, exile in Angola, Tanzania and elsewhere, and has just retired as a general in the South African National Defense Force (SANDF).

¹⁸⁸Stofile addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts at Fort Hare, 29th March 2002; see Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, pp.120-124.

to rural rugby. However, many of those who understood the hidden message of the situation and managed to handle this experience lived to become acclaimed freedom fighters, politicians or civil servants of the new democratic, and non-racial South Africa. 'It is no exaggeration to say that "Luma Blues", the University of Fort Hare rugby club, is the founder of non-racialism in sport in the VERU district.'¹⁸⁹ However, Reverend Stofile says that credit should be given to the old rugby enthusiasts of the area such as Ronnie Cebisa, who with an understandable reluctance, accepted and supported the emerging non-racialism principle. 'I want to say, if it was not for these men and their support, I don't think that we could have achieved what we wanted to achieve'.¹⁹⁰ The Fort Hare rugby club also contributed to the establishment of numerous other SARU unions in South Africa, much as the entire institution produced African leaders and academics. Amongst such illustrious alumni, the institution produced some of South Africa's top sportspersons, both players and administrators alike. The club can proudly claim that it kept alive the spirit of Dennis Brutus and many other doyens of non-racialism at Fort Hare.¹⁹¹



Paramount to the 1970s South African black rugby society was that when a call for a stay-away was made, everybody responded. Stofile says, 'when we said, "its Sharpville Day today, we are not going to work and play", people responded accordingly. When we said, "its Workers Day today", people understood what we meant'.¹⁹² Things developed so fast that by 1972 'SARA did not have even a single club in East London, not to mention a field to play'. All the clubs that were initially under GRFU and later MDARU were already within the non-racial MDARU and ELRU, within the non-racial fold of SARU. SARA could only claim a few individuals but not clubs as such in the EL area.¹⁹³ 'In fact we were laughing at them and calling them *Amahlosi*, the Leopards, the name of their "national" team'.¹⁹⁴ SARA was relatively strong in the rural area and in the Transkei and that was where it got players for its Leopards team.

¹⁸⁹ See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.123.

¹⁹⁰ Stofile addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts at Fort Hare, 29 March 2002.

¹⁹¹ See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.123.

¹⁹² Stofile addressing VERU veterans and rugby enthusiasts at Fort Hare, 29 March 2002.

¹⁹³ Interview Tengimfene.

¹⁹⁴ Interview Tengimfene.

Following SAARFB, SARFF and SARFB's understanding and alliance, the names of the African and white boards changed to SARA and SARB respectively as indicated earlier. SARA and SARFF were no longer allowed to refer to their 'national' teams as Springboks as before but Leopards and Proteas respectively. In justifying the ideological separation of emblems on racial lines, 'a lot of anthropological nonsense was used by Dr [Danie] Craven and company'.¹⁹⁵ This was indicative of the inferior status they had under the establishment board and 'it should be understood that the whole thing was very much political. We broke off because of our politics. That was the start of our struggle against differentiation from the white people'.¹⁹⁶

It has been seen that in 1972 GRFU fixtures were moved to Mdantsane and that marked the birth of MDARU. Following many setbacks such as relocation, this new union needed to be strengthened in many ways. MDARU's first president was Skolo with Ben 'Ta Ben' Tengimfene succeeding him in 1978, the position he held until 1980. He refused to stand in 1981 due to academic commitments. Tengimfene says

...We usually held our meetings at Mzomhle high school in the evenings...tak[ing] half the night arguing about this and that. But people were very keen in playing their rugby and we really became a strong union. This was MDARU but the coloureds and some black teams, for instance Winter Rose RFC...split into two clubs...Winter Rose under MDARU while the other section remained down within the ELRU. Boiling Water also remained together with Thembu United RFC, the whole of Thembu remained with the coloureds. There was that rivalry and I can easily say that the strongest of these unions were MDARU, ELRU and Zwelitsha... there was a year when we all beaten by Zwelitsha and the rivalry between MDARU and ELRU continued to exist. There was also the King Williams Town and Districts, which included Ginsberg and the surrounding areas; and Zwelitsha Rugby Union being part of us as well, and later we were joined Peddie, then Stutterheim and districts and later Keiskammahoek Rugby Union; Middledrift tried to join us but it was very weak...Kei Road and...Komga...joined at a later stage as well... we would hold fixtures... MDARU at the time had about fourteen clubs...With all those clubs there was Wallabies RFC, my club...I was MDARU president in 1978, 1979, 1980...and I had to go to Rhodes University...and that was when I last participated in active rugby...after that I didn't go back to settle in Mdantsane. In fact I trying to get away from the place because of the treatment we were getting from the security police...in 1984, in fact by the end of 1983, I called them together and told them that I won't be taking any active part in the administration of rugby as I had my education to concentrate on...¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125.

¹⁹⁶See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998, p.125.

¹⁹⁷Interview Tengimfene.

MDARU-SARU: Successes and Challenges enroute to SA's Rugby Unity, 1970s-1980s

In the 1977 season MDARU was “reborn” within the non-racial family, a move that brought discomfort, trauma and disillusionment to some with eventual resistance surfacing. However, it became apparent that change was inevitable, thus, ‘ultimately many saw the light’.¹⁹⁸ At the time there were inter-union tournaments that were organised by the non-racial Border Rugby Union (BRU), the provincial union at the time. ‘Almost ninety nine percent of rugby clubs in the EL region, including MDARU affiliates supported and associated themselves with the non-racial fold’.¹⁹⁹ However, with this widespread change within rugby, some clubs in the rural areas continued to encourage racial rugby under SAARFB, later SARA. Having lost urban support, SARA officials concentrated on rural clubs and on the mines around the Free State Gold Fields and Transvaal. These mines had good developed players with access to sophisticated training methods and facilities and adequate funding. At this time mining companies were embarking on serious recruitment campaigns specifically “dangling the carrot” in the form of job offers for their prospective players in exchange for playing services. Thus, some former well-known rugby personalities secured coaching jobs for these teams and SARA sides. For example, people such as the Cushe brothers (Morgan Cushe and Meshack Cushe) of Uitenhage were amongst recruits to coach in the mines and for SARA teams in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Black rugby in the greater Border region, with MDARU (ELRU and Zwelitsha) dominating the rest, had had to contend with other challenges such as the administration of the game. MDARU experienced numerous difficulties especially with regard to the nature of administration since the early days of GRFU in the old EBL in Duncan Village of East London. Some members from particular clubs dominated management positions and administration of the board, union and other influential sports structures by manipulating the strategic positions they assumed. It became apparent that coming to Mdantsane and the emergence of non-racial sport, ‘meant that things were to change for the better and/or for worse, for good’.²⁰⁰ Ngqondela says

¹⁹⁸Interview Tengimfene; Ngqondela; Twaku; Puzi.

¹⁹⁹Interview Ngqondela.

²⁰⁰Interview Ngqondela; Twaku; Puzi; Tengimfene; Magqabi & Dunga.

...there were lots of unnecessary squabbles, *uchuku beluluninzi kakhulu*...something that I can call...“vengeance” within rugby administrators of the day...when rugby was still played in EL under the GRFU, a number of Swallows members were serving in the administration...When we came to Mdantsane it was clear that there was a move to prove a point that a time has come for that to change...a sort of saying, “now you are to listen to us, because your time is over”...This manifested itself in many ways. There was plain bigotry against Swallows. This unfortunately had a negative impact on the standards of rugby and the to whole *fair play principle* of sport...There were lots of petty issues...People who were administering the club rugby in this region would openly pride themselves and happily show appreciation when the Swallows is found to be at fault...reprimanded...punished, even if the end result would be detrimental to the game itself generally...Yes, *iSwallows ibikhe yanothuko* [there were moments where Swallows got a ran for its money]...in a number of ways both in terms of losing important matches and within its internal matters, around the 1970s...later on it came up very strong and proved itself to be a real force to be reckoned with in the 1980s. The man who was the coach at the time was Sizwe Balie...²⁰¹

It became apparent that Mdantsane rugby was to change from that of the GRFU in many ways. The balance of power tilted and influential positions were assumed by a particular brand of leader. Winter Rose and Bush Buck that were once branded as *amaqab'akuXaxazena* and *amaGcaleka*, respectively, began to assume vital administrative positions. Thus, Swallows' dominance was slowly becoming a thing of the past. At worst, as Ngqondela indicates above, its glorious days seemed to fade and its challenges overwhelmed it. Controversial decisions made against the club became more prevalent. Dumisani Mhani, the former Swallows captain, says:

...in 1987 we were suspended by the MDARU for the whole season...We felt that we were “robbed” because the season was wrapped-up before other important things were sorted out. For instance, we felt that we were cheated within the zonal level competition. We believed to have won the zonal competition and or at least managed to secure a place in the final. But unfortunately, the administration at the time dismissed our protests and... out of frustration...we misbehaved...we disrupted the Border Champs of Champs games...we invaded the pitch...and Border called on MDARU to account on this behaviour, putting pressure...and this led to our suspension in the beginning of the 1987 season and that meant that the whole Swallows, both the first and the second teams wouldn't play for the whole of 1987 season...One of the conditions of our suspension by MDARU and BRU was that we couldn't play against any of its affiliate clubs up until our suspension is over...and we came back the following season...and gained our *form* and high standard in 1988 after the ban was lifted...We become champions since then up until the end of MDARU during the unification process of all different unions in the region and the formation of a single Border Rugby Football Union in 1991...in my rugby career, we won the MDARU championship, the Zonal competition, the Knockout competition and the Border Shield...in fact our club won the Border Champions for four consecutive seasons²⁰²

Despite some internal differences, EL rugby survived within SARU. EL clubs within MDARU and ELRU continued to dominate other BRU sub-unions with Swallows, Wallabies

²⁰¹Interview Ngqondela.

²⁰²Interview Mhani.

and Winter Rose excelling in club rugby in the 1980s till South African rugby amalgamation. Young players such as Welcome Dunteni, Thobile Mtya, Mobs Mabele, Gibson Gawulayo, Dumisani Mhani emerged. Mhani says

...I started playing for the Swallows in 1981...what was interesting was that most people believed and prophesied that the Swallows had a great future player in me. Many would often say, "Swallows has secured itself a ten-year long future scrumhalf investment" in me...we became the second team Champions of MDARU...we were dominating all the team within the sub-union. We were just unbeaten in the championships and in the zonal sections. After that I was promoted to the first team'.²⁰³

At the time MDARU had three major competitions that included the league Championship, the Zonal trophy and the Knockout Trophy. The winner of the MDARU Championship would represent MDARU in the Border Champ of Champs and compete against the other Border sub-unions such as ELRU, Keiskammahoek Rugby Union, King West Rugby Union (KWERU) which comprised Dimbaza and the surrounding areas, King and Central District Rugby Union and Peddie Rugby Union (PERU). Clubs that won the Championship under their respective sub-union played against each other to determine one Border winner that would represent it against other provinces in the SARU Top Eight Competition. Clubs such as Black Lion from Zwelitsha; Head of Lion of Ginsberg; Spring Rose of KWERU; Swallows of MDARU; John Bisseeker of ELRU; Sparrows from Burnshill and Rockers of the Keiskammahoek Rugby Union; Tails of Berlin Rugby Union (BERU), seem to have dominated within their respective unions as they frequently featured in this competition.²⁰⁴ However, it was the Swallows that dominated Border Rugby Union Champs of Champs, winning and representing the province in the Top Eight competition more than any other club in the region since MDARU affiliated to SARU.²⁰⁵ Mhani says Swallows represented Border in the SARU Top Eight competition three times though it failed to capture the trophy. In its first year the club struggled badly but the second and third year it played fairly well as it proceeded to the loser's section. This was a big achievement considering the level of the game in the competition and that the club was in fact representing the entire Border Rugby Union, competing with clubs from all

²⁰³Interview Mhani.

²⁰⁴See *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports – "Top Sports: East London"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, EL, 20th December 1990.

²⁰⁵Interview Mtya; Ngqondela.

SARU provinces across the country. It is apparent that SARU's Top Eight Competition was tough and a real test of club rugby within the various provinces.²⁰⁶

To achieve the highest levels in rugby at the time demanded a lot of creativity, dedication and determination from rugby administrators from club to the highest level. Swallows' response to its suspension in the 1987 season was indicative of this level of motivation and will to succeed. Mhani says

...[following our suspension in 1987...] Fortunately, we had good administrators in the club...Monwabisi Yako and Sizwe Scott Ballie managed to keep us busy for the whole 1987 season by organising matches for us to compete...making it possible to keep us active. They organised matches for us all over and as far as Port Elizabeth, Somerset East and the other places. We also organised some local tournaments...competing with the clubs that were not Border affiliates...the clubs that however, were also playing under the non-racial fold...clubs that believed in non-racial sport but did not belong to any organised body at the time. For instance, the Star of Alice, affectionately known as *Uamlambo*...we were able to play against them...Tigers of Somerset East...and we would also go assist, beef-up and developed the African Bombers in Port Elizabeth...We also played against Fort Hare "Blues" RFC...²⁰⁷

From the mid-1980s through to the 1990s, MDARU seems to have been dominated by Swallows, Wallabies and Winter Rose, with old traditional rivals such as Thembu United, Black Lion, Bush Buck, Spring Rose, Storm Breakers, performing weakly whilst clubs such as Vultures, All Blacks, Orientals, Rovers, Strand Loppers, Hamiltons, Redhounds and Flying Eagles made their presence felt.²⁰⁸ There were many influences that apparently contributed to these fluctuating performances. The ability to adapt in the changing rugby environment and the nature of administrators within the clubs played a significant role in their individual successes or failures.²⁰⁹ Reporting some highlights about Border club-rugby successes in 1990, Eliot Mtshozeni of the *Daily Dispatch* writes

²⁰⁶The competition comprised of clubs that represented all the WP unions, namely: the City and Suburbs union, Tigerberg and the African-dominant Western Province Union within the wider WP's geographic area; EP, Transvaal and many other provinces.

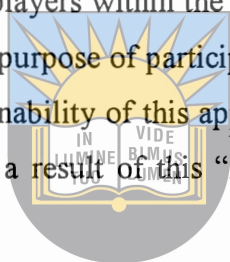
²⁰⁷Interview Mhani.

²⁰⁸See *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Its for the birds"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 14 June 1990, p.16; see *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Head of Lion become new rugby runners up"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 18 October 1990, p.11; See *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports', throughout the 1980 and 1990s.

²⁰⁹Interview Mhani; Mtya; see *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Lions tops"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 14 June 1990, p.5.

...It was a game for the birds when Swallows flew home with an 11-0 win over Vultures after leading 8-0 at half-time...Swallows became Border champ of champions for a second time, and also won the MDARU league and zonal trophies...John Bisseker became the East London Rugby Union dual champions to win both league and knock-out trophies...Playing in the King Central and District, Black Lion kept their unbeaten record intact when they hammered Africans to 30-7...²¹⁰

These results indicate the standard of individual clubs in the area throughout this period. The lines were clearly drawn, with strong and relatively weaker clubs easily distinguishable. The recipe for success in some clubs is an interesting aspect to explore. Mhani and Mtya stress that their clubs had 'star rugby players, continuing to recruit no less quality and prepared to go extra miles to achieve that aim'.²¹¹ Constant good results became the priority in order to maintain clubs' successful records. However, the danger in this approach was that it was undermining the developing of young players within the ranks. This winning at all cost attitude was also beginning to subvert the very purpose of participating in sport itself. Since clubs could not expect to win constantly, the sustainability of this approach is questionable. Furthermore, it could be argued that the successes as a result of this "makeshift" approach were going to be short-lived.



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Things were also never going to be the same within the greater East London rugby, with school rugby continuing to contribute to the development of the game in the area and Border region broadly. The following schools were held in high regard in rugby development and in school sport generally, namely: Mzomhle, Hlokoma and Wongalethu of Mdantsane; John Bisseker High of East London; and Siseko Senior Secondary School of Middledrift; Kuyasa of Dimbaza; and Training school and Thembalabantu Secondary School of Zwelitsha. 'Schools sports were prestigious events within these schools, with rugby being the most popular codes before and during the 1970s and 1980s. These schools were the main "breeding grounds" of players for clubs, provincial and even national teams'.²¹² Puzi asserts that many schools in black communities were for a long time the nurseries of players for clubs in their respective townships.

²¹⁰See *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Its for the birds"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 14 June 1990, p.16; see *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Head of Lion become new rugby runners up"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 18 October 1990, p.11; See *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports', throughout the 1980 and 1990s; *Indaba*, 'Indaba Sports - "Lions tops"', by Elliot Mtshozeni, 14 June 1990, p.5.

²¹¹Interview Mhani; Mtya.

²¹²Interview Puzi.

However, for Puzi, it was during the time of student uprisings, school boycotts and the struggle for freedom in the country that things started to change. Students took the forefront of the struggle and that adversely affected and led to an almost total collapse of the sporting culture in black schools. 'Hence the historically white schools appear to be the main producers of provincial and national players. It is only recent that black school rugby culture is being brought back but unfortunately there are not enough people with either expertise or interest any longer within them who are able to carry this otherwise gigantic project forward'.²¹³ The setback that was suffered by black schools is indicative of the broader challenges that black communities faced. 'Masses of people within these communities involved themselves in political activities in a number of ways, including joining political organisations, on the factory floor, and in trade unions'.²¹⁴ Players also had a role to play as community members and some as workers. They joined political organisations, trade and community-based organisations that dealt with uplifting standards of living. Students also mobilised and some assumed leading roles in fighting the political system, especially the Bantu Education policy and other laws that were enacted to suppress their needs. Thus school rugby and sports suffered and collapsed within black schools.

To Puzi, non-racial sports meant that

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we operated and maintained an entirely non-collaborative approach towards the establishment sports...and with those who supported, observed and upheld the apartheid government policies...we played in the ghettos...show[ing] the...world that the South African government had a bad discriminatory system of government...that deserves to be isolated until it changes and transforms itself into democracy...most sadly, in that process we sacrificed our talents...we didn't play on the limelight, nobody knew much about us...except our own communities...non-racial movement strengthened...spreading throughout the black townships and the rural areas, to a certain extent, it [non-racialism] made inroads...the actual ideology...people acknowledged that they needed to support the call for non-racial sport because it was an ideology in-line with the political struggle...of the day...people supported the non-racial fold...one by one at a time...ELRU was the first sub-union to play under the non-racial SARU fold in the Border region. Then King Central and Districts rugby union, dominated by people from Zone 10 in Zwelitsha...later...MDARU... initially...as individual clubs because an idea of this nature is viewed differently by different people at given times...people have peculiar interests and beliefs... thus, some were seeing "a thing", some were not...ultimately everybody "bought" the idea...the first team to join the non-racial fold in East London was Thembu United followed by a section of Winter Rose, after it broke away from MDARU...then Boiling Water... From Mdantsane Rugby Association [MDARA] clubs, the forerunners to form MDARU-SARU were Wallabies, Black Lion and a couple of other clubs... Swallows people were mainly involved in the administration of MDARA...it is common that administrators who might still be comfortable with the status quo don't often see things the same way other people on the periphery would otherwise view them...particularly, something that will cause a radical change...they often don't feel happy

²¹³ Interview Puzi.

²¹⁴ Interview Puzi.

with such moves...hence it's the affiliates that saw the light at the end of the tunnel and they decided to move...²¹⁵

Tengimfene agrees, indicating that 'SARA was led by stiff neck administrators' such as Chief DM Jongilanga, Chris Mxoto, Gecelo Curnick Mdyesha, Grant Kgomo, former board presidents, Pat Cossie, general secretary; WSM Bashe of Swallows, Siphon Tanana, Fikile Bhengu of Bush Buck and others.²¹⁶ This history is viewed by many as sensitive and thus must be treated with caution. This was evident during data collection for this study, with some respondents feeling uneasy talking freely about these issues. For example Tengimfene says, 'perhaps I wouldn't like to mention their names but they were interposition to us because they were playing with the whites of Danie Craven. I don't want to mention their names really because you know these things...'²¹⁷ The administrators of SARA were also associated with the Ciskei government of LL Sebe. Thus, they would invariably be anti-SARU and in favour of the NP government and its racist policies. It was for this reason that SARA administrators and followers both in their individual capacities and as groups or clubs earned themselves the "sellout" *iimpimpi* labels within their societies and the non-racial rugby fraternity at large.²¹⁸ However, the Swallows seemed to have suffered this predicament more than any other club in the area. Mainly this was because it remained stuck within racial SARA rugby while other clubs joined SARU. Mhani says

...when I arrived at Mdantsane in 1979...there were no clubs that were playing under the racial fold of SARA in the entire East London. Hence Ciskei government established its own CRA, which mainly comprised police and soldier teams...I think it was proper for SARA to die out because it was no longer serving the purpose it was expected and purporting to play... All Mdantsane clubs were far below par...and incomparable to those of the non-racial SARU affiliates...There were clubs that played under SARA before and in fact Swallows was the last club to join MDARU which affiliated to SARU at the time. ...The reason for it to remain within SARA was that...Swallows is a club of the intellectuals, people who wouldn't involve themselves in something before they have analysed and synthesised the situation, testing its viability...Swallows was sceptical of the death of our rugby if African people were to move over to SARU without having discussed further within its ranks...Swallows didn't want to get into untested waters. The club wanted to establish what would its members benefit and or gain from playing under SARU. Swallows

²¹⁵Interview Puzi.

²¹⁶Interview Tengimfene.

²¹⁷Interview Tengimfene.

²¹⁸See Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989; interview Mhani. The word *iimpimpi* in its literal sense meant "an informer" and was generally used to refer to all those that were in anyway collaborating with the apartheid regime and its puppets and agents.

was sceptical of joining an unviable and inefficient rugby body, *unombiliyane wento*, an unwell-established structure that can easily vanish, dump people in the cold... For Swallows, establishing whether SARU would manage to accommodate the wider South African society within the non-racial family it was purporting to cater as opposed to its initial limited coloured group was fundamental. The club joined SARU after it had established these facts...The club was accused of being full of *iimpimpi* because its members and leaders were cautious. The old Swallows people had the impression that to be led by *Amalawu* would not assist and advance the African people's cause and their rugby...it is known that SARU administrators were...mainly coloureds, for instance Ebrahim Patel, its president...thus they [Swallows] were reluctant to join and didn't trust them because they were wary of the idea that coloureds could "sell them out", *bangabathengisa* and that they were also viewed as the "*amper bus*" [the white man's right hands]...These were in fact, the general African's perceptions about the coloureds...that was the situation with the Swallows...²¹⁹

This was how Swallows justified and or explained its sticking within SARA while all the other clubs in the area deserted it. This issue sparks heated debates when it surfaces amongst rugby enthusiasts of the area. It has been generally observed that between blacks and whites, and even within the black population (Africans, Coloureds and Indians), there have been and still are experiences of deep-seated racial differentiation and ethnic or tribal tendencies. These should never be condoned. However, the reality is that these tendencies are constantly surfacing.

However, there is evidence that rugby played a meaningful role in the struggle for liberation of all the oppressed black people in South Africa, irrespective of racial or ethnic group. The apartheid laws differed in the degree to which they affected the black population groups.²²⁰ This was enough to develop a degree of mistrust amongst them, especially considering the "divide-and-rule" principle embedded within this system. With all these socio-political factors, gaining freedom was the ultimate goal of the oppressed black population. For the MDM, the minimum prerequisites for one to be accepted without suspicions involved commitment, identifying with progressive forces and structures, supporting and observing boycotts, appreciating its culture and tradition such *toi-toing* or singing freedom songs, and chanting slogans. This in short meant that one should make an effort to be identified as a *comrade*. In many ways, to earn this trust, participating and being involved in the progressive sport

²¹⁹ Interview Mhani.

²²⁰ For more on "African-Coloured" relationships in South Africa's work place and societies; intergroup and or non-racial mobilisation, see G Adler, "Of Shop Floor and Rugby Fields": The Social Basis of Auto Worker Solidarity,' seminar paper presented in RW 7003 Seminar Room. This paper is drawn from two chapters of Glenn Adler's Doctoral Thesis: "'The factory Belongs to All Who Works in it': Race, Class, and Collective Action in the South African Motor Industry, 1967 - 1986,' Columbia University, 1994), university of Witwatersrand Institute for Advanced Social Research, 1994.

organisations, especially rugby in the Border, EP and the WP, played a pivotal role. Given the nature of the oppressed political organisations in South Africa, sports and politics were inseparable. Openly or covertly, politicians mostly administered sport in black communities. This eased the process of accommodating, accepting and respecting individuals from various ethnic groups in the country. Respondents in this study agree that rugby was, from the early 1970s onwards, “not rugby as usual”, but a combination of game excellence and political manoeuvring.²²¹ Thus, community integration came before internal mistrust within the black oppressed majority. Fighting for a common cause was much more important and this was instilled in people’s minds through involvement in organised politics. Mhani says

...I am sure that there were some intellectuals within the Africans that played a magnificent role in combating this belief [coloured folk suspicion]...tried to neutralise matters within SARU...pronouncing that we are all the same black people...the ANC played a big role in uniting South Africans, both Coloureds and Africans. I am sure that people joined SARU having accepted each other through such political mobilisations and engagements because as a matter of fact these are the very same people who are also leading us within the ANC ranks and some in other non-racial political organisation...that contributed a great deal in promoting unity and minimised conflicts between...Africans and Amalawu...coloureds in our sport structures...In fact, for many years, Africans and coloureds were ever together since the GRFU era and we stood together in socio-political issues such as campaigns...for a united EL - MDARU; one-city-one municipality...it didn’t become a very difficult thing to achieve unity even at national level because politically these groups were ruled by the same leadership, irrespective of being coloureds or Africans within the ANC...²²²

The issue of Africans joining the predominantly traditionally coloured yet non-racial structures such as ELRU, BRU and SARU, can never be reduced to mere “suspect” race-relation issues between these groups. It is much deeper than what appears on the surface. This debate started even before MDARU was conceived. Black rugby in the area was centred at Gompo, in the Duncan Village part of East London. The scourge of forced removals in the early 1960s, saw many people being relocated at Mdantsane. It did not take long for the relocation of rugby closer to the majority. Thus, inevitably, a few years later, a new union bearing the name of the area (MDARU), emerged. It is ironic to note that the same arguments raised in justifying this action, were reiterated in opposition to joining the ELRU just under a decade later. Disbanding MDARU and affiliating to ELRU meant going back to play rugby in East London, where it was

²²¹Interview Tengimfene; Puzi; Mhani; Magqabi & Dunga; Twaku; Mgwebi; Stofile also indicated this in the VERU Veterans Anniversary Ceremony, in 20002; see also Booley, *Forgotten Heroes*, 1998.

²²²Interview Mhani.

initially played. However, this was about twenty-five kilometres from where the majority of people were residing. This also meant that there were serious cost implications to be considered. Tengimfene agrees that though the debate to join ELRU was politically correct, given its non-racial political stance, its application was expensive, especially if the deal meant weekly travelling by the poor majority to and from East London. He says

...it was...political...they felt that we are now being racist when we are forming MDARU only for blacks [Africans]. They wanted us to all belong to ELRU...But we started MDARU though and played our fixtures at Mdantsane. After a year or so my club Wallabies called us to a meeting...I was in its disciplinary committee...it was proposed that we should affiliate to the ELRU and dissolve MDARU...and move away from Mdantsane to play down in East London with the Coloureds just as Thembu, Winter Rose and Boiling Water did...people in my club were divided by this view and I was afraid that the team looked like it was soon going to collapse because it was just about half of the people who wanted to go either way...I wrote a letter to the club and invited them to a meeting as a senior member of the Wallabies...so that we could thrash this problem...I was against us or some of us moving to ELRU...they came to the meeting that was held at Mzomhle High School in the evening. It was full...men and ladies...I reasoned with them saying...ever since we raised the idea of going over to ELRU I have been very worried. I do feel that this is going to kill the club because some of the members of the club are not going to have the money to travel...by bus or taxi when honouring our fixtures in the ELRU every weekend and even to practice during the week...some people were not working...and they were going to afford...leading to a situation where the club just collapses...because we pay rates here in Mdantsane and it was not the fault of anybody that we were moved from East London to Mdantsane...it was decided behind our backs by the white man. And he was doing this exactly for the reason that we are here this evening, so that we should be divided. It was a divide-and-rule stance...I pay my rates in Mdantsane and not in East London where ELRU is, thus, I feel I have a right to all the rugby fields in Mdantsane. They belonged to me and you and why should I forsake what belongs to me now, and go and beg to the people in ELRU? It was not our making that we came over here. We never wanted to, we resisted it but we were forced by the white man to leave East London...to stay among the bushes of Mdantsane. If there is still an open space where we can practice, let's stay here and practice. By the time the meeting was over I had already won everybody...we didn't move...I appealed to them that we shouldn't be divided on this position but we should be one...²²³

In time, MDARU affiliated to SARU, thus, meaning that the dream of being united with the coloureds of the ELRU under the one non-racial BRU was indirectly achieved. The main focus in this struggle was moving towards the non-racial fold, upholding the non-racial principle as opposed to stressing the ideal of being within the ELRU just for the sake of being within the coloured rugby. There was in fact no benefit in reaching the non-racial fold ideal through this route because, at worst, the communities that were already impoverished would be further disadvantaged. Upholding the non-racial principle could have been achieved within MDARU if the fundamental transformation that was being addressed was the transformation of the mind set

²²³ Interview Tengimfene.

of the people concerned. It was therefore possible to accomplish this ideal without necessarily moving Mdantsane rugby to East London.

The decision not to relocate Mdantsane rugby to East London rescued clubs such as Thembu United that were in the verge of collapse due to the financial pressure of weekly travelling to and from East London. 'Thembu United was already dying out slowly, with most of its members residing in Mdantsane, they were suffering, because they didn't have money to sustain themselves in the ELRU league...they approached MDARU, tabling their money problem for honouring their fixtures under the ELRU...asking if we could allow them to play with us...because we understood their problem, we allowed them...to rejoin'.²²⁴ It seems that the same was true with Winter Rose. Tengimfene says, 'Winter Rose did the same...they came back to MDARU again. The Winter Rose branch that affiliated to ELRU, the strongest compared to the one at MDARU, came over to rejoin us forming one Winter Rose in Mdantsane'.²²⁵ The assertion that sport always mirrors the nature and concerns of its community becomes apparent. Transport to and from East London was a general problem, affecting every sector. It equally affected the rugby players of Mdantsane.

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Conclusion

One of the aims of this chapter was to attempt to offer a comprehensive analysis of certain themes in an attempt to bridge the gap in the scanty literature on black and non-racial rugby. These themes include: the persistent splits that ravaged black rugby over the years in the East London area and in the country at large, with the 1958 BBRFB split, being a notable case; the complex transformation and growth of EL rugby compared to other black communities in the country; the SABRFB's early interactions with the SACRB and their apparently ambiguous relations; the socio-political challenges facing rugby and rugby enthusiasts over the years and their responses to them, with the impact and implications of forced removals in the East London

²²⁴Interview Tengimfene.

²²⁵Interview Tengimfene; Twaku; Mnyute; Ndondo; Puzi.

area closely analysed; early calls for a single non-racial rugby body in the country, and finally, the shaping of the route to ultimate unity in 1991.

In an attempt to explore these themes, the challenges and building blocks of black rugby such as its organisational structures, the political development in relation to the transformation of the game and the role of the education institutions, have been explored. This study came to the conclusion that splits within black rugby over the years were prompted by various factors. An approach that appeared popular in justifying and explaining these splits was to seek the most convenient noble reason. In fact, these factors had very little to do with political influence. These splits were also a big setback to the growth and development of rugby within this society.

It has been found that rugby within the black societies had been very closely linked to and in fact mirrored the socio-political underpinnings of these communities. This has manifested itself in various ways stretching from the day-to-day livelihoods to the most complex issues that governed black people within apartheid South Africa. Issues such as access to sophisticated training methods, humane living conditions, transportation, housing and in fact the forced removals that adversely affected the East London rugby and the broader community are crucial. Creative ways adopted to respond to these ordeals have been discussed. However, the role of the Industrial Leagues as sponsored by the Industrial Unions within the firms in the East London must be acknowledged. This is generally believed to be one of the major role players in giving black rugby a lifeline following the forced removals in East London.

Black rugby however suffered a great deal owing to these adversities, the collapse of the SAARFB's interprovincial tournaments being the most pronounced factor. This is perhaps the worst ever because it also marked the major split within the ranks of both the SAARFB and SACRB, with KWARU, and SARFF and SARU emerging for the first time in the history of black rugby. This was also the era of naked political intervention in sports, especially in rugby. Whether this transformation was welcomed by everybody and whether it was a necessary exercise, sometimes sparked heated debate. However, this change was rather inevitable, thus undoubtedly essential, though much could be said about the manner in which the process was handled.

This brings to light the apparently controversial relationship amongst blacks, especially between the Coloured board and the African board. It should be acknowledged that the political climate at the time provided fertile ground for suspicion and at worst, sometimes treachery. Without endorsing the latter, it is vital to note that the apartheid regime had versatile tricks to deal with its victims, and that it encouraged the divisions that characterised rugby at the time.

The role of Fort Hare students and the VERU in the development of non-racial sport in the Border region was prominent. It is generally believed that following the major split of KWARU in Port Elizabeth from the non-racial fold, these students took to themselves the task of spreading the principle throughout the Border region. Though it was not always easy, they showed determination and faced threatening circumstances with fortitude. Hiding behind the shadow of the VERU, which in fact, they immensely contributed to establish, Fort Hare rugby team became central in keeping the light even through the darkest corners. The result was that ultimately, the whole Border region sang one song under the banner of SARU. The region continued to lead the country's rugby transformation.

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CHAPTER VI

South African Sports Unification: The Process, Challenges and East London Club Rugby's Responses

Introduction

This chapter discusses the dynamics of rugby transformation during the most critical period in South Africa's political history. The era of radical political repositioning, with South African sport promising a more dramatic transformation than ever before. The late 1980s to the turn of the last decade towards the twenty-first century, created a complicated possibility in the social, economical and political development of South Africa. This therefore prompted many to undertake critical analyses of this revolution with great enthusiasm. In an attempt to explain some of the aspects of this development, specifically in relation to rugby transformation, unlike the earlier chapters, several theoretical expositions are utilised to guide this discussion, as it is said that 'without theory, the fight for the egalitarian sport will be a blind' one.¹ It should be appreciated also that the aim of this chapter is to launch an attempt at critiquing specific chosen themes pertaining to the South African rugby's radical development during late 1980s to 2000. This process therefore will evoke and uncover the country's sports transformation processes broadly. It is in this light that the view that sport in any society always mirrors the underlying social aspects of the society within which it is perpetuated is espoused.

The Background: En-route to Sports Unity

Sport in South Africa has always been linked to the country's social and political situation. The application of apartheid and the intensification of the struggle against it had a direct bearing on developments in sport.² Even if the rugby

¹See Vawda, E, 'Forward' in Cheryl Roberts, ed., *Sport and Transformation: Contemporary Debates on South African Sport*, 1989.

²See Grundlingh, A, Odendaal, A and Spies, B, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, 1995, p.55; see also Peires, JB, "Facta non verba": Towards a History of Black Rugby in the Eastern Cape', paper presented at the History Workshop, University of Witwatersrand, 1981, p.1. Another version of this paper also appeared in *Work in Progress*, April 1981; see also Tshwete, SV, 'Challenges Facing Non-racial Sport', pp.14-21, in *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, Roberts, C, ed., 1990. This paper was delivered as a keynote address at the national launch of the National Olympic Sports Congress (NOSC) in June 1990.

enthusiasts from the oppressed communities were slow to respond to the political events as they unfolded within the country, particularly during the last decade of the century, the growing political polarisation would have in any case compelled them to take decisive decisions about the future of rugby in this country. The signs of this move were evident as early as in mid-1960s. The fact that this political pressure gathered momentum down to the 1970s cast little doubt that these processes could have gone otherwise. In this era lines were clearly drawn between those supporting the struggle against apartheid and those who were for the National Party government's policies and the establishment sports bodies such as the South African Rugby Board (SARB).³

Many different forms of repressive actions by the apartheid government, the most pronounced being the Sharpeville massacre on 21 March 1960, were seen across the country. At Sharpeville, the South African police shot sixty-nine people dead, leaving a hundred and eighty injured during an anti-pass demonstration. This time the apartheid government resorted to direct repression to destroy its opposition. It declared a State of Emergency, and many people were detained and harassed, and political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) and the newly established Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), were banned, leaving anti-apartheid activists to operate underground and or fleeing to exile. Sports activists were invariably amongst those affected. Black rugby suffered big losses in the form of prominent players and administrators, for example, Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo, Norman Ntshinga, Steven Vukile Tshwete, John Harris, Mathemba "Ngconde" Balfour, Ndikho Gemjikile Mnyute, Sam Ramsamy, Ben "Ta-Ben" Tengimfene, Dennis Brutus, Leo Louis Mtshizana and many others were arrested and detained in several prisons across the country, with some even sent to the notorious prison on Robben Island. For instance, Dennis Brutus, who contributed to establishing the South African Non-racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) in 1963 to lobby for South Africa's expulsion from the Olympic Games, was shot by the police and subsequently imprisoned on Robben Island. As if that was not enough, SANROC's secretary, John Harris, was also captured, accused of planting a bomb on Johannesburg station. SANROC was ultimately smashed altogether within the country, leaving it, as other

³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.56.

anti-apartheid organisations, to re-establish itself outside South Africa. For instance, it opened offices in London in 1966 where, together with the broader emerging anti-apartheid movement, especially the newly formed Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, it successfully initiated and coordinated an international campaign to boycott apartheid sport.⁴

Following the fierce repression of the early 1960s, which temporarily overpowered the radical challenge to apartheid, there was a revival of resistance in the late 1960s and 1970s. This did not only manifest itself through a rapid growth of trade unionism and a strong wave of Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), as led by the courageous and dynamic Steven Bantu Biko, but also the re-birth of a powerful non-racial sports movement within the country. The formation of the non-racial South African Council on Sport (SACOS) in 1973 indicated this new development. 'Within ten years SACOS, working closely with SANROC and international groups, exerted an iron grip over South African sport, as one establishment sports body after another was expelled from international competitions because of apartheid.'⁵

The South African Rugby Union (SARU) was a founding member of SACOS although the 'relationship between these two bodies was sometimes complicated', as will be shown below.⁶ SARU soon grew to become recognised as the only credible and authentic rugby body for blacks in South Africa and which formed part of the 'people's camp'.⁷ This gradual alignment with the progressive forces within the country not only gave it credibility, but also afforded it new impetus. Since the mid-

⁴See Lapchick, *The Politics of Race and International Sport: The Case of South Africa*, 1975; Thomson, R, *Race and Sport*, London, 1964; Hain, P, *Don't Play with Apartheid: The Background to the Stop The Seventy Tour Campaign*, 1971.

⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.57.

⁶See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.57.

⁷See Adler, G, "Of Shop Floor and Rugby Fields": The Social Basis of Auto Worker Solidarity,' seminar paper presented in RW 7003 Seminar Room. This paper is drawn from two chapters of Glenn Adler's Doctoral Thesis: "The factory Belongs to All Who Works in it": Race, Class, and Collective Action in the South African Motor Industry, 1967-1986,' Columbia University, 1994), university of Witwatersrand Institute for Advanced Social Research, 1994; also see Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, pp.7-9 for Kwazakhele Rugby Union (KWARU) breakaway and incidents thereafter; also see Paul Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa: A history 1861 -1988*, Cape Town, 1989, pp.115-116; see also Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

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1960s, many unions and clubs from Cuthbert Loriston's South African Rugby Football Federation (SARFF) and South African Rugby Association (SARA), the South African African Rugby Football Board's (SAARFB) successor, defected to SARU in large numbers. This started with a dramatic move in Port Elizabeth in 1971 when ten first division clubs out of twelve broke away from the Port Elizabeth African Rugby Board (PEARB) and formed KWARU.⁸ After several futile attempts for recognition by the national African Rugby Board, SARU became KWARU's last resort.⁹ The magnitude, capacity and standard of rugby of the newly formed union, KWARU, meant that a considerable number of influential Africans moved to SARU's ranks for the first time since the Bantu Board had split from the ranks of the predecessor Coloured Board in the 1930s.¹⁰

While SARU became firmly established as part of the broad democratic movement in South Africa, the SAARFB and SARFF responded to the pressures of the time by moving closer to the white establishment. They played as Leopards and Proteas respectively; being active participants of the multinational sports policy devised by the government and establishment sports structures in the 1970s in an attempt to ward-off growing international pressure. Most strategically, this policy was aimed to *relax* its long lasting rigid segregationist practices by allowing confined contact at the national and international level, without jeopardising 'traditional' policy at provincial and club level.¹¹ By 1977, the African Board now already renamed SARA; together with the SARFF and the establishments' South African Rugby Football Board (SARFB), formed the SARB. The rest was history, as a stark dividing line was drawn, with one side supporting the multinational policies and its proponents and the other one, 'the non-racial SARU, closely aligning itself with the struggles of the resurgent liberation movements. Relations between these two camps remained antagonistic right through to the 1990s'.¹² The period of normalisation of the political

⁸ See Peires' details of KWARU's breakaway in, Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.4.

⁹ See Peires' details of KWARU's breakaway in, Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981.

¹⁰ See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59; also for details of the KWARU breakaway, see Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981; Adler, "Of Shop Floor and Rugby Fields", 1994.

¹¹ See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59; also see Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

¹² See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990; see also Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

climate and mediation by the newly formed NOSC and the ANC's Steven Vukile Tshwete paved the way for rugby unity for the first time in the long history of segregated South African sport.¹³ Most importantly, just as it had been the case for over a century, *politics* had the final say.¹⁴ 'One big difference now, however, was that the balance of power had swung dramatically in favour of the oppressed since the days when Isaiah Budlwana Mbelle and other pioneering administrators head (sic) [had] set out to establish the first non-racial rugby bodies in the 1880s and 1890s'.¹⁵

It is now obvious that segregation in South African sports, rugby in particular, has a long history. In fact, from its inception, South African sport had, until the early 1990s, been administered under 'a dichotomous system'.¹⁶ Sport in this country comprised the establishment (white) side and non-establishment (black) side within their respective umbrella bodies, that is, the national federations affiliated to 'an all-purpose organisation'.¹⁷ This situation continued until the last decade before the twenty-first century, despite ensuing changes. Bruce Kidd is helpful here as he concurs, arguing that

...South African sport continued to be deeply divided by apartheid and the battle lines, which have been drawn up against it. Historically, the sharpest antagonisms have separated what is referred to as "establishment sport" - the white-dominated network of clubs, national bodies, and umbrella federations whose leaders have been intertwined with the apartheid state - from the "anti-establishment", "anti-apartheid", "non-racial" sector led by men and women of colour. Each has their own facilities, their own competitions, their own champions, and their publications. Rarely, until very recently, did they communicate. On the contrary, establishment sports repeatedly polemicized (sic) against their non-racial counterparts on the grounds that they have "politicised" sport. For its part, despite constant harassment and very meagre revenues, which has kept facilities poor and playing opportunities uneven, the non-racial movement has militantly opposed apartheid. ...further demarcation lines within the establishment sector...the various governing bodies, leagues, and clubs are hierarchically organised by race...SARB is a membership organisation of primarily white clubs, while it also incorporates and paternalistically controls the "coloured"...SARFF and the black...SARA...¹⁸

¹³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59.

¹⁴See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59.

¹⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59.

¹⁶See Goslin, A, 'Human resource management as a fundamental aspect of a sport development strategy in South African communities', *Journal of Sport Management*, 10, 1996: 207-217.

¹⁷See Goslin, 'Human resource management', 1996: 207-217.

¹⁸See Kidd, B, 'From Quarantine to Cure: The New Phase of the Struggle Against Apartheid Sport', pp.35-55 in Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

The establishment side, with its various sports bodies, had strong links with the apartheid government and had access to sophisticated training methods and opportunities as well as modern facilities, while the non-establishment side was denied such benefits.¹⁹ Odendaal notes that 'as old moulds were broken, new patterns became discernable (sic) [discernible] in the 1970s. While SARU struggled to secure sponsorships and its players were regularly refused access to facilities by local authorities, the SAARB and SARFF received generous support from the state, business and the white SARB. The Mdantsane Stadium in East London...was upgraded to the tune of R332 000 for the showpiece fixture between Leopards and the British Lions in 1974'.²⁰

Jeff Peires also detailed cases where KWARU-SARU was refused and blatantly denied facilities by SARFF and SAARFB, with support from government, in the name of upholding and 'carrying the sport policy of the land'.²¹ It was also interesting to compare the upgraded Wolfson Stadium, 'with its grass surface, proper seating and floodlights' to KWARU's 'vacant lot...[that it] set their supporters to clearing the stones and making boundaries'.²² Hence, with the collapse of apartheid, South African sports had to be unified and the socio-economic disparities redressed under a single non-racial structure.

As shown, some non-establishment bodies such as SARU operated under the auspices of the non-racialist movement, led by the SACOS, while others such as SARA, SARFF threw their lot towards the establishment sports bodies, as discussed above. Following long years of isolation and segregation in South Africa, sport unification became inevitable as a precondition to *normalise* South Africa's sports situation.²³ The year 1992 marked South Africa's official re-admittance to

¹⁹See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, pp.35-55.

²⁰Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.58; see also Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989; interview Tanana.

²¹ See Peires quoting SARA's President, Gecelo Mdyesha and his SARFF's counterpart, Cuthbert Loriston in Peires, "'Facta non verba'", 1981.

²²See Peires, "'Facta non verba'", 1981, p.6-7; see also SACOS Festivals, volume '88, 1988.

²³See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Ebrahim Patel', 1990; Sam Ramsamy, *Apartheid: The Real Hurdle - Sport in South Africa and the International Boycott*, 1982; Roberts, *Sports and Transformation*, 1989; Roberts, 'Introduction', *Challenges Facing South Sports African*, 1990, pp.1-3; Broglio, C, *South African Sport*:

international sport participation and for the first time opened doors for it to compete in events such as Olympic Games and various World Cup competitions. In as much as it was a positive move, this brought to light many challenges to the South African sporting arena. This highlighted the vast need for more urgent and focussed sport development programmes in previously disadvantaged communities. Since there were many different sport bodies in South Africa, owing to the apartheid government's policy of separate development, social development, including sports, within the black communities had been hindered for a long time.²⁴ This made it virtually impossible to deliver acceptable standards of sports organisation and administration across the country. It was in this light that the non-racial proponents intervened to shape the direction that South African sport had to take in the last decade of the century and into the second millennium.

The Non-racial Sport Movement in South Africa

In an attempt to address the challenges that faced the South African society, and democratise the entire sports fraternity, some painstaking realities had to be considered. Apart from the latter, careful analysis of the rapidly changing political climate within and outside the country had to be undertaken. Central to these processes was the urgent need for unity within the non-racial sports organisations themselves, consolidation and serious commitment to achieving non-racialism in South Africa. In 1989, with the new non-racial sport body simmering, it became clear that this was going to be a mammoth task to achieve. However, it was apparent that the direction to be forged was not going to be in the hands of the sport administrators in total isolation from the mass democratic movement, progressive forces and the country's political situation. This, therefore, invariably fermented a strong breeding ground for ideological conflicts amongst and within the non-racial sports movement.

Racism in Sport, 1970; Roberts, 'Ensuring the hegemony of non-racial sport: Is the NOSC capable?', *Challenges Facing South Sports African*, 1990, p.62. However, SACOS took a standoff stance towards unity before the sport situation in SA is "normalised", arguing there could be 'no normal sport in an abnormal society'.

²⁴See *Daily Dispatch*, Ebrahim Patel, 1990; Ramsamy, *Apartheid: The Real Hurdle*, 1982; Roberts, *Sports and Transformation*, 1989; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South Sports African*, 1990, pp.1-3; Roberts, 'Ensuring the hegemony of non-racial sport', in Roberts, *Challenges Facing South Sports African*, 1990, p.62; see Broglio, *South African Sport*, 1970.

SACOS “Versus” NOSC

In the late 1980s, the progressive forces acknowledged that, whilst SACOS had done sterling work in the promotion of non-racial sport against many adversities, ‘it was yet to meet the general expectation of becoming a mass-based sports movement’.²⁵ Out of impatience at the pace of the mass organisation of non-racial sport, another sports structure emerged, namely, the NOSC. Given the mandate, timing and character of this new organisation, there was little doubt as to who the proponents of this new development were. It was apparent that these were people within the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the broad grouping of anti-apartheid forces that were engaged in tactical alliances to break the apartheid regime. In fact, speaking at the NOSC’s press launch in June 1989, Krish Naidoo, who was the secretary general of the interim committee of the NOSC said ‘it’s no secret now that the NOSC emerged from the Mass Democratic Movement and that it was born of the political realities of the time’.²⁶

However, when the NOSC emerged, SACOS was already in existence as an anti-apartheid sports organisation in the country. The NOSC claimed not to be in opposition to SACOS, but rather, was prepared to work with SACOS to bring about a truly mass based, democratic sports movement in the country and to assist with the development of non-racial sport, particularly in the African townships and rural areas where large numbers of sports people were lured into the ranks of multinational sports. Whilst the NOSC proponents argued that it was not formed in opposition to SACOS, there was no doubt that its existence had opened an era of contestation between the two sports forces, as they were both competing for the same constituency. Since the NOSC’s inception, its relationship with SACOS remained tense. The three meetings that they held prior to the NOSC’s official launch were under strained conditions and did little to alleviate the obvious conflict of interests that was vividly simmering, which was to subsequently have major repercussions for the organisation of non-racial sport in the country. In 1990, Steve Tshwete declared that in ‘every meeting, the parties appear to be moving further apart. In the

²⁵See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

²⁶See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

immediate future there is no prospect of unity between the two organisations.²⁷ For instance, in September 1989, these two sport groups met to sort out their differences and mark the parameters of their territories. These talks, however, deadlocked after the NOSC refused to acknowledge SACOS as the authentic sports wing of the liberation struggle. Both NOSC and SACOS failed to reach an agreement on each other's relationship to the liberation struggle.²⁸

Speaking at the national launch of NOSC in June 1990, Tshwete declared that SACOS appeared unwilling to enter the unity process though it was not clear what proportion of its membership supported this view. 'The line of demarcation appears to be political ideology and hegemony in sport'.²⁹ In fact, SACOS had gone to the extent of declaring the NOSC a "rival" organisation, something that Roberts says marked the last nail in the coffin of this organisations' relationship. She noted that 'the final crunch between them came in November 1989, when SACOS passed a controversial resolution which (sic) labelled the NOSC a "rival organisation"'.³⁰ At this stage both the NOSC and SACOS were consulting with their respective constituencies on how to resolve the non-racial sports impasse.

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The basic divide between the NOSC and SACOS was the issue on which they failed to agree: which was each other's affiliation in the liberation struggle.³¹ From the outset the NSC stated that it was aligned to the MDM whilst SACOS stood firm against party political alliance. It was driven by its uncompromising motto: "no normal sports in an abnormal society", and felt that sports unification before the social imbalances created by apartheid were fully redressed would be a futile, insensitive

²⁷See Roberts, *Challenges facing South African Sports*, 1990.

²⁸See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation: 'Can Sport Cross the Final Hurdle'*, 1989; Roberts, 'Introduction', *Sport and Transformation*, 1989, pp.1-3; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.59.

²⁹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

³⁰See Resolution of SACOS Conference on The Road Ahead, November 1989, quoted in Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.60.

³¹See Roberts, *Sports and Transformation*, 1989.

exercise, thus, rendering it no less than a 'sham-unity'.³² SACOS argued that its membership had diverse political affiliation, therefore, choosing a particular political formation would be cumbersome. Hence it chose to remain non-aligned. It also argued that it committed itself, from inception, to the liberation struggle and did not find in the interests of non-racial sport to align itself to any particular political force.

Nonetheless, the NOSC had a different view as it steered the unification process forward, despite SACOS's adamant view.³³ The sports unity negotiations between NOSC and the establishment sports commenced in the early 1990s, at the time the ANC and NP government were making political deals towards a democratic South Africa. For instance, a statement issued jointly by SARU and SARB after what was termed 'an historic meeting' between these two bodies declared that their 'meeting was mindful of the "modest contribution" rugby could make towards the creation of a new South Africa'.³⁴ Tshvete also argued that the talks between SARU and the SARB were 'augur[ing] well for the future of rugby in South Africa'.³⁵ Amongst the issues involved was the possible lifting of various forms of sanctions against South Africa by the international community. The NOSC as the ANC's sports political wing felt, therefore, that the non-establishment and the establishment sport bodies should also consider engaging themselves in unity negotiations, where each sport code would have a single national body representing it. Further, in contrast to SACOS, the NOSC's view was that it is through unified sports that societies and the country could be normalised, especially if development opportunities are created for the previously disadvantaged.

SACOS and SARU's Relationship

The relationship between SACOS and the NOSC was rather tense from the onset. Many prominent SACOS members and affiliate unions undermined its

³²See Douglas, 1997; see Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sports*, 1990.

³³See Douglas, 1997; Grundlingh, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995.

³⁴See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Rugby bodies agrees to work for unity', 23 February 1990.

³⁵See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sports*, 1990, p.18.

stubborn total no-collaboration principle and motto: “no normal sport in an abnormal society”, and bought into the NOSC’s pragmatic idea, commencing unity negotiations with the establishment sport bodies. This act however, did not go without notice and contempt from some SACOS members. For instance, following SARU’s meeting with SARB on matters concerning rugby unity in the country in May 1988, and with the ANC in Lusaka in September, and in Harare in October later that year, numerous media reports indicated that certain SACOS members were planning ‘to have SARU expelled from the non-racial sports body’.³⁶ In fact, N Maharaj of the South African Hockey Board, which was one of the SACOS affiliates, declared that SARU was ‘holding SACOS to ransom’, and that ‘SACOS did not take kindly (sic) to threats’.³⁷ The *Daily Dispatch* also reported that

SARU and its president... Ebrahim Patel... came under fire from certain SACOS affiliates and was forced to defend his union’s decision to talk with the SARB and ANC in Harare in October. The debate followed a report from the SACOS executive on...discussions with SARU on the rugby Indaba. The SACOS executive held an emergency meeting with SARU... to discuss the Harare meeting. ...there was much heated debate over SACOS’s policies and principle concerning the talks.³⁸

It seems that SARU did not take this “interrogation” lightly, as it also responded rather arrogantly. Silas Nkanunu, who was a SARU official at the time, challenged SACOS, saying, ‘SARU had, by meeting with the SARB and the ANC, held a meeting with a multi-national sports body...and SACOS must deal with SARU’.³⁹ However, SACOS, in its council meeting held at the Betheldorp Technical College on 4 December 1988, ruled that SARU ‘had acted within the policies of SACOS when it met the ANC and the SARB in Harare...’.⁴⁰ It is not clear why SACOS officials made such overturns. Whether it was due to it’s being “uncomfortable with threats”, as Maharaj seems to indicate, or whether this was a conscious “strategic repositioning”, was yet to be seen.

³⁶See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC’, 5 December 1988; see also *Daily Dispatch*, ‘South African Rugby Union, Students meet with ANC’, 19 September 1988.

³⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC’, 5 December 1988.

³⁸See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC’, 5 December 1988.

³⁹See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC’, 5 December 1988.

⁴⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC’, 5 December 1988.

However, it should be remembered that in 1993 SARU, at the time one of the biggest units of SACOS, “surprisingly” suspended its membership from this non-racial body. In its statement, as reported in the *Daily Dispatch* on 23 March 1983, SARU indicated that it took such a decision ‘in protest against the brutal, defamatory and malicious attack launched on them by certain individuals and certain councils of sport at the last biennial meeting of SACOS, who went as far as calling for the suspension or expulsion of SARU from SACOS’.⁴¹ This statement further indicated that the ‘attacks on SARU in general, and their leadership in particular, cannot be allowed to continue and this conduct or campaign on the part of certain individuals within the fold of SACOS came as a bitter disappointment to SARU...’.⁴² This statement, however, clarified the fact that SARU was not terminating its membership of SACOS but ‘merely suspending it and in the interim shall not deviate *one iota* from the cause of non-racialism or ethics of non-racialism’.⁴³ In his response to this, SACOS president, Frank van der Horst, appeared rather disappointed, though optimistic that an amicable solution could be sought. In the statement he issued, he regretted that SARU took such a decision in spite of the attacks levelled against it. Van der Horst indicated that his executive believed that since there was a basic agreement among the people of non-racial sport and society, ‘there can be no differences or areas of friction that cannot be removed by continuous consultations with SARU and their affiliates’.⁴⁴ Horst urged for SACOS to take a new approach where all of its units, from grassroots through to all levels, would be heavily involved in discussions, formulation and implementation of the non-racial policy. The statement goes further:

... If clubs and members play an active part in the building of unity between sports bodies under SACOS and with community organisations, then a lot of the embarrassing and the emotional criticism can be easily resolved... The need for meaningful unity on sound principles and policies is urgent and vitally necessary in the face of attacks that the government is launching on SACOS and people’s organisations...⁴⁵

⁴¹See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SARU suspends membership of’, 23 March 1983.

⁴²See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SARU suspends membership of’, 23 March 1983.

⁴³See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SARU suspends membership of’, 23 March 1983.

⁴⁴See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SARU suspends membership of’, 23 March 1983.

⁴⁵See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘SARU suspends membership of’, 23 March 1983.

Underpinning the tone of the SACOS president above, was not only the will to unite the oppressed non-racial forces, but also there appeared to be a strong sense of concern that indeed, SARU's decision to suspend its affiliation to SACOS, being one of its largest units, meant a significant blow to the broad developments and unity within the non-racial movement. Thus, arrogantly neglecting this issue could undoubtedly have had adverse repercussions for the future of non-racial sport in the country. The fact that Van der Horst did not hesitate to make an undertaking that 'the SACOS executive will certainly meet with SARU in the near future' bears testimony to the latter postulation.⁴⁶ This, therefore, affords one significant room to hypothesize that Maharaj's concern about the uncomfortable "threats" referred to above, might have led to the eventual "change of heart" by SACOS.

It is apparent that there was a possibility that SACOS, or at least some individuals within its circles, was considering "relaxing" some of its uncompromising policies. Thus, its support for SARU's talks with the SARB and the ANC was a manifestation of this new flexible stance. Yet, the report that the SACOS delegation compiled for the meeting with the organisers of the Anti-apartheid Conference in Cape Town in September 1988 explicitly spelt out and reiterated its objections to 'sharing, participating in conference with multi-national sports organisations, "collaborationist Bantustan establishment organisations" and "liberal-white" opposition parliamentary groups'.⁴⁷ Thus, the issue of "strategic repositioning" becomes questionable and an unlikely scenario. However, the response to the changing political climate and within the sporting fraternity, seen by the specific considerations by the ANC, which, for instance, invited SARU in Lusaka and Harare in 1988, 'to discuss the rugby situation in the country with specific reference to its future' should not be undermined.⁴⁸ The delegation, led by the ANC's information chief, Thabo Mbeki, with Ebrahim Patel, SARU's president, together with four other members, was characteristic of the nature and seriousness of these discussions.⁴⁹ Given these developments, the stage was apparently set for possibly newer and

⁴⁶See *Daily Dispatch*, 'SARU suspends membership of', 23 March 1983.

⁴⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, 'SACOS backs SARU on talks with SARB, ANC', 5 December 1988.

⁴⁸See *Daily Dispatch*, 'South African Rugby Union, students meet with ANC', 19 September 1988.

⁴⁹See *Daily Dispatch*, 'South African Rugby Union, students meet with ANC', 19 September 1988.

flexible strategic repositioning within the sports organisations and, at least, their individual members. Regarding the uncompromising SACOS, these developments might have encouraged some members initiating some level of “compromise”. For instance, after SACOS decided to ‘back SARU on talks with SARB and ANC in December 1988, Krish Mackerdhuj, who was at the time SACOS’ finance secretary, was quoted as saying ‘SACOS needed to take its place in the “liberatory struggle.” He also added that ‘SACOS could not afford to isolate itself’.⁵⁰ Interestingly, Mackerdhuj’s “pragmatic” views saw him and many others leaving the rather stubborn SACOS to join the rapidly emerging and dynamic NOSC. Mackerdhuj, in fact, grew to be one of the prominent leaders and executive members of the NOSC during the 1990s. There is evidence that a similar trend followed in other SACOS affiliate organisations, leaving them one-by-one to join NOSC fold. It was against this background that the NOSC managed to convince and gather support of the majority sports people in the country and thus furthered negotiations for united, democratic and non-racial sports bodies.

Perhaps it was this ‘steadfast stance’ on alignment that there were speculations of a split in non-racial sport.⁵¹ Though it was difficult to predict the future of the South African sport, there was great likelihood of such a scenario, especially, considering the fact that, although it was not yet formally announced, there were already rumours that the NOSC was to be launched on a national scale early in 1990. In fact, the NOSC already had interim committees set up throughout the country. However, as it was expected, SACOS was going to refuse dual affiliations, that is, sport structures belonging to both SACOS and the NOSC at the same time.⁵² In its resolution in 1989 SACOS stated that ‘dual membership of both NOSC and SACOS would not be tolerated’.⁵³ It asked its membership to make a choice.

⁵⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘South African Rugby Union, students meet with ANC’, 19 September 1988.

⁵¹See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989; see also Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990.

⁵²See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989; see also Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990.

⁵³See Resolution of SACOS Conference on The Road Ahead, November 1989, quoted in Roberts, *Challenges facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.60.

Making such a decision, according to Roberts, was not going to be easy and simple but rather required painstaking thought before finality was reached.⁵⁴ However, there is evidence that, at one point, SARU managed to achieve this controversial dual affiliation with SACOS and NOSC. For example, following what was referred to as an “historic meeting” between the SARB and the SARU in February 1990, Krish Naidoo, who was the secretary of the NOSC, was quoted in the *Daily Dispatch*, saying Ebrahim Patel (who was at the time SARU’s president), as ‘a member of the national executive committee of the NSC...he stood by any agreement they had come to’.⁵⁵

There were many other such members within the non-racial movement, in particularly the former executive members of SACOS and other non-racial bodies, who joined the NOSC during this period. This led to accusations, damning labelling and mistrust amongst the non-racial movement sports persons. For example, during his visit to South Africa at the request of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa to “get a feeling” of what was happening in the country, Sam Ramsamy, who is widely believed to be one of the “architects” of South Africa’s sporting isolation, was welcomed by furious uncompromising picketers. Outside the venue where he met Danie Craven’s SARB, SACOS executive and many other sport administrators, for a “question and answer session” on the progress of sports integration in South Africa, picketers accused and labelled Ramsamy as a “sell-out” for ‘speaking to the SARB and the organisations and dealing with racist sport persons and unions against the interests of non-racial sport’.⁵⁶ In his response to this visit, the New Unity Movement (NUM) regional chairperson, Abe Fortuin, was quoted in the *Daily Dispatch* accusing Ramsamy of having ‘turned his back on SACOS’ and instead ‘chose to side with ANC-leaning sporting bodies such as the NSC’.⁵⁷ The NUM was an organisation that identified itself with the PAC and rejected any

⁵⁴See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

⁵⁵See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Rugby chiefs suspend tours’, 11 May 1990.

⁵⁶See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Ramsamy seeks progress on sport unity process to SACOS, Craven’, 9 August 1990.

⁵⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Ramsamy seeks progress on sport unity process to SACOS, Craven’, 9 August 1990.

‘collaboration with the oppressors,’ as it viewed the ANC’s talks with the government at the time.⁵⁸

However, in its annual general meeting in Port Elizabeth in 1990, SARU took a resolution to reaffirm its position of openly aligning with the NOSC while remaining affiliated to SACOS ‘until such time as any other decision becomes necessary’.⁵⁹ SARU further ‘committed itself to the unification of all oppressed sports...[and that it would do everything in] its power to avoid unnecessary splits or fragmentation within the ranks of the oppressed sports persons’.⁶⁰ It is apparent from the latter statement that SARU itself was already sensing trouble about its controversial dual affiliation. This was but one of the several issues that SARU and its long lasting mother body constantly found themselves at loggerheads with each other.

The NOSC and its Mandate



There is little doubt that the NOSC emerged as a result of frustrations of SACOS’s stubborn approach to the South African sport transformation. The NOSC therefore emerged to play a crucial role of taking this rather stagnant transformation process forward and further build a mass based sport movement in SA. Initially, the NOSC’s constituency was likely to be centred around African sports people. But at the same time, although they had not formally announced their intended affiliation, it was likely that non-racial codes like soccer, cricket and rugby were to gain a majority backing in moving their allegiance from SACOS to the NOSC, and that actually happened. In this case, the decision was a political one, and because these codes supported the MDM, they wanted to play their sport under the banner of the MDM.⁶¹ With regards to the other codes and players under SACOS, and those that were not affiliated to any umbrella sport structure, their decision to join either sports structure

⁵⁸See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Ramsamy seeks progress on sport unity process to SACOS, Craven’, 9 August 1990.

⁵⁹See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Stofile as rugby vice’, 11 April 1990.

⁶⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Stofile as rugby vice’, 11 April 1990.

⁶¹See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

was likely to be prompted by the availability of facilities, funds and amenities within these two sports organisations. 'After all, most people play sport for the enjoyment and whoever makes their life most enjoyable in this regard was to win their support'.⁶²

Although it was still in its formative stages, NOSC appeared to be well aware of the challenges that it was to contend with in its future programmes. However, it had the advantage of learning from the mistakes and weaknesses of other earlier sports organisations and again had the advantage of being guided by the "oppositional forces", particularly the MDM. It was hoped that if its planned "Unity in Sports Conference" became 'a success and "anything to go by", the stage was definitely going to be set for the emergence of what was to be the most significant sports organisation in South Africa'.⁶³ One of the fundamental questions posed at the time was what did the emergence of the NOSC mean to the multinational sports? Most importantly, in its short existence the NOSC had already attracted the attention of some multinational codes like road running and the South African Cricket Union (SACU) who wanted to talk to the NSC.⁶⁴ But besides attracting their attention the NOSC also had an effect on the internal administration of some codes. Yet it was clear that those who thought that the NSC was going to be a liberal sports structure compared to the 'hardline' attitude of SACOS were mistaken.⁶⁵ It indeed grew to be a strong force within the South African sports fraternity and committed itself to the cause of democratising of sport and furthering non-racialism.

The NOSC's agenda for a mass based sports movement included discussions between all sports codes. But these talks had stringent preconditions like the abandonment of rebel tours and acceptance of non-racial sport. Further, there was no way that the NOSC thought of relaxing the sports moratorium, particularly as it affected multinational sport, but it campaigned vigorously for its continued isolation.

⁶²See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.10.

⁶³See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.10.

⁶⁴See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.10; see also *Daily Dispatch: Indaba*, 'Cricket apartheid is over', 20 December 1990, p.15.

⁶⁵See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

For example, through its affiliates such as SARU, the NOSC did not waste time in showing what it stood for. The SARU's delegation led by Ebrahim Patel, also the NSC's executive member, in a meeting with the Craven's SARB in 1990, 'gave notice that all tours should be suspended until amalgamation had been completed'.⁶⁶

SACOS and the NOSC continued their programmes. For both anti-apartheid sports forces, the real test of strength was shown by the support they each commanded on the grass roots level. However, in doing so, they were apparently wary and made sure that they did not fail to deliver the "sports goods", as that would have meant a big blow to non-racial sport. Both seemed vividly aware of the challenges, weaknesses and complexities they were contending with.

A few months later, while SACOS was gasping its last breath in the history of non-racial movement, the NOSC led the debates for unifying the non-establishment sports and the establishment sport bodies. As was expected, it demanded, as a condition for national and international recognition that the newly formed sport bodies be made up of racially mixed groups and be united under one single body of a specific sport code. Further, it insisted that they show commitment to developing previously disadvantaged communities by setting up clear development programmes. From this point it was evident that these demands were not easily achievable. Sport unification and transformation in the country, as other forms of change, became a big challenge and was characterised by setbacks.

For black rugby, the shrinking in numbers of pre-unification clubs became a cause for concern as this left a void in its previous roles in their respective communities. With traditional black clubs vanishing from the picture, identifying, nourishing and producing talented youth from the grass roots, as prospective "feeder" to the provincial and national teams, would be an impossible. It is in this light that the underlying issues pertaining to the post-unification sports prompted investigation. More of this is discussed below. A critical look at and analysis of the rapidly "changing" South African political scenario at the turn of the last decade towards the twenty-first century became imperative. Fundamental questions that came up

⁶⁶See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Rugby bodies agrees to work for unity', 23 February 1990.

included: what was the significance of this “change” in relation to the broader South African society, and to sport transformation, rugby in particular? Why, these “changes” now? What informed the timing of such a change? How sincere were its proponents and what influences led to this revolution? How were the non-racial forces expected to respond? What was really at stake and what did the future hold for the non-racial sport movement? Many of these questions are raised and responses are attempted below, with the first critical one being that of looking at whether there was any change in the first place.

A “Changed” South African Political Scenario or a “Gimmick”

On 2 February 1990 the South African state president, Frederick Wellem De Klerk, according to Grundlingh, ‘made what was probably the most important speech’ of any white South African leader in parliament, as he formally “unbanned” the ANC, PAC and other banned organisations. This effectively ended thirty years of exile for the country’s major black politicians.⁶⁷ However, some believe that the ‘post - February 2 created an unexpected confidence about the future of the “new” South Africa with the National Party government unleashing a newer and more sophisticated offensive against the oppressed’.⁶⁸

The dramatic political developments, which, at the turn of the 1990s, dominated the history of the country, had a profound impact on virtually every aspect of the citizen’s social existence. De Klerk’s declaration of the “liberalisation” of South African politics was multifarious. On the international front, this “bold step” was lauded almost unanimously, and the attitudes of most governments, with the majority having vehemently opposed the apartheid regime, changed virtually overnight.⁶⁹ The warm welcome that de Klerk had in Paris in 1990 was indicative of this rapid and easy forgetfulness.⁷⁰ Within the country, reaction was less concurrent,

⁶⁷See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.1.

⁶⁸See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13, in Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.5.

⁶⁹See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁷⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Rugby chiefs suspend tours’, 11 May 1990.

ranging from outright rejection, to sceptical acknowledgement, and enthusiastic acclamation at the other end of the spectrum.

However, the reception of de Klerk's announcement amongst the oppressed masses who purportedly stood to gain most from it was, at least to the uninformed observer, confusing, argues Hendricks. 'By all indications, divisions amongst blacks in the country were exacerbated (sic), resulting in violence and near civil war in some places. Many people were injured or maimed, and countless were slain'.⁷¹ The carnage continued through to the beginning of 1994. Within the sports organisations of the oppressed, a similar trend was observed, thus vilifying the belief that sport merely reflects the society in which it is pursued.

The oppositional forces of the day, with their political initiatives, forced the apartheid state to respond. But what it came up with, according to Hendricks, was merely a revised format for maintaining the privileged position of the ruling class. The attack mounted by the oppressors was more integral to the liberation struggle than before. Thus it was important for the oppressed to consolidate their forces into a solidified unit and throttle the apartheid regime. With regard to sport, unity amongst non-racial sports organisations became a must. Establishment sport and some of their intentions were debatable, especially following the post-February 2 period. A strong and unified non-racial sports movement possessing the capacity to contain establishment sport became the sole necessity.⁷²

Potential Divisions in South African Sport

Several questions about the lack of consensus amongst the oppressed in their response to 'de Klerk's proposals immediately sprang to mind, and, certainly, many hypotheses emerged in response thereto. In this regard, Grundlingh notes that a number of factors led to this landmark decision:

⁷¹See Hendricks, 'A case for unity in non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

⁷²See Hendricks, 'A case for unity in non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

...international sanctions had debilitated the economy and restricted room for manoeuvring on the part of the state; internal insurrections placed further strain on the state as a recurring cycle of repression and resistance shaped the contours of South African society; armed attacks by the ANC, though never seriously extending the military, added to increased instability; and the international order had changed with the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, leading the state to realise that it could no longer play the West off against the East.⁷³

In an attempt to explain the divisions as they prevailed within the ranks of the oppressed sport organisations in South Africa, Hendricks argues that a crucial focus, inevitably, has to be upon the social milieu in which such “agonetic (sic) agnostic activity” was perpetrated.⁷⁴ However, critical questions confronting those trying to discuss these divisions include: the rather sudden and dramatic turnaround of the NP government with regard to the ‘pursuance of its apartheid policy’.⁷⁵ This becomes particularly significant when one considers the rather close relationship between the chronology of the escalation of tension and violence amongst blacks, and de Klerk’s announcements on 2 February 1990. Hendricks argues that the temptation exists to explain that “ostensible change of heart” as further authentication of the commitment of the rulers, or the established group, to preserving its hold on power through the vigorous pursuit of a policy of “divide and rule” of which the events of 2 February 1990 were simply another manifestation of such.⁷⁶

On the contrary, it could be hypothesised that this represented a genuine attempt at reconciliation by the NP. However, when one considers the likelihood of any “ruling class” voluntarily surrendering power to a black majority, in this instance, the latter explanation becomes questionable, especially considering the possible consequences of such an action for the white establishment in its entirety in South Africa. There is little doubt that the de Klerk government, and the broader establishment fold, for that matter, were not aware of this. The country’s establishment folks were often reportedly suffering what was referred to as “white-

⁷³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.1.

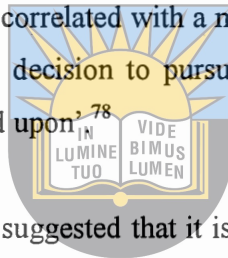
⁷⁴See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁷⁵See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁷⁶See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

fears”, especially when the political scale certainly tilted towards the non-established group.⁷⁷

Others have, nonetheless, attempted to link the proposed changes in the political fabric of the society to the social upheavals of Eastern Europe and the perceived demise of socialism and communism in these societies. Hendricks argues that there is little doubt though, that the latter impacted significantly upon the timing of the decision to embark upon a programme of reform in this society for it certainly had undermining implications for those with any inclination towards imposing, or even suggesting, a similar alternative for the South African circumstance. It would, of course, be simplistic to attribute the developments in the country to any single factor or “control”. It can more likely be correlated with a multitude of factors, ‘the combined effect of which precipitated the decision to pursue the particular course of action, which had indeed been embarked upon’⁷⁸



Furthermore, it has been suggested that it is necessary to recognise the extent to which people and aggregates of people, or interest groups, in societies are interdependent, whilst at the same time recognising the fact that, within societies, some people are more dependent on others than what the others are in turn dependent upon them.⁷⁹ This, according to Hendricks, constitutes the very basis upon which power differentials in society are founded. The ability of an individual group to monopolise a resource which another group or individual needs, affords the former the leverage, which allows it to wield power, at the very least, ensures that notice is taken on its particular disgruntlement. To illustrate the point one needs to consider the extent to which garbage worker strikes in Cape Town, Johannesburg or any other big city in the world, for that matter, are able to disrupt the lives of so many others, impelling some form of negotiation from which the discontented usually, though not

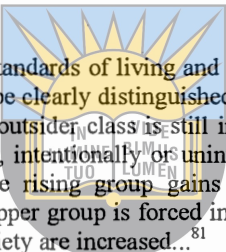
⁷⁷Soon after the 1994 general elections, some politicians and newspapers disapproved the approach and some attempts at reconciling black and whites in the country and subsequently accused the then incumbent States President, Nelson Mandela of addressing the “fears of the whites” as opposed to dealing with the urgent needs of the black majority that voted him and his organization into power. Ironically, Winnie Mandela, his fellow comrade with the ANC and controversial wife, was central to these accusations.

⁷⁸See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁷⁹See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

always, come away with concessions which, in one way or another, improve their pre-bargaining status. The illustration serves to confirm that within any locus of social interaction or figuration, no single actor, or group of actors, is completely powerless. On the contrary, if that was indeed the case, then a dominant group or the white establishment in this case, would have simply attempted to eradicate, or drive out, such a subordinated group, or blacks in this case, altogether.⁸⁰

With regard to the latter, there are two observations that can be made about the 1990 “breakthrough”. Firstly, it is important to note that power within a figuration or any regime is never static, but is rather in a constant state of flux. To this account, Norbert Elias notes with regard to the establishment-non-establishment group relations that:



...we see a clear tendency for standards of living and of conduct to be equalised and contrasts levelled out. ...two phases can be clearly distinguished: a phase of colonisation or assimilation in which the lower and larger outsider class is still inferior and governed by example of the established upper group which, intentionally or unintentionally permeates its differentiation, or emancipation, in which the rising group gains perceptibly in social power and self-confidence, and in which the upper group is forced into increasing restraint and isolation, and the contrast and tensions in society are increased...⁸¹

It is apparent that by the turn of the 1990s, the “levelling out” described above had already occurred or at least was taking place in South Africa, since this is a process that does not occur overnight. Rather, it can be explained in what Elias refers to as ‘a process of “functional democratisation” in which the chains of interdependence linking individuals and groups, become longer and more differentiated over time, leading, eventually, to diminishing power differentiated by virtue of the strategic and specialised roles which actors play within the web which forms the social figuration’.⁸² By virtue of the ability of the individual or group to renege upon its obligations within the web of interdependence, it is able to wield reciprocal control over others who may even be more powerful.

Thus, this leads to the second observation that, concerning the fact that interdependence and ‘its relationship to the ability to wield power is not located solely

⁸⁰See Hendricks, ‘A case for unity in non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁸¹See Norbert Elias, *State Formation and Civilisation*, 1982.

⁸²See Elias, *Civilisation and the Human Self-Image*, in S Mennel, 1989, pp.159-179.

within the economics sphere. The interdependence referred to above, includes and extends beyond the realms of cooperation on the production line. It concerns the ability of an individual group to monopolise and or withhold anything, which another group may need or desire'.⁸³ With regard to the present discussion, which may also include the need or yearning on the part of the established, for re-admission to the international fraternity of competitive sport, the key to which, as early as the late 1970s, lay fairly securely in the hands of the oppressed majority of the country.⁸⁴ For instance, Grundlingh says, following numerous accounts of denial, accusations and counter-accusations of intransigence, insensitivity and opportunism, by the establishment and non-racialists, the former ultimately learned to accept this reality. Danie Craven became increasingly aware that, without the blessings of an organisation like the ANC as well as SARU, his SARB would find it difficult to organise an international tour without it being disrupted by demonstrators and violence. The "rebel" English cricket tour of 1989-90, which was aborted midway because of mass demonstrations, was a stark reminder to Craven that the same could happen to rugby.⁸⁵

However, the anti-apartheid sport organisations had to take such political realities into account. Sport has been an important weapon in the arsenal and to surrender it without being able to show tangible gains would have been politically unacceptable. Hence the NOSC resolved that the establishment sporting bodies like the SARB had to support the moratorium on sport tours and work together with anti-apartheid forces in eliminating all discrimination in sport before seeking fresh international ties. The SARB had to show its commitment to change. 'This is time', it was argued, 'for the SARB to display its sincerity, to catch the moment'.⁸⁶

Furthering the discussion on the possible forces leading to South Africa's political overturns, it should also be noted that, as Hendricks argues, whilst the process of "functional democratisation" referred to above seemed to have received its

⁸³See Elias, *Civilization and the Human Self-Image*, in S Mennel, 1989, pp.159-179.

⁸⁴See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

⁸⁵See *Sunday Times*, 27 January 1991.

⁸⁶See *Sunday Star*, 18 February 1990.

impetus from pressures exerted upon the establishment from the outsiders or from “below”, it was similarly possible for such pressures to emanate from within the ranks of the establishment group itself (or from above).⁸⁷ The context of the South African society that at the time referred in no uncertain terms, to the phenomenal growth of the “political right”, and very often resulted in attempts by the ruling “class” to forge links with interest groups which, under normal circumstances, would have considered them its adversaries. In this regard, the inferior affiliation status acquired by non-white rugby bodies like SARA and SARFF from the Cravens’ SARB rapidly comes to mind. Within this orientation it is simultaneously necessary to note that the intent of such a ruling “class”, as Hendricks argues, was to preserve its power or hegemony, albeit in a somewhat modified form. Hendricks warned, arguing that if the latter implies that the “2nd February 1990 breakthrough” aimed at “normalising” the South African society, yet *albeit* covertly, ‘representing another attempt at preserving the status quo in terms of the power change on the demarcated racial categories within the society, or even if it meant a shift toward a new stratification hierarchy along class, or any other line’, then, greater vigilance on the part the oppressed sports people had to be exercised in their handling of sport developments as they were unfolding, particularly if they seriously cared about their intention to democratise the “institution”.⁸⁸

The manifestation of this theoretical expose in the South African context concerned the compromising “about turns” of the NP to its traditional adversaries on its left within the political spectrum. In accordance with this supposition, also, it might be concluded that this originated as a response to pressures from the oppressed outsiders, in the form of upsurging opposition to the apartheid order from within the ranks of the disadvantaged. In the latter regard, therefore, and in conjunction with the stipulations of the above hypotheses, no group or action can single “handedly” be ‘accredited *ad the* control which precipitated the present political flux’.⁸⁹ Rather, it emanated from the conjoined impact of a variety of factors or controls, including pressures in the form of schools, sport and rent boycotts, industrial action and the

⁸⁷See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁸⁸See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

⁸⁹See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

phenomenal growth in trade unionism, civil disobedience, demonstrations, religious disdain, and international political and cultural embargoes, to mention but a few. In fact, 'it would not be improper to include the "resistance" effects of those interest groups who were traditionally labelled as "junior partners" in the apartheid regime either, namely: the Buthelezi's, the Hendricks', the Rajbansi's, the Democratic Party, and the like, had also "contributed" to the "political flux" in the country'.⁹⁰

It is important to note the underlying theme of the resistance effort at the time always revolved around the issue of racial equality, and the extent to which the order of the day denied this. It is equally important to realise that all the role players, or group of players mentioned above, obviously also had their own "interests at heart" in their involvement in the "struggle". Those interests, as Hendricks postulates, varied, raging from personal career concerns, to better working conditions and higher wages, to ensuring greater profits, political power, and so forth.

However, the influence of the pressure from within the establishment group can never be undermined as well. In fact, Hendricks notes that it can also be argued that the growth of the "political right", and the threat which this posed to the power chances of the NP, contributed significantly to the attempts at pursuing the alignments which were eventually sought. The implication of this deduction is that the ruling party saw the latter option as a more alluring alternative to relinquishing power to the "political right". However, of paramount importance here was the extent to which this pressure also impacted upon the proposed political "changes".⁹¹

The Nature of the Sport Scenario at the Turn of the 1990s

By the turn of the last decade toward the twenty-first century, very little change in the South African sport scenario had come to fruition.⁹² Of paramount importance to the non-racial sports bodies was the careful analysis of the proposed

⁹⁰See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

⁹¹See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

⁹²See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

changes following de Klerk's speech. In 1990, Roberts noted that it was not since the days of intensive isolation of South African sport from the international arena had the sports question placed itself on the resistance agenda with such an explosive and decisive approach as it did during this period. It reached a critical turning point, which required analysis coupled with applicable programmes of affirmative action.

However, the sport fraternity's approach and its subsequent response to transformation issues encapsulated some of the critical challenges facing the sports organisation. Specifically, it was to be seen whether the NOSC had the capacity to move beyond anti-apartheid tour protests and begin to set in motion processes that were to offset structural changes in the sports network. Further, whilst the answers sought were those that were to provide a workable resolution to the sport impasse, 'they also had to go beyond the prevalent rhetoric and polemic' which characterised the country's sport from establishment and non-racial perspectives.⁹³ It was therefore essential that careful attention be paid to whether the de Klerk government's proposed changes were in fact going to deliver the disadvantaged from the deprivation which they, for a long time, found themselves in.

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Therefore, the oppressed sport structures had to take stock of what they were to do to bring about equality which was so fervently talked about and yearned for within the South African society? It was also important to realise that the "normality" within the sport sphere was, for a long time, was still intimately linked to normality in every other sphere of the South Africa's social existence. The right to cast a political vote was but one aspect thereof. However, to some the latter did not constitute the process of democratisation towards equality in sport.

It became apparent though that de Klerk's speech had different meanings to different people. For instance, there is evidence that this was not how Craven comprehended the NP's espoused political changes of February 1990. In fact, Craven apparently had 'an imperfect grasp of the magnitude of the change required in South Africa and this had a bearing on his failure to understand the precise linkage between rugby and politics. To him, the abolishment of apartheid primarily involved the

⁹³See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, pp.57-58.

scrapping of social and economic discriminatory practises. It did not entail a universal franchise, majority rule and a totally new political dispensation'.⁹⁴ For instance, he publicly made it clear that the government had to be very careful about the vote. 'There is one thing that the government must never do, and that is to give everybody an equal vote'.⁹⁵ Craven could see no reason why South Africa could not return to rugby as usual; apartheid, as far as he was concerned, was officially abolished and international tours could be resumed.⁹⁶

Speaking at the 10th Datnis Amatola Sports Star of the Year Award at the Pirates Club in King Williams Town in 1991, Craven excitedly described these developments as the 'dawning of the new South Africa ... thrilling adventure...' that could see the country's rugby back in the world arena 'before the end of April [1991]'.⁹⁷ In many publications inside and outside the country, Craven constantly described de Klerk's speech as a 'wonderfully encouraging move', which would facilitate South Africa's re-entry into international sport.⁹⁸ He appeared so naive and careless as he underestimated and failed to comprehend the political influence of the ANC's sports wing, NOSC, within the country. He never bothered to entertain the fact that the long oppressed people were rightfully cautious of the political developments as they were unfolding, and that this was to continue until such time that it was clear that the dismantling of apartheid had become an irreversible process. The chances of foreign tours to South Africa therefore were slim. The fact that a new political order still had to be negotiated and that the transitional process was fraught with pitfalls and possible reversal was immaterial to him.⁹⁹

⁹⁴See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

⁹⁵See *Die Burger*, 5 February 1990 (translation), quoted in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

⁹⁶See *City Press*, 2 February 1990.

⁹⁷See *Daily Dispatch's* King Williams Town supplement, known as the [Kie] *Mercury*, 'Craven tells of exciting adventure', 14 March 1991; also see *Daily Dispatch*, 'FW: SA rugby wants world place', 25 April 1990; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Craven: unity in SA rugby possible in 1990'; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Boks on way back says Doc', 8 May 1990.

⁹⁸See *Daily Dispatch's* [Kie] *Mercury*, 'Craven tells of exciting adventure', 14 March 1991; also see *Daily Dispatch*, 'FW: SA rugby wants world place', 25 April 1990; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Craven: unity in SA rugby possible in 1990'; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Boks on way back says Doc', 8 May 1990.

⁹⁹See Rugby 15, May 1990 quoted in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.2.

However, economic empowerment was, and is still, reckoned to have a more significant impact on the ability of individuals to participate as equals in sport. The idea of promoting sport in the townships and rural areas through coaching clinics, competitions, and so forth was to amount to nothing more than charity under circumstances where the disadvantaged lacked all the basic requirements for sustaining their participation in such activities. In fact the same situation was and indeed still is currently true in many communities. Such sustenance could only be accomplished 'when people have the material means, the time, and the motivation to involve themselves in agonetic (sic) activities on a stable and permanent basis'.¹⁰⁰

Thus it was, and it is still, essential for the oppressed at the same time 'to be acutely aware of the "opiate value" of sport, its inherent capacity to lull participants into a false sense of complacency about change in society, which their newfound access to sport m[ight] lead them to believe. The extent to which this possibility might have negatively impacted upon the "liberalisation effort" of the oppressed could be gauged from the extent to which sportspersons from the disadvantaged [backgrounds] who had sought greener pastures within establishment sport, and (sic) [had] become politically apathetic, in the pursuit of their self-interests.'¹⁰¹ For example, 'the "lashing" that the initiative of the quota system in South African rugby' received by Breyton Paulse and Deon Kaizer was typical of this behaviour,¹⁰² when they both came 'out against "race quotas"'.¹⁰³

However, there was little doubt that this was indeed one of the aims of the schemes of the Ali Bacher, Danie Craven, Issy Kramer, Johann Barnard and others like them, to promote sport amongst the disadvantaged township dwellers. Kidd

¹⁰⁰See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

¹⁰¹See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

¹⁰²Quota system referred to above stands for "selection with bias". On 12 January 2002, Silas Nkanunu, the president of the SARFU, called for more blacks to be chosen by the owners and coaches of national and provincial teams, even if they are not quite as good as white contenders. 'A black player, nearly as good as his white counterpart "should have an edge", because he would have overcome incredible obstacles in getting so close to national ranking.'

¹⁰³See *Sunday Times*, 27 June 1999, p.24.

concurr, noting that several establishment sports bodies launched highly publicised coaching and development schemes for blacks, the most pronounced one being the heavily sponsored cricket “grassroots” programme started in the townships by SACU, steered by its president, Ali Bacher. Kidd further acknowledges that ‘there were obvious benefits from the infusion of energy, expertise and money into township sport that could not be denied. But here, too, the political motivation seems dominant’.¹⁰⁴ For instance, in 1989, Bacher tried to use these township programmes to justify the “rebel” tour. ‘When the tour went ahead against their objections many black leaders withdrew their support’ for the programme.¹⁰⁵

Kidd also notes that the Squash Rackets Association “made no bones” about the fact that it was convincing the 8 to 12 year olds it was recruiting that ‘sport and politics do not mix’.¹⁰⁶ To illustrate that the establishment bodies’ intentions were questionable, and indeed had a particular mischievous objective, ‘most of their programmes were imposed from above with little, if any, consultation with black leaders and athletes’.¹⁰⁷ In fact, some critics even suggested that the white bodies were ‘introducing thousands of black children to sport only to discard them if they do not show potential for competition or if they cannot be transported to decent facilities in white areas’.¹⁰⁸ Hendricks argues that whilst the establishment groups’ efforts presented a favourable picture to the outside world about their commendable efforts at “empowering” the emasculated, they simultaneously served to provide an interlude in the lives of the ghetto dwellers, and temporary escape from the dour reality of their existence whether they received their “coaching hand-out” from the latter when they ventured into those areas.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴See Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, p.41.

¹⁰⁵See *The Star*, ‘Atterbridge tell SACU coaches to go’, 23 January 1990; Dave Hill in *The Star*, ‘Mismatch of History and opportunism’, 11 February 1990.

¹⁰⁶See Kidd, ‘From quarantine to cure’, 1990, p.41.

¹⁰⁷See Kidd, ‘From quarantine to cure’, 1990, p.41.

¹⁰⁸See Douglas, ‘South Africa’s Autonomous Sport Strategy: Desegregation Apartheid Style’, *Sporting Traditions: Journal of Australian Society for Sport History*, 6:2, 1990, p.179, in Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, p.41.

¹⁰⁹See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

Thus, the non-racial sport bodies had to take cognisance of the fact that the cherished process of democratisation, and that of the concept of democracy itself, amounted to nothing more than a shift in the balance of power. Kidd acknowledges though, that there will always be an interest group that feels that its cause, or rights, or privileges, were not being afforded “fair” or democratic consideration. ‘Rather, with the shifting balance of power, new inequalities constantly emerge. That, obviously, holds negative implications for the possibility of the ultimate utopia which some believe to be possible’.¹¹⁰ Thus, the non-racial sport organisation had to resist any possibility of losing sway of the momentum, which brought them to the stage where they were in their social history in which the prospects for liberation of the subjugated masses seemed more promising than at any time previously.

Errol Vawda concurs, arguing that one of the themes that came to the fore towards the last decade of the twenty-first century was that the struggle of the oppressed in South Africa to claim the right to a better quality of life, including culture and sport, was a political one. Envy, rather cautiously, the slogan of the Sports Council of Europe; “Sport For All” Vawda notes the limitation of this approach, especially within the context of discrimination troubled South African society.¹¹¹ He argues that it would have been improper for South Africa to work for such a charter without addressing its radical implications; and implementing an egalitarian sports strategy could not be attained in the absence of a radical restructuring of society, meaning, therefore, that future sports developments and their specific social, economical and political context can never be divorced from one another. The oppressed had to realise that the sport infrastructure in South Africa had been and is still limited to support the “sport for all principle”, thus, time constraints on the full realisation of this policy were and obviously are still a big challenge.

Vawda further argues that some other challenges that [needed] to be considered in relation to sport include “class contradictions”, gender differences in access to sport, male dominance in the sphere of playing and administration, and many others. Thus, vigilant planning of the country’s sport policy was essential, ‘for

¹¹⁰See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

¹¹¹See Errol Vawda, ‘Forward’, 1990, pp.2-3, in Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sport*, 1990.

“sport for all” not to degenerate into sport for some in the future’.¹¹² The impetus for this effort revolved around an uncompromising commitment to non-racialism and anti-racialism, as there was little doubt that the achievement of the objective of an egalitarian social order was and is still a long way off. However, lessons should be drawn, according to Vawda, from the errors of the country’s northern neighbours where “revolutions” have not done much to change the circumstances of the deprived, even after more than twenty-odd years of “liberation”.

Given the fact that de Klerk’s speech signalled the end of apartheid as the official state policy, although the negative social and economic effects of a discriminatory policy, which had been entrenched for decades, could not be erased by decree overnight, the fact that apartheid measures were to be scrapped from the statute books did open up the way for a fundamental restructuring of society. This also meant that the longstanding ‘international sports boycott of South Africa could be re-assessed.’¹¹³ In its response to these developments, the non-racial sports organisation maintained their resistance to the prevailing order through commitment to non-racialism.

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Numerous non-racialists encouraged the non-racial movement to remain suspicious of efforts at building *unity* in sport when the basic requirements for such unity and equality, were noticeably absent, as it were in most instances already.¹¹⁴ The same vigilance by non-racial sports persons was to be inevitably applied to other sectors such the enthusiasm of the “establishment media”, and of capital to support the drive toward immediate sports unity between the establishment and non-establishment sport organisations, whilst at the same time promoting disunity within the ranks of the latter.¹¹⁵ Concomitantly, being significantly less enthusiastic about the talks of redistribution of wealth in the society. In the latter regard, the solution for the deprivation of the masses remained extricable linked to long term economic

¹¹²See Vawda, ‘Forward’, 1990, pp.2-3.

¹¹³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹¹⁴See Hendricks, ‘A Case for Unity in Non-racialism’, 1990, pp.6-13.

¹¹⁵See Vawda, ‘Forward’, 1990, pp.2-3.

growth in the country. 'The example of the ostensible "identification" by the establishment with the "sport moratorium" served to illustrate either their ignorance or their tact'.¹¹⁶ Their comprehension thereof was based on a misconception about commitment, in the belief that it amounted to a brief abstinence from international contacts, after which all links were to be once again restored, even as early as 1990.¹¹⁷ For instance, Patel maintained that a condition for the unity talks was that the moratorium should be supported, but, ironically, in as much as Craven was in full agreement that a single rugby controlling body be established in South Africa, proven by his earlier meetings on this issue with SARU in 1977 and had also met the ANC in Harare in the late 1980s, 'he baulked at the idea of a moratorium'.¹¹⁸

This undoubtedly indicates that the major item on the establishment sports' agenda at the time concerned the question of readmission to international competition. The question of equality in sport, or in the conditions that were to permit this within the country, did not enjoy the same prominence. Moreover, for them, there was apparently very little understanding about what non-racialism was all about. SARU's junior vice-president, Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, who sent a strong warning in 1990, to the non-racial sport movement and administrators that they be 'vigilant not to be used as tools by the racists, as window dressing for international tours, or blackmailed into entrenching international tours', held a similar view.¹¹⁹ 'Stofile's call echoed a wider concern of the ANC during this period, that in dealing with the NP government, the movement added greatly to the credibility of the government at home and abroad. More than likely this stiffened SARU's resolve not to accede to international tours prematurely'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶See Hendricks, 'A Case for Unity in Non-racialism', 1990, pp.6-13.

¹¹⁷See *Daily Dispatch's* [Kie] *Mercury*, 'Craven tells of exciting adventure', 14 March 1991; also see *Daily Dispatch*, 'FW: SA rugby wants world place', 25 April 1990; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Craven: unity in SA rugby possible in 1990'; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Boks on way back says Doc', 8 May 1990; See *Die Burger*, 5 February 1990 (translation), quoted in Grundlingh, Odendaal & Spies, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹¹⁸See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹¹⁹See *New Nation*, 8 November 1990.

¹²⁰See Lodge, T, 'The ANC in the 1990s' in Mos, G, and Obery, I, ed., "South African Review 6: From "Red" Friday to Codesa", Johannesburg, 1992, p.70.

It was against this background that strong unity within the ranks of the non-racial sports movement was paramount, failing which Elias' words were to be agonisingly applicable, when he contends that 'while access to greater power sometimes goes hand-in-hand with numerical superiority, often a closely-knit minority may exercise power over a less closely-knit, less well organised majority'.¹²¹ As it has been noted earlier, there were some and in fact there would always be political "interest group" diversity within the ranks of the oppressed, as amongst all people. However, 'the extent to which the oppressed surmount their differences to resist and conquer their communal disadvantage would ultimately depend upon their ability to unite under the banner of non-racialism'.¹²² Whilst it was equally important to note that 'the folly which many had often associated with the belief that sport is apolitical, as similarly applicable to the South African situation, where interest groups used and continue to use whatever means they had at their disposal, including that of agonetic (sic) activity, to further their own causes'.¹²³ Thus, the human tendency towards sectarianism, irrespective of the basis thereof, would often prevail and when it led to discrimination and injustice, should be fought at every turn using every available medium.¹²⁴

The Unification Process: The Role of and Challenges Facing the NOSC

By 1990, the NOSC had already established and positioned itself to be one of the most significant sport organisations existing in South Africa. Though it was launched on 1 June 1990, the NOSC was recognised, albeit unofficially, as the most notable sports movement that was to spearhead a solution to the longstanding country's sports impasse.¹²⁵ However, the critical question that the oppressed sportspersons were consistently raising following NOSC national launch, was whether it was actually capable of delivering an alternative sports organisation to those that

¹²¹See Elias, *Civilisation and the Human Self-Image*, 1989, pp.159-179.

¹²²See Hendricks, 'A case for unity in non-racialism', 1990, p.12.

¹²³See Hendricks, 'A case for unity in non-racialism', 1990, p.12.

¹²⁴See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.41.

¹²⁵See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.56.

were already in existence. Since its inception as a contending force on the sports terrain, the NOSC identified sports unity as being one of its main objectives.¹²⁶

However, the unity initiatives with the establishment sport presented a new battleground altogether, and the NOSC had to be prepared for such encounters. Thus, another crucial issue that the latter had to address was 'whether the sports unity that it was advancing indeed ensured the hegemony of non-racial sport, considering the financial power and strength of the establishment sport'¹²⁷. The anti-apartheid activists encouraged the NOSC to be more careful and vigilant in its quest for the unification of sports in South African, and not merely unite various groupings without transforming the sports network.

At the NOSC's national launch in Cape Town on June 1990, the ANC in its message of support said: 'the tasks ahead are formidable and we have every confidence that you will face them with vigour and determination. Your challenge now is to take sports to the people and to establish a working administration that will facilitate the development and practise of sport in the rural and urban areas of our country. This can be achieved through the genuinely non-racial approach that has characterised your style'.¹²⁸ In fact, this was well encapsulated within the NOSC pamphlet that it produced to advertise its launch. In this, the NOSC outlined its vision of non-racial sport in South Africa, demonstrating its main objectives, namely:

We believe in a mass-based, united, non-racial and democratic sports movement. Sport is the right of every South African, yet there is an appalling lack of facilities for the majority of players. As sportspersons we must fight for these facilities alongside our comrades in the factories, mines, schools and communities who are striving for a non-racial democratic South Africa. We seek to unite all sportspersons who share this vision. In preparation for a post-apartheid South Africa we must form single non-racial controlling bodies.¹²⁹

¹²⁶See *Weekly Mail*, 28 June 1990.

¹²⁷See Roberts, *Challenges facing South African sport*, 1990, p.56.

¹²⁸See message of support from the ANC's Department of Arts and Culture on the occasion of the NOSC's launch published in NOSC secretarial report, quoted by Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.60.

¹²⁹See NOSC Pamphlet, 1990 re: National Launch.

It is apparent that the issue of unity in sports was in line with the ANC's strategy of negotiations, and its importance was outlined on several platforms. Speaking on behalf of the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC), Tshwete also raised this issue in his keynote address at the NOSC national launch. In his address Tshwete outlined the challenges facing the country and non-racial sports at the time, and identified sport as one of the main role players in the South African political situation. He also pointed out several other crucial issues that needed attention during the unification process. For instance, he stated that 'ideally a sports movement encompassing all sportspersons, black and white, is the singular goal of the future. ... In the unity process we should identify the positive aspects among the parties, then allow the initial unity to strengthen and consolidate itself by eradicating the negatives. ...Any unity process that is allowed to linger will always attract out detractors and create unnecessary tension. Parties to the unity process should have a common purpose...of aspiring towards a non-racial South Africa'.¹³⁰

The issue of unity within the framework of transformation during this period, therefore, was a big challenge to the NOSC. There was however, little doubt that non-racial sport and establishment sport needed each other. The proponents of non-racial sport had the theoretical and practical on non-racialism whilst establishment sport had the material goods.¹³¹ Nevertheless, of paramount importance was whether they were to effectively define a working relationship amongst themselves. This was but one of the issues that the NOSC and the liberation movement had to address as a matter of urgency.

In an attempt to analyse the liberation movements' strategies to address this issue, especially in the wake of espoused changes within the country, as indicated above, it is relevant to emphasise that NOSC was created by people involved in the MDM to offer an alternative to SACOS, which was the only non-racial multi-sport organisation for many years. SACOS maintained its uncompromising approach towards considering any change in its rather stubborn strategy. In July 1989, while it

¹³⁰See Tshwete, 'Challenges Facing Non-racial Sport', 1990, pp.14-21; see also Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sport*, 1990, p.61.

¹³¹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990, p.60.

continued to advance a blanket boycott under the slogan, “no normal sport in an abnormal society”, 475 people from sports, the constituent political groups, trade unions, women’s groups, teachers’ and students’ organisations, and the churches attended the first NOSC national conference, where a decision was taken to change the name NOSC, dropping the “O” for “Olympic”, to National Sports Congress (NSC). This left the NSC enjoying the allegiance of the largest non-racial sports bodies in the country, namely: soccer, cricket and rugby, and non-racial federations in 22 other sports.¹³²

For most of the period between 1970 and 1990, the non-racial sports movement targeted the whole system of apartheid. However, during the 1989-1990 period, the years of turmoil, the movement moved towards a new strategy of maintaining the pressure against the pro-apartheid sports bodies while developing the conditions for the entry of a democratic South Africa into the international competition. This “new strategy” actually predated the dramatic political breakthroughs of 1989. ‘It grew out of the contradictions of “multi-racial sport” and the conditions of the savage emergency, when virtually all political opposition was suppressed and critical discourse censored. The surface liberalisation of sport left an opening where some critical public commentary was possible, if coded in the language of sport. Making a virtue out of necessity, the democratic movement stepped up its effort to agitate against apartheid sport’.¹³³ This was not merely a question of tactics. It also began to create new sports opportunities in the townships and rural areas, which were and are still particularly underdeveloped. The liberation leaders also sought to extend their following into the black sport bodies, which had collaborated with “multi-racial sport”.

In dealing with this, reconsidering the continuation of blanket boycott was essential. Kidd notes that in establishment track and field codes, rugby, soccer and boxing, where the mining companies, the police, black sports entrepreneurs and international firms like Addidas aggressively promoted black stars, the number of accomplished black athletes grew. ‘Many of these, such as those who worked in the

¹³²See Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, pp.47-48.

¹³³See Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, pp.47-48.

mines, had no choice but to play within “multi-national” sport. Careers are short, so it is not only the apartheid propagandists but also a segment in the black community which, not fully comprehending the sports boycott, has criticised the international campaign’s hardline’.¹³⁴ For instance, in 1988, SANROC persuaded the Federation of International Football Association (FIFA) to bar star Jomo Sono from an international fundraising expedition in Harare.¹³⁵ Soccer is the most popular sport for black South African males. The intervention unleashed a fury of criticism against SANROC and the blanket boycott. The “two-track strategy” took shape not in response to these conditions, but to prepare the oppressed for a major role in the new South Africa, in consultation with SANROC and African sports leaders. However, there was little doubt that this process was to yield several advantages.¹³⁶

It is important to locate where and how was non-racial and establishment sport were placed during this point. For several decades, establishment sports’ primary objective was the development and progress of sport as that carried out by sporting nations, particularly in the capitalist west. “Sport’s sophistication” ‘like coaching, commercialisation, spectatorism (sic) and administration’ were emphasised together with the support of corporate capital.¹³⁷ A change towards this focus was seen after 1985. Issues such as international isolation, coupled with the condemnation of establishment sports organisation for being “immersed” with a white membership, forced the proponents to look at secondary objectives. This was achieved ‘in the form of development programmes, for example, the township programmes of cricket, tennis and squash’.¹³⁸ However, the non-racial sport never legitimised these programmes, but simply labelled them nothing more than widow dressing schemes which were aimed at attracting international support, and which were devoid of sincerity to create non-racial sports structures.

¹³⁴See Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹³⁵See Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹³⁶See these “two-track strategy” advantages as outlined in Kidd, ‘From Quarantine to Cure’, 1990, p.47.

¹³⁷See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.58.

¹³⁸See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.58.

The non-racial sport had different primary objectives. It is known that non-racial sports' emphasis was placed on using sport to expose the apartheid regime and apartheid's inequalities. It did not find space, given the socio-economic and material conditions, to concentrate on the development of a sophisticated "infrastructural" system. Thus, whilst the non-racial sport concentrated on the political aspect, the establishment sport got a wonderful opportunity to make successful inroads into black areas.¹³⁹

It has been argued, however and quite rightfully so, that the decade of the 1990s brought with it a different set of priorities for non-racial sport, and that "much of the baggage" which sustained it in the 1980s certainly had to be reviewed with the proviso of providing fresh and challenging ideas. With the opening of legal space for political organisations, after the 2nd February 1990, non-racial sport had to shift its attention to the sport agenda with 'overnight immediacy'.¹⁴⁰ In fact, as per the resolution of the NSC national launch, the top sport priority was the imperative to create a mass sports movement. The sport organisers embarked on a "cutting edge task" of developing a people's culture of sport, mass-based nature in nature and characteristic of the democratic forms of organisation, accountability and rank and file participation at all levels.¹⁴¹

Throughout 1990, the NSC was in the forefront of every major sports development. During the 1989 controversial rugby tour, it held the most effective protest against an international team ever seen within the country, 'demonstrating against games and local branches of the sponsoring First National Bank, confronting the players and their manager in the hotel, all with favourable publicity. In September and October, it provided assistance to the democratic movement's mass trespass against "beach apartheid", which ultimately forced de Klerk's government to declare the sea and beaches open to all races'.¹⁴² These successful interventions were but a prelude to the massive nationwide protest against the cricket tour in January 1990. Kidd declares that despite media manipulations, police charges, tear gas attacks, and

¹³⁹ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹⁴⁰ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹⁴¹ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.59.

¹⁴² See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.47.

threats of being declared illegal, as at one point the SACU's president, Ali Bacher threatened the NSC coordinator Krish Naidoo, saying 'I could just pick up the phone and have your organisation banned'.¹⁴³ The NSC and its allies turned the tour into a total failure, with 'SACU's capitulation coming just hours before the release of Nelson Mandela'.¹⁴⁴ Thus the message of these dramatic events was unmistakable: 'the old order of "rebel" tours, played out behind the protection of police dogs and baton charges', was over.¹⁴⁵ Subsequently, the establishment sports' only hope for international competition lay in negotiations with the NSC.

The NSC was quick to take advantage of this favourable ground. It met with establishment sports leaders in boxing, cricket, gymnastics, road running, soccer and track and field codes, as well as SANOC and some white schools sports associations, in an effort to draw them into a non-racial, anti-apartheid alliance. The starting point for these negotiations was the establishment bodies' acceptance of the sports moratorium, an obligation to educate their members in the ethos of non-racialism, and a commitment to 'actively participate in the process to destroy apartheid'.¹⁴⁶ In addition, the NSC played a leading role in the unity talks between the various black associations in soccer and tennis. It started its own development programme to fill the void left in the township following the rejection of SACU's in the wake of the cricket tour, and later devised similar programmes for tennis and other sports. In each case, it challenged the South African Breweries and the other large sport sponsors 'to make good on their anti-apartheid rhetoric and invest in black sport. This long history of neglecting black sport continued up until 1990 and beyond, and fact, up to ninety percent of all sponsorship monies were channelled into white sports'.¹⁴⁷ These efforts had the blessing of the international community. Several western governments contributed to the cost of NSC activities. In 1990, the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA) indicated that it was prepared to admit the

¹⁴³See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.47.

¹⁴⁴See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.47.

¹⁴⁵See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.47.

¹⁴⁶See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹⁴⁷See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, pp.49; De Broglio, *South African Sport*, 1970.

NSC as the representative of non-racial South African sport 'immediately the moratorium against international sporting contact was lifted'.¹⁴⁸

These inspiring breakthroughs, especially 1989s, raised the worldwide expectation that apartheid's demise was imminent. However, the liberation leaders cautioned that "grand apartheid" still remained intact and, thus, sanctions had to be continued. There was generally an undeniable spirit of optimism, with success in these endeavours depending on the talks at the highest level between the apartheid government and the ANC. Non-racial sceptics argued that if less than "one person, one vote" democracy was obtainable, and a web of apartheid regulations, however amended, remained, then the possibility of creating genuinely non-racial sport was to be significantly restricted.¹⁴⁹ With the de Klerk government's refusal even to contemplate a democratic franchise, instead stiffened by the growing strength of white resistance. It seemed that the situation was to be prolonged as the rolling negotiations possibly reaching a stalemate, with further advances occurring only when the mass mobilisation and international pressure made them inevitable. Even if a "full liberal-democratic" constitution was to be obtained, the capitalist system was to remain, with, the glaring inequalities in land and other resources still to subject the black majority to continuing misery. Thus, this was a good reason to focus on the sports campaigns more sharply, given what was happening in sport, as the "two-track strategy" did, but non-racialists could not have afforded to lose sight of these larger determinations.¹⁵⁰

At the beginning of the unity negotiations, the president of the National Soccer League put off talk of immediately ending the moratorium, saying that 'we don't deserve to be part of the world right now'.¹⁵¹ However, the most constantly raised question during this time was what the potential '...fair test of the non-racial, anti-apartheid unity which the movement has established as a condition of its entry into

¹⁴⁸NOSC, 'Secretarial Report' and 'The way forward', 1 June 1990; see also Hugh Eley, 'Africa backs new body', *Sunday Star*, 10 June 1990.

¹⁴⁹See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.49.

¹⁵⁰See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.49.

¹⁵¹See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.50.

international competition could be¹⁵². Kidd contends that the maximum requirements seemed clear:

legislation forcing all sports bodies to be non-racial, so that they are fully colour-blind and democratic at all levels, from schools right through to high performance. ...legislation which prohibits discrimination of any kind in public recreation facilities, public and private schools, private clubs and voluntary associations, with an effective and inexpensive appeal mechanism so that anyone denied membership can quickly challenge the decision. ...a massive infusion of public and private funds into black sports. ...a major sharing of white facilities and resources through bussing and other redistribution programs...¹⁵³

The acceptance of these conditions was another challenge that the NSC had to contend with. However, given the white resistance and the enormous power of the apartheid state and the corporations which supported it, the much more likely scenario was that the old racial differentiation was to remain intact. To manage and counteract this situation, though, there was an understandable impatience with the continuing sanctions, 'the "two-track" strategy and the blanket campaign were offering obvious gains', thus abandoning them prematurely would have been blatantly careless.¹⁵⁴

When the rebel sports tours and the subsequent protest action from the anti-tour proponents seemed displaced as the central issues of antagonism between non-racial and establishment sports organisations, sports unity and the imperative to form single controlling non-racial organisations gained precedence. Roberts argues that at the time there was little doubt that establishment sport had decreased its "blatant arrogance" in thinking that they were possessing power and influence to direct and determine the future patterns of South African sport.¹⁵⁵

This development also influenced even the most stubborn, for instance, the ever-hard-to-convince Craven grew to learn that indeed the political situation had dramatically changed. The almost two decades of isolation from international sports competitions, together with establishment sports' own vision of the imperative for

¹⁵²See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.50.

¹⁵³See Kidd, 'From Quarantine to Cure', 1990, p.50.

¹⁵⁴See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.46-47.

¹⁵⁵See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.61.

change in preparation for what was their vision of a new South Africa, forced it to take cognisance of the reality that the NSC has emerged as the country's legitimate sports representative in the international sports fraternity.¹⁵⁶ The NSC's most powerful "weapon" was its practical demonstration of non-racial sport.

However, numerically and administratively, Roberts believes that at the time the NSC was weak compared to the umbrella coordinating sports bodies which were broadly defined under the establishment banner. 'Thus, there existed every likelihood of non-racial sport being swamped and absorbed into the structures of the establishment sport without effecting any changes to the structural network. The era of 1991 had to address this challenge, with particular attention paid to the two main issues, namely: the implementation of non-racialism at all levels and the redistribution of resources coupled with a commitment to narrowing the gap between playing standards which arose from apartheid inequalities'.¹⁵⁷ Hence, prior to any of the "unity talks", the NSC insisted, as was to be expected, that the establishment organisations embrace specific pre-conditions, amongst which were their acceptance of the sports moratorium, implementation of non-racialism and demonstration of the state of preparedness of its sportsmen to actively participate in the destruction of apartheid.

In contrast to the past, by this time, non-racial sport was already played by a significant number of sports person's organisations, and it was up to the establishment to make its mark and 'really understand the concept of non-racialism without confusing it with multinationalism or multiracialism'.¹⁵⁸ It was also critical that the prospective unified national sport bodies do everything to avoid the "first and third world" situation, where whites continue to possess and monopolise all the resources whilst blacks live in the same situation as prior unification. The unity steering committees were thus encouraged to propose new constitutions characteristic of the central features of the new organisations and also emphasise the equal distribution of resources and facilities within these non-racial codes.

¹⁵⁶See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.62.

¹⁵⁷See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.62.

¹⁵⁸See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.62.

The situation in South Africa was, and this in fact has to a larger degree remained unchanged, that resources were minimal in the oppressed people's residential areas, but in abundance in establishment areas and were in several cases, under-utilised. Thus, the NSC had to deal with this challenge, and one mechanism to achieve this was to demand that the manner in which the large sponsorship that organisations were receiving be reviewed, and that a big portion be used to provide facilities and development in the previously neglected areas, rather than channelling it 'on lavish and massive competitions'.¹⁵⁹ The ownership of facilities was another area that had to be looked at given the fact that at the time, facilities were mainly owned and controlled by the central government and its local government structures, education departments, corporate capital and sports organisations themselves.¹⁶⁰ Thus, one of the NSC's responsibilities was to fight for a reasonable number, if not all, these amenities and facilities to be brought under the control of the local government so that they could be publicly owned.

The NSC therefore, had to undertake a critical theoretical study of the sociology of sport and further brought it under discussion so that the establishment sport could recognise the role that "post-apartheid" sport is to play, and where issues concerning sport and society assumed central focus in such unfolding debate.¹⁶¹ Subsequently, contributing significantly in guiding and responding to one of the establishment sports proponents' beliefs that 'sport must remain devoid of "politics"'.¹⁶²

The non-racial sport proponents had to be vigilant and careful in understanding the implication of being "non-political" as proposed by the establishment group. They had to strategically evaluate this issue 'in the light of what

¹⁵⁹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.63.

¹⁶⁰The apartheid advocated a divide and rule mechanism where every section of the South African society was designated to live, study, shop, school, the list is endless, in its particular corner, hence "education departments". Whites, blacks, coloureds, Indians, each had their respective departments handling their affairs.

¹⁶¹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.63.

¹⁶²See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.63.

potentially reactionary and conservative forces were capably of doing, also noting the right wing element that was dominating and imprinting its own racist programme' within the emerging united "non-racial" sport bodies.¹⁶³ Establishment sport, therefore, had to be confronted and educated that the oppressed majority was committed to building a new society, and this was only achievable with the co-operation of those forces involved in the reconstruction and transformation of apartheid South Africa.¹⁶⁴ The outcome of these endeavours was therefore had a crucial bearing on the nature and character of the South African sport. To be specific, it seemed that without any doubt, whatever resolutions reached at through the sports unification steering committees, were to have crucial bearing on future sports relations.

During the process where various sports bodies under establishment and non-racial sport were engaging in unification negotiations, little or no attention was paid to the review of the moratorium on international tours. However, there were indications that the establishment sport was anxious for the latter process. The non-racialists were, however, expecting all kinds of pressures from the establishment sport to review the moratorium placed on tours, and they constantly warned the latter against this approach. In fact the non-racialists often accused that some elements within the establishment sport were mainly interested in the unification process because they wanted to use it as a means for immediate entry into international sport competitions. The non-racial movement seemed aware of the potential organisational and structural strengths of, and the likely influence that establishment sport had on the future South African sports, especially if proper analysis of its role in the post unification era was not undertaken. For instance, the non-racialists acknowledged that the establishment sport was powerful, having been built over many decades, and with the assistance of the apartheid inequalities, which deprived the oppressed masses of resources and amenities, it had a solid infrastructural system, which compared with some of the world's best.

¹⁶³ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.63.

¹⁶⁴ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.63.

Therefore it was imperative for NSC to find a workable strategy within its organisational forums on the best way to tackle the country's entry into world sport. One thing obvious was that the 'playing strength of the white sportspersons' was to 'ensure that national representative teams' were to 'continue to reflect the historic imbalances even in the post-apartheid era'.¹⁶⁵ Hence, it was important for the NSC to be 'careful of the opportunistic elements which were rife in establishment sport especially committees that were pursuing the unity question particularly for the sake of gaining official participation in sport'.¹⁶⁶

To achieve these objectives, the NSC made sure that it emphasised unity amongst the oppressed. This issue rightfully came out strongly in its "Unity in Sport" Conference in July 1990. Amongst the other crucial issues that were debated was its 'commitment to develop the structures for a mass-based sports movement', organising 'both rural and urban sportspeople', and that it was 'imperative to ensure sports unity amongst the oppressed as being of more importance than the unification of non-racial and establishment sport'.¹⁶⁷ However, at the time, the NSC had, to a certain degree, 'managed to achieve this goal as it organised the oppressed sports people and this was particularly reflected at school level' where it broke down the Department of Education and Training's (DET) control of school sport. This did not only occur in DET, but talks to the state's multinational sports policy, which was left in crisis with little support.¹⁶⁸ However, this did not come without a price because with educational struggles receiving top priority on the agenda of student organisations, school sport was left relatively unattended by progressive organisations. Ironically, this did not only allow the DET to make inroads into schools with minimal resistance from progressive student constituencies, it also collapsed the whole struggle and sports culture within these schools. It was in the early 1990s that the student affiliates, together with progressive teacher organisations began to give sport top priority, which, in fact, augured well for the unity goals espoused by the NSC.

¹⁶⁵See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.64.

¹⁶⁶See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990,p.64.

¹⁶⁷See *New African*, 24 July 1990.

¹⁶⁸See *New African*, 2 April 1990.

Whilst the NSC had other crucial issues to attend to, it also identified the development of a mass-based sports movement as its most essential prerogative. To achieve this, it took up issues such as encouraging the newly formed sports organisations to take cue from the labour movement and political organisations.¹⁶⁹ They also had to structure their existence on grassroots democracy, accountability and the mass involvement of all members; eradicating sexism and gender inequalities. The sports organisation aligned themselves to the MDM whilst at the same time they were actively and consciously involved in the transformation of sport in the country, and recognised that 'for a mass-based sports movement to become a reality, "the urban-rural divide" had to be narrowed with a particular emphasis placed on sport in the rural areas'.¹⁷⁰ What also emerged within the NSC ranks was the recognition that the development of the mass-based sports movement ought to be coupled with the transformation of sport.

Thus, in this regard, an analysis of sports relations and the sports network had to be inevitably undertaken if appropriate programmes of action were to be implemented. However, given its position of accommodating and controlling establishment sport as well as building the mass sports movement, the NSC was 'certainly in no enviable position'.¹⁷¹ Establishment sport and the non-racial sport under the NSC inevitably needed each other, but the NSC had to be creative in giving precise direction and guidance in an attempt to ultimately ensure that the proponents of non-racial sport govern the "sport apparatus".¹⁷²

Rugby Unity: The Approach, Impact and Implementation

Whilst there was a relatively smooth transition following unity amongst other sporting codes, rugby football remained engulfed in turmoil and conflict. Rugby appeared to have learnt very little from the political breakthroughs that were unfolding during the greater part of 1990 and well into 1991, as a series of

¹⁶⁹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.65-66.

¹⁷⁰See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.65-66.

¹⁷¹See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.65-66.

¹⁷²See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990, pp.65-66.

“acrimonious exchange” between Craven and Patel continued and the exploratory talks between SARU and SARB grounded ‘to a halt amidst accusation and counter-accusations of intransigence, insensitivity and opportunism. Whilst other sporting codes managed to emerge with relative ease, rugby remained the odd one out’.¹⁷³ This situation continued and became a big cause for concern as one journalist observed sarcastically: ‘perhaps it is the aggressive nature of the game that causes rugby officials to fight’.¹⁷⁴ Central to the conflict between SARU and SARB were two almost utterly opposed perceptions of the role of sport in society. Whilst SARU and the NSC saw very little or no divide between sport and society, Craven refuted even a trace of social significance of rugby and continually argued against what he referred to as blatant interference of politics and politicians into rugby affairs. However, to the non-racialist, ‘sport was seen as inter-linked with the total social formation’ of the country and thus had to ‘reflect society’.¹⁷⁵

This fight was perpetuated to a level where the non-racial movement had to intervene. Recognizing that SARU and SARB were unable to reach a consensus that would solve the rugby impasse, in March 1991 Tshwete, at the time the ANC sport spokesperson and South African Minister of Sport, interceded.¹⁷⁶ In fact, by this time Tshwete had gained the popular *epithet*, “Mr Fix It”, due to his significant role in brokering talks between several other sporting codes, most notably cricket. He believed that establishment of one rugby controlling body was of paramount importance in countering sectionalism and in empowering previously disadvantaged sections of the population.

It was therefore essential, he argued, for SARU and SARB to get together so that they could influence each other in such a way that any hardened attitudes could be broken down. Tshwete was also concerned about the perceived potential negative spin-offs that rugby could have on wider South African politics. ‘It is a delicate process where the rugby talks are bound to influence the political process in the country and vice versa’.¹⁷⁷ He argued that the establishment of a single unified non-

¹⁷³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹⁷⁴See *Business Day*, 28 January 1991.

¹⁷⁵See *New Nation*, 8 November 1990.

¹⁷⁶See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹⁷⁷See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

racial rugby body in the South African 'so that whatever is done, we should operate under this new body'.¹⁷⁸ This was also the message Tshwete tried to convey to Craven, whom he found more 'attentive and not insensitive to the demands of the occasion'.¹⁷⁹

In as much as Tshwete's interventions were considered invaluable, there were indications that Craven had become increasingly understanding to admit, and recognising the changed South African political situation. Though he objected being dictated to, there was evidence that Craven grew to understand that without the blessing of the ANC, NSC and SARU, it was almost impossible for his board to organise international tours free of disruptions through demonstrations.¹⁸⁰ Tshwete played a relentless role in steering the talks towards unity. 'Pressure was exerted on both Patel and Craven. A meeting was even arranged between Nelson Mandela, ANC president at the time, and Craven. This apparently further helped to smooth the way. In December 1991 it was announced that a new unified' non-racial rugby body, named the SARFU, was to be launched at the beginning of 1992.¹⁸¹

This new body committed itself to the development of rugby across the board and, in particular, in disadvantaged areas. Consequently the "go-ahead" for international tours was given in 1992.¹⁸² The latter effectively meant that 'SARU had to drop the moratorium on tours, but for the first time in a history of more than a hundred years, the SARB had to take the opinions and influence of people other than whites seriously and, moreover, act upon them'.¹⁸³ Whilst the SARB had coloured and black affiliates in the past, 'they had never exerted the same pressure as Patel and SARU'.¹⁸⁴ The 1992 breakthrough ushered in an era where rugby administrators faced up to each other as equals. 'An interim constitution, designed to underpin the unity process, ensured "fifty-fifty" representation for the SARU and SARB, with

¹⁷⁸See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.3.

¹⁷⁹See *Weekly Mail*, 8 March 1991.

¹⁸⁰See *Sunday Time*, 27 January 1991.

¹⁸¹See *Pretoria News*, 9 December 1991; *Die Burger*, 15 February 1992; see also Dobson, *South African Rugby*, 'Doc: The life of Danie Craven', Cape Town, 1994, pp.182-187.

¹⁸²See *Pretoria News*, 9 December 1991; *Die Burger*, 15 February 1992; see also Dobson, *South African Rugby*, 'Doc', 1994, pp.182-187.

¹⁸³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.5.

¹⁸⁴See *Bleed*, 6 April 1989.

Craven and Patel as joint presidents', with the latter to take over solely in 1993, following Craven's death.¹⁸⁵ However, 'despite the apparent equitable "fifty-fifty" agreement, it was an uneasy unity; both parties were driven to it by circumstances rather than conviction'.¹⁸⁶

This manifested itself in many ways as shown by the union's administration and how it actually operated in the eyes of the observers. This attitude should be understood within the context of the longstanding troubled historical relations of these rugby bodies and thus expecting that "just by a snap of the finger" things were going to be perfect would be over simplistic and rather comical. Nevertheless, the unification process at the national level seemed to have advanced relatively smoothly and showed a degree of success, though some felt a bit uncomfortable with the hasty manner that characterised this process. 'I am convinced though that there was no other way to deal with the situation as the popular call through the media circles that "the bus is moving, if you don't board it now, you will be left behind"'.¹⁸⁷ However, this vigour was not really witnessed in the provinces. It seemed though that inadequate attention was paid to the latter and, in fact, little was said about the effects of unity at "grass roots". Much focus was on the new body's operational dynamics at national level, with the provincial and local dimensions rather overlooked. This, with reference to the Border region, is explored in the section below.

Rugby Unity in the Border Region

Whilst the unification process was manoeuvred at the national level, the same process was also, to a certain degree, unfolding in the provincial rugby units across the country. Before the actual unification of the establishment and nonestablishment structures some other critical issues had to be addressed. For instance, with the many challenges that the unity committees had to deal with, the issue of provincial demarcations was critical. This was particularly difficult to deal with, especially given the longstanding division within the South African rugby fraternity. For instance, there were four different rugby controlling bodies in the country. Rugby

¹⁸⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.5.

¹⁸⁶See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.5.

¹⁸⁷Interview Puzi. It was generally believed that Steve Tshwete, who in his quest for a unified and non-racial sport network, worked tirelessly to see it through the end, spread this message.

enthusiasts within these various rugby groups had to develop credible proposals and further debate to justify the need for the existence of their respective pre-unity provincial units.

This generally gave rise to robust debates across the country, with many fearing that their regions might be given “raw deals” by the new administration, which was in all fairness unfamiliar to them and their sentimental sports needs and interests in a detailed manner. With radical development programmes coupled with sports resources such as facilities in the offing, rugby enthusiasts from various areas became sceptical of being marginalized by the new provincial administration. Considering the fact that some sportspersons had raised these concerns even before unity, while they were within their respective rugby controlling bodies, this in fact had a long history in all sectors of rugby, irrespective of race, political allegiance and affiliation. For instance, from its inception, rugby in black communities emerged in the urban areas with very little or no rugby at all in the rural and *platteland* areas. When rugby grew and developed in the latter, the rural areas often accused them of marginalizing them. For instance, East London and Port Elizabeth, which were for a long time were considered the “Meccas” of black rugby, were frequently accused of marginalizing their fellow neighbouring rugby regions. It was often argued that the Border provincial unit’s administration and teams mainly comprised East Londoners (i.e., Duncan Village and Mdantsane) with merely a sprinkling of outsiders like King Williams Town, Alice, Transkei and other small areas. The same was said about the EP and PE as regions like Grahamstown and others often accused EP of being biased in favour of PE.

In fact this was the reason the Transkei region successfully fought for autonomous status through the SAARFB in 1957 and later in the 1970s. Victoria East Rugby Union (VERU) also followed suit, though it was unsuccessful.¹⁸⁸ It seems that the perception that without its delegates or representation, rugby units were bound to suffer neglect, something that was seen many decades ago. There was fear that this could be still perpetuated until now. For instance, the former VERU general

¹⁸⁸Interview Magqabi & Dunga, 303 NU 9, Mdantsane, 8 January 2001; Interview Leo Louis Mtshizana, 1 Van Tonder Street, Sterkspruit, 23 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mtshizana). The Stofile brothers, Reverend MA Stofile, also cited this during the VERU Veterans Anniversary Ceremony in Alice in April 2002.

secretary, Ponono, talking in the VERU veteran's anniversary, lamented the process of amalgamating the provincial units within the unified non-racial SARFU, and specifically referred to the unified non-racial Border unit, as he said 'we didn't want to affiliate to Border. We wanted VERU to remain an independent provincial union that is directly affiliating to SARFU. I was one of the people who were dead against this move because we were sceptical that we might be marginalized. However, following numerous heated debates we acceded and we [VERU] are now one of the Border sub-unions'.¹⁸⁹ Mike Stofile, the current VERU president, concurred, saying 'in as much as we honour and respect the fact that VERU is now an affiliate of Border, very little has changed. *I-Border ise li-Monti nangoku* [The Border provincial unit remains "East London" even today]. However, we are doing everything to change the situation and in fact some of us are contributing immensely in affairs of rugby in the region.'¹⁹⁰



However, with all other things considered, regarding the big word "viability", at least in as far as the national rugby enthusiasts seemed to have triumphed, the SARFU consistently reiterated that it could not afford to sustain many provincial bodies, thus, many units with serious sentimental value to some, had to be sacrificed. This, apart from financial considerations, was actually going to undermine the whole essence of rugby unity and further perpetuate the old various 'racial kraals' that Louis Leo Mtshizana first talked about in the 1960s.¹⁹¹

For instance, if the amalgamation of those old existing establishment and nonestablishment "provincial" units were to succeed the area currently catered for by the BRFU would have had five rugby "provincial" bodies [namely, SARU's VERU, Frontier Rugby Union (FRU), and Border Rugby Union, with the unaffiliated Transkei Rugby Union and the establishment Border Rugby Union]. A similar situation would have occurred in the EP and other several provinces just as the current Western Province (WP) emerged as a result of the amalgamation of at least nine pre-

¹⁸⁹Ponono said this at the VERU Veterans Anniversary Ceremony in Alice in April 2002. This information is captured in the videocassette that is on the author's possession.

¹⁹⁰Mike Stofile, the current VERU president and Junior Vice-President of the unified non-racial BRFU, and the youngest brother to the Reverend Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, said this at the VERU Veterans Anniversary Ceremony in Alice in April 2002. This information is captured on videocassette that is on the author's possession.

¹⁹¹Interview Mtshizana.

rugby unity provincial units.¹⁹² This situation was no doubt going to create redundancy, was utterly illogical and a waste of both human and the scarce financial resources.

Thus, in this case the unification meant significant resource restructuring. Looking at the issue of viability, this saved and produced large sums of money for the newly established SARFU to the benefit of rugby broadly, especially the fourteen new provincial units as approved by the national body. This was achieved under trying conditions as the former WP secretary Theuns Roodman acknowledged in 1992 that ‘unification has not come cheaply... costs have tripled... finances are healthy, and we might show a profit, but things are not as easy as they were’.¹⁹³ The latter was achieved under severely difficult circumstances, though, as earlier indicated.¹⁹⁴

It appears, though, that factors like the entrenched rugby traditions and interest in the game also played a prominent role in deciding which old provinces were to be retained. A clear observation made is that almost all the old established provincial structures were retained and given more life, more than the majority of those from the nonestablishment side. The explanation for this seems related to Roberts’ view that the establishment sport bodies were financially, administratively and organizationally strong. Thus it made sense that their structural and infrastructural resources gave them an edge. For instance, most, if not all of the current provincial unions are housed in the old establishment buildings and matches are played in “their” fields as well. The nonestablishment unions did not have the financial backing that the establishment bodies had from both government and the “corporate world”. Thus, the former situation was inevitable.

¹⁹² Interview Noors Ibrahim, District Museum, Buitekant Street, Cape Town, 6 October 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Ibrahim); Graham Abrahams, 120 Plain Street, Cape Town, 9 October 2000, (Henceforth: Interview Abrahams).

¹⁹³ See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, p.2.

¹⁹⁴ Interview Abrahams.

Regarding unity at the provincial level, out of the fourteen newly established “non-racial” rugby provincial units of SARFU, BRFU was first to unify. The unity negotiations among the leading administrators in this region began in 1990, with Mluleki George of the NSC and Ronnie Grobler of the established Border Rugby Union mainly instrumental in initiating the process (see the picture below). The steering committee was chaired by Ken Dovey, who at the time was a professor and researcher attached to Rhodes University and a director of the East London based Institute for Social and Individual Development in Africa (Isida).¹⁹⁵ This culminated in the coloured, African and white rugby bodies uniting to form a non-racial Border Rugby Football Union. Mluleki George became the first president of this first non-racial rugby unit in the country. The key role players and the rugby unification committee members within the Border region are pictured in the following page.

It is imperative that the unification process be analysed within the context of the socio-political and economic transformation of the twenty-first century, of course with other several crucial aspects carefully considered. Like any other forms of transformation, rugby unity did not come easily. It was rather confronted with many challenges that if dealt with carelessly would have meant serious danger to the future of non-racial rugby at large. During and after this process, issues such as the unification process itself, the logistics and administrative dynamics, subsequent financial benefits, other incurred resources in the form of facilities, sponsorship, human resource, white rugby hegemony, the continued perceptions of racism, prejudice, and the question of representativity within the country’s provincial and national teams soon became topical. For the sake of the future growth and development of South African rugby, these issues necessitated appropriate attention.

¹⁹⁵Professor Ken Dovey’s Isida project was funded by National Research foundation since its establishment in 1988. This project was administered by Dovey and his team of researchers and comprised of 4000 adults and children from the economically depressed Border area. Dovey says his project was aimed at helping its subjects realise their potential and among its several areas of focus, sport development, especially rugby, where an Under 10 Junior Rugby League among East London schools including nine township schools. Patsa Matyeshana held this project with high regard, describing it as one of the most important things that has happened to the little boys in the area, and he in fact also indicated that one of his sons enthusiastically participated in this programme. See National Research Foundation news: Centre for Science Development [SWO] Bulletin 5 (1), ‘Research Development Programme proposed’, 1992, pp.7-8; interview Patsa Matyeshana, 1920 NU 17, 20 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Matyeshana).



From L-R: Mntuwekhaya Nkwinti, Syd Loubscher, Ronnie Grobler, Ngconde Balfour and John Ncinane.

Black Clubs, 1980s and 1990s

In the preceding chapter, the standard of the traditional non-racial rugby clubs was discussed. Before and during rugby unity, much focus was directed at the “national” level in terms of transformation and development, by almost all the four rugby bodies in the country. This was done at the expense of traditional provincial and local club rugby, with arguably only the establishment bodies that kept their rugby immune from polarisation of the “changing” national rugby political landscape. Prior to unification, the provincial and club rugby throughout these national bodies, however, continued to play a crucial role as a “feeder” to these national teams. In fact, during Craven’s desperate days to “unify” rugby in the country, very little was done to change the face of the provincial teams and club rugby within the establishment circles. What was common among these four rugby bodies was that club rugby played the pivotal role of enlightening and encouraging the youth to play the game from grassroots through to all levels.

As previously indicated, many clubs in the East London area, just as it occurred elsewhere, continued to pride themselves in the number of players within the provincial and “national” teams. They gauged their strength not only by the number of cups and championships they had achieved over the years but also by the number of players within these teams. In this regard, East London clubs such as Swallows, Thembu United, Winter Rose, Black Lion, Rising Stars, and John Bisseeker Old Boys made names for themselves over many decades. Players such as Joe Mtyeku, Simo Mjo, PV Maneli, Bunga Richard Price Ncunyana, Bittie Phillips, Patsa Joe Matyeshana, Gibson Gawulayo, Charles Mgweba, Thobile Mtya, (and many other Swallows players); George Mnyute, Livingston and Kwepile Mnyute, Maboy Mbiza, Max Bukashe, Malawi Solomon, Big Fotoyi, (and many other Winter Rose players), Joe Mngqikana, Lappley “Swarie” Sontshi, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Denis Botha, Ryn Manuel, (and other Thembu United players), Vuyani Mngqatu and Mbulelo Mngqatu, (and other Bush Buck players), Roderick Jonkers, Godfrey Simons, Mick Fritz and many other players who featured in the provincial and “national” teams, made their clubs proud. These players thrilled their immediate domestic crowds over the years.

However, by the late 1990s through to the era of rugby unity, some of these clubs were no longer as strong as they used to be. For instance, clubs such as Bush Buck and Spring Rose showed notably low standards and, in fact, they were struggling to even qualify playing in the first division within the MDARU Zonal Leagues.¹⁹⁶ The relatively new clubs that were previously considered “underdogs” constantly trounced clubs with a long rugby tradition such as Black Lion, Thembu United. Swallows, Wallabies, Winter Rose (of Mdantsane), Rising Stars of East London, Black Lion (of Zwelitsha), Breakers (of Queenstown) and others were the few that kept the non-racial rugby fires burning in the area. However, it was clear that rugby football was not what it used to be and rugby enthusiasts in the area shared various beliefs and theories in their attempts to explain this debacle.

The two decades preceding the South African rugby unity generally evidenced that many traditional non-racial rugby clubs showed remarkable decline in playing standards. The rugby enthusiasts in the EL area argue that this phenomenon was not a one-big-single-event but rather, is as a result of concomitant events that marked the transformation of rugby of this population. They argue that this did not suddenly happen but rather steadily occurred over the last three decades. For instance, Mjo believes that black rugby gradually died out over the years, though the ‘failed tournament at Umtata in 1969’ marked the final nail in the coffin of “Mr Black Rugby”.¹⁹⁷ Mjo believes that the biennial interprovincial tournaments were the backbone of rugby in these communities. There are many who share this view. ‘If we didn’t establish the Industrial League in the mid 1960s, the whole East London could have played soccer a long time ago’.¹⁹⁸ Mjo also argues that the popularity that soccer later earned was rather promoted by rugby enthusiasts themselves. He says

... I...was the Border president in 1978... East London had two subunions, MDARU and ELRU, which were under SARU. ...SARU as an affiliate of a non-collaborating and non-compromising SACOS...which didn’t want to play its rugby in the limelight, it was

¹⁹⁶Interview Dumisani Mhani, 1326 NU 14, Mdantsane, 27 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mhamni); Interview Ntandazo Rufas “Jujuju” Mabija, 966 NU 10, 30 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mabija); Interview Mahlubandile Puzi, Langa Rugby Grounds, Langa, Cape Town, 1 October 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Puzi).

¹⁹⁷Interview Mjo, Old Mutual Building, Green Acres, Port Elizabeth, 4 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Mjo); Mabija; Interview Sipho Tanana, 16 Edge Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 9 May 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tanana); see also JB Peires, “Facta non verba”: Towards a history of black rugby’, a paper presented at the history workshop at Witwatersrand University, 1981; see also Dobson, *South African Rugby*, 1989.

¹⁹⁸Interview Mjo.

committed into playing it in the *Ghettoes* ...and believed they shouldn't have its games televised because... TV was the apartheid government's propaganda material. I felt differently... because I think we could have used that propaganda material to propagandise our rugby. Why didn't we use it? Unfortunately, they didn't share this view... because of this *short-sightedness*... right now... the new generation knows soccer and Doctor Khumalo's... because that is what they see on TV. ...around the country, black youth play soccer compared to rugby, for instance every young boy knows the soccer national side. ...today's generation identifies itself with these things because that is what they know best. What is on show now is Kaizer Chiefs... *Ezikamagabhula* [Orlando Pirates] ... even...cars and taxis throughout the country advertise soccer and everything is all soccer and soccer all the way...something that wasn't happening before especially in places where black people played rugby... where rugby was the major sports like EL and PE. Places that have produced excellent rugby... high quality rugby! ...with highly reputed rugby stars... I insist that these areas still have a potential to do the same given the existing rugby personnel... the innate flair of the game amongst the people...¹⁹⁹

Just as Roberts noted above, sports in the black communities rightfully took a back seat to the country's social and political concerns. In fact the manner in which authorities perceived sports almost compelled the non-racial sports persons to prioritise the fight for the country's social and political freedom. This inevitably compromised adequate focus on sports development, with politics assuming the centre stage. For instance, in 1981, Jeff Peires concurs with this as he wrote, 'as a game, rugby is declining in the face of the greater glamour of the NPSL [National Professional Soccer League] soccer. In the Transkei, it has nearly collapsed altogether, partly owing to KD Matanzima's view that SARU is an organisation belonging to another country'.²⁰⁰ Sports activities were used as vehicles to expose the wrongs of the apartheid system, thus development programmes did not have the space to take off. While this was happening in the non-racial rugby, the establishment sports developed, further entrenching themselves in every respect of the "sport world", and ever improving their competitive environment. Sport in black communities, just as many other social aspects such as music and arts was generally used as an arsenal to expose the evils of apartheid and, in fact, in these communities, "sports for sports sake" was an unknown phenomenon.²⁰¹

This therefore left a big hole in the true development of rugby football. However, during the turn of the last decade towards the first millennium, some rugby enthusiasts perhaps due to naiveté, believed that the standard of the game in these communities was just on par with that of the privileged established sportspersons.

¹⁹⁹ Interview Mjo.

²⁰⁰ See Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.9.

²⁰¹ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

This led to a situation where some blacks showed rather bloated expectations “to prove a point to the white clubs” after rugby unity between these groups. However, some strongly argued quite convincingly that their clubs had the capacity to face the white clubs as equals. For instance, Dumisani Mhani says, ‘we also wanted to prove to the *Boers* that we could do it too and that they just could not trample over us that easy... we were to compete on par... for instance Swallows’ coach at the time, Sizwe Ballie, the Rhodes Human Movement Studies graduate, used contemporary scientific methods in training and he would often request the use of the scrum machine from the white clubs like Buffaloes...’.²⁰² Given the latter perceptions, the stage for an enduring “showdown” was set, where the rugby fraternity was to witness these issues on practical terms.

The Traditional Black Clubs Merge

It appears that the NSC was sensing a possibility of a consequential emotional disillusionment and dejection when things do not go as expected by many black rugby enthusiasts. It suggested that, if it did not simply instruct, the clubs within the underprivileged communities to merge together so that ‘they can be strong enough’ to face “the more than one way” privileged white opponents.²⁰³ This “suggestion” was generally never taken kindly by many clubs in these communities across the country.²⁰⁴ Most of the longstanding traditional clubs frankly rejected the NSC’s proposal to merge with other clubs.

The clubs called urgent meetings, and long serving members and club stalwarts also attended to discuss this issue. ‘Swallows flatly rejected the proposal. ‘I was called to East London to discuss this and I advised them against it. I felt that this

²⁰² Interview Mhani.

²⁰³ Interview John Ncinane, Holiday Inn, Bunkers Hill, East London, 19 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Ncinane); Puzi. Ncinane says that the NSC simply advised and sometimes assisted rugby people to get three to four clubs merged together so that they can be strong enough to face whites teams.

²⁰⁴ Interview Mjo; Interview Bishop Mgwebi, Border Rugby Football Union offices: Waverley Park, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mgwebi); Interview Bhunga Richard Price Ncunyana, 3607 NU 8 Mdantsane, 19 October 2000 & in 19 December 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Ncunyana); Interview Pulle Twaku, 54 Oxford Street, Lewis Stores, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Twaku); Interview Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute, 46 Duton Road, Cambridge West, East London, 20 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mnyute); Interview Christian Ndondo, Amatale District Council [Municipal] offices, Cambridge Street, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Ndondo); Mtya; Mhani; Ncinane; Puzi; Matyeshana; Ibrahim.

was going to kill the clubs and rugby in the area'.²⁰⁵ Critical on the agendas was the question of "loss of identities", the newly formed club's starting line-ups, and the potential conflict of traditions within the merging clubs. The merger was considered as a serious betrayal to the forefathers of the clubs. In chapter three, the manner in which these clubs were formed, why they were formed, the origins of their players, and club traditions, were discussed. The idea of merging these clubs understandably became a difficult decision to take. Given the fact that things were done hastily, decisions had to be taken and indeed they were ultimately taken. This dramatically changed the face of non-racial rugby perhaps for good.

However, it was clear that many within these clubs, especially the old folk, were not prepared to compromise and in fact, it could be safely said that even though they supported rugby integration, they ironically seemed to have an imperfect understanding of the price at which this transformation process could be achieved. However, one of the NSC administrators, also one of the former unity steering committee members, and later BRFU executive member, Madodana John Roman Ncinane, has a rather harsh response to the latter attitude. In his analysis of the situation he says one 'doesn't always bring all the baggage through during the process of transformation...you gain something and you have to lose some. There are things that must be sacrificed in order for the process of change to be effective. However, there were certain Mdantsane clubs like Thembu, Swallows and others, which refused to merge and guess what happened to them? They died a natural death, and in fact many that didn't take our advice are no more or at least very weak just like Thembu'.²⁰⁶ However, some acceded to the NSC's call to merge and in fact 'embraced this proposal as their own'.²⁰⁷ Though, as indicated above, some of these clubs believed that they were strong enough to trounce the white clubs but when this time came the opposite was true. 'They were utterly humiliated as they were beaten big scores by the white teams'.²⁰⁸

In as much as there were apparently many convincing arguments concerning the issue of the merger of the non-racial clubs, there were other obvious concerns to

²⁰⁵ Interview Mjo.

²⁰⁶ Interview Ncinane

²⁰⁷ Interview Puzi.

²⁰⁸ Interview Puzi; Tanana; Mabija; Mgwebi.

be addressed. For instance, the huge non-racial community that loved and had embraced the rugby game as part of its traditional way of life over a number of decades who, now had to 'make do with the new and unfamiliar set-ups'.²⁰⁹ A large number of rugby players and administrators felt out of place in the wake of the merging of clubs. This did not only see the number of players and clubs remarkably reduced, but motivation to play, administer and the general people's interest to participate in and support the game evidenced a dramatic decline.²¹⁰ 'People just lost interest because when they go to the fields they wanted to watch their own Rising Stars but not the newly formed United RFC [formed by the merger between Rising Stars and John Bisseker Old Boys]. They could not identify themselves with it. They were still stuck on the old traditions of their individual respective clubs'.²¹¹

There are many who share this view, pointing out that, for instance, before the mergers various clubs had their respective teams and administrators and with the merger, many felt out of place. This in fact signalled 'the death of "Mr Black Rugby" because our club rugby was more social than actual playing. We had clubs with their respective peculiar traditions, like for instance, Black Lion, *Amagqunukhwebe*, which died out following rugby unity, merged with a fairly new club called Himiltons and the other two and at worst changed name. People weren't interested anymore because their name and identity, *Amagqunukhwebe*, which they pride themselves with over the years was no more. All that interest was gone, and because of frustration people said "there is no more Black Lions, why must I go watch rugby, I used to watch my brother, so and so play and now, he isn't there any more"'.²¹²

The administrators and players from the merged clubs were sadly lost from rugby. They could not be accommodated within "one newly formed club" and this caused the rugby playing pool and the platforms for administrative capacity development to shrink remarkably.²¹³ Ncinane says following unification rugby

²⁰⁹ Interview Temmers, 54 Port Rex Street, Buffalo Flats, East London 12 June 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Temmers).

²¹⁰ Interview Ibrahim; Temmers, Mjo; Mgwebi; Twaku.

²¹¹ Interview Temmers.

²¹² Interview Ben "Ta-Ben" Tengimfene, 19 Nahum Road, Albrow Gardens, Milnerton, Cape Town, 1 February 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Tengimfene).

²¹³ Interview Temmers; Mjo; Mgwebi; Ndonko; Interview Thobile Mtya, 29 Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Mtya).

people 'thought everything was over and they started other new things'.²¹⁴ Many club rugby and union administrators of the day left rugby for greener pastures, with some being fulltime politicians, others joined business and so forth, and thus left 'black rugby very weak'.²¹⁵ 'Some people got jobs within the newly established BRFU and were quite comfortable and getting the fat cake meanwhile the players were left behind'.²¹⁶ 'I never agreed to what happened in the Border region and Eastern Province. In Port Elizabeth at one point there was a "club" called Kwazakhele Rugby Union Rugby Football Club or in short KWARU Club. What a contradiction? *Wakhe wayiva phi into yokuba i-Union ebekwa yi-club* [where did you hear of a situation where a "union" also become a club...] at the same time? I never agreed and believed that this was a correct way of transforming our rugby'.²¹⁷

Mhani says that players themselves were against the merger proposal and he, as the Swallows captain during this trying period, together with the rest of the team, threatened to retire if such a decision was to be adopted by the club stalwarts. He further says

...we didn't have a problem with the unity process whatsoever...we were aware that we are South Africans and Mdantsane is part of EL, thus should be under one rugby controlling body. However, the only problem we had concerning the unity process was the proposal that non-racial "clubs should merge together in the name of strengthening them" and ...to compete on par against *amabhulu* [the Boer or white clubs]. ...as the Swallows RFC, unfortunately felt otherwise...as a top club in the area...playing the best rugby...anyone who know us (Swallows) can agree with me in this regard. We believed that we were strong enough to compete with the white clubs quite well. ...we were the champions of the MDARU at the time and we have been the non-racial BRU for four consecutive years and the rugby playing pattern that we were using was universally adopted... therefore to merge with another club would have meant that the very same Swallows XI would be fielded, with the players from other club featuring in our second team. Another issue with the merging process concerned the changing of club names, which we wouldn't dare accept...we were very adamant on this...we upheld peculiar traditions that not every new person could have easily fitted into... other clubs, however, accepted the merger proposal though within a few years following this process... disintegrated and went back to their original clubs ... perhaps because of conflicts and other reasons...thus... merger could no longer hold...²¹⁸

After unity was achieved within the Border rugby, the new union was faced with a task of organizing an integrated Premier League and other topflight rugby competitions. This meant that a promotion-relegation games had to be played by the traditional nonestablishment clubs against the former established white clubs and or a

²¹⁴Interview Ncinane.

²¹⁵Interview Ncinane.

²¹⁶Interview Tengimfene.

²¹⁷Makhenkesi Arnold Stofile, at the VERU veterans anniversary in Alice in March 2002.

²¹⁸Interview Mhani.

pool of the combination of both these groups. This was one big issue that is constantly raised even after ten odd years following unity, and many rugby enthusiasts in the areas feel that some unfair logistical practices occurred during this process.

The crux of the issue was the manner in which the draw for these games was made. There were accusations that the officials that were involved in this process had their allegiances to specific clubs, and so somehow manipulated the proceedings for their advantage, and deliberately 'set other clubs up for defeat'.²¹⁹ For instance, Mhani says

...The manner in which the promotion-relegation fixtures were organised was flawed and the organising committee of Syd [Loubser], Mr Bhe and Hobo was bias towards certain clubs. ...Hobo was representing MDARU in the structure that drew the fixtures and he seized that opportunity to serve his own interests...to ease the way for his favourite clubs. For instance he made sure that he plays [matches] Winter Rose, his club, against the weakest teams he could find. ...the likes of African Bombers from Peddie and the other vulnerable lot... with only one credible club...a certain white club...and it [Winter Rose] thus won comfortably...affording it a chance to qualify to play in the Premier League. Other clubs such as Swallows, Wallabies competed against the strongest clubs in the Border region, the likes of Swifts, Buffaloes, Cambridge and the [South African] Police (Services rugby team in the East London area). ... the real cream of the white rugby of the area. ...the qualifying conditions for Premier League status was that a club should at least win three matches, which Winter Rose, United and Black Lion of Zwelitsha managed to achieve. ...white clubs were fortunate because they played against clubs that were not playing quality rugby... most of our black clubs were not playing the right rugby at the time. Therefore, white clubs won easily to qualified to play in the premier league...²²⁰

Some rugby people argue that clubs that were the champions within their respective unions should have been accorded a special status in the Premier League, without necessarily being subjected to the tedious promotion-relegation programme.²²¹ However, the counter argument to this was that BRFU, for a particular reason, wanted only a limited number of clubs from the former nonestablishment fold, thus hand picking as suggested above would not have been fair for other clubs.

Another challenging aspect of this rugby revolution was that the non-racial clubs had to travel to far off areas to play in the former establishment grounds. It is known that black areas had generally poor or no facilities at all and this motivated the unity committee to use posh establishment facilities rather than the former. Sadly,

²¹⁹Interview Matyeshana; Mhani; Mtya.

²²⁰Interview Mhani.

²²¹Interview Mhani.

this meant that the rugby enthusiasts had to pay costly travel fares constantly to play and watch their clubs. This posed a big financial burden to them, many of whom were generally destitute. This, therefore meant that a large portion of the rugby fraternity was being deprived of the opportunity to participate in the rugby affairs that they were part of for a number of decades. In fact, many could not even support their clubs when they needed them most. 'Rugby was taken away from the township, within the midst of Mdantsane people, where it mattered most'.²²² This posed various difficult challenges to the rugby enthusiasts of the area. For instance Patsa Joe Matyeshana says

...when I started playing rugby, like any young location boy, I used to carry *bhut* Themba Nyikana's rugby sport bag with his "kit" inside knowing that I am going to wear his jersey when I play my rugby match before he use it for his. This was in fact a general trend in the location. This was our way of life because we as black people are poor, a situation that hasn't changed much even today. With the changes after unity, our problems were further compounded, where, for instance our first team will be expected to play in Queenstown and the second team at West Bank in East London. *Waqalak'uqulukubhode*, [Things started to crumble]...²²³

This meant that the jersey that "the young boy" was hoping to wear during his match was not going to be available anymore. He would be left stranded, and this perhaps, would subsequently, makes him abstain from honouring matches and eventually cease playing rugby at all. The kick-off times also posed another difficulty. The senior teams were expected to commence their matches at half past one in various afar places such as Queenstown, Stutterheim, and so on, whilst players whom, mainly workers in the East London factories, 'generally knocked-off from work at the same one o'clock. *Baqala ke ububhetyebhetye*' [things started to fall apart].²²⁴ The township clubs travelled long distances and were often accused of game delays by their white counterparts, who often complained that 'blacks are late again, blacks again are not coming, and these led to serious squabbles'.²²⁵

Reverend Stofile argues against the issue of taking rugby away from the people, noting with regret that some rugby administrators somehow misunderstood

²²²Interview Tengimfene.

²²³Interview Matyeshana.

²²⁴Interview Matyeshana.

²²⁵Interview Tengimfene.

sport transformation. In his message of support to the SARFU's development conference, he declared that the term "development" as used in SA sport meant different things to different people. 'In as far as NSC and later SARFU were concerned, the term "development" was never designed to be a programme of taking rugby away from where the people must struggle to get to. How can a community lend support to "strangers"? Development was meant to go where the underprivileged are and lift their standards up'.²²⁶ However, the reality was that the opposite was happening, thus, players and rugby growth suffered. Mjo concurs with the latter view, saying that black clubs had to travel to East London as opposed to playing within the township was problematic. He says

...Swallows refused to merge with any club but went down to play in town [EL] as opposed to its backyard, Mdantsane. ...some of the major disadvantages of playing away from their residential places...include for instance, the question of support which characterised traditional black people's rugby in these areas...this also meant that many people, especially the old and experienced membership won't be able to attend the rugby matches as they used to... Thus, there won't be any people to give meaningful feedback in terms of the clubs' game performances... the aspects to be improved, rectified for the development purpose of the clubs ...there won't be any support and rugby playing aspiration from the upcoming generation because they do not watch rugby in their immediate communities...and thus the latter won't have rugby role models as it used to be previously... children would get their role models from people and sports that they would be exposed to at the time as they grew up and definitely, that won't be black people's rugby but something else because rugby is no longer played in the townships. The worst would be that these young people won't even know that blacks once played excellent rugby just as their white counterparts... as its only white rugby that is on television and consequently there won't be any rugby in the black communities anyway...in fact, now, lots of the township boys play soccer as opposed to rugby, even though this was an unthinkable phenomenon during our time. The question of transportation and accessibility to rugby fields because of financial constraints, the clubs and to the spectators, was to be one other big issue itself...²²⁷

This was not only observed in the East London area but throughout the country, especially in the places that had a strong rugby playing traditions like Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Transkei, to mention just a few. For instance, there were ten-odd first division non-racial clubs within MDARU by 1991, but this number rapidly went down following the process of merging these clubs. Some of these mergers went on well for some time while many soon proved to be a good recipe for disaster. This led to a situation where some ended up entirely disappearing in the last decade towards the twenty-first century. For instance, out of the pre-unity batch that included clubs such as Swallows; Black Lion; Thembu United; Spring Rose; Bush Buck;

²²⁶ See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference'. In this 'Message of Support', Stofile raises various issues concerning the state of rugby development in the Border region and South Africa broadly.

²²⁷ Interview Mjo.

Winter Rose; Storm Breakers; Boiling Water; Busy Bees; Strand Loppers; Wallabies and All Blacks, only a handful survived on the other side of the unification process, and as indicated earlier, many were asked to merge.

For instance, at Mdantsane, the following clubs merged: Black Lions, All Blacks and Orientals merged to form Fifteen Attackers RFC; Thembu United, Bush Buck, Storm Breakers, and Strand Loppers were supposed to merge but things did not workout as expected, while Rovers and Eagles merged to form Eagle Rover RFC [this one is the only successful merger in the area as this club is still in existence]; Spring Rose and Vultures merged to form Roses RFC; Winter Rose of Mdantsane and Winter Rose from Parkside in East London combined to reconstitute one Winter Rose; Boiling Water, Busy Bees, and Wallabies also merged together and the John Bisseker Old Boys and Rising Stars of Parkside and Buffalo Flats, merged to form United RFC. However, Wallabies and Swallows were supposed to have merged but Swallows rejected the idea of merging and, as indicated earlier, decided to go it alone.

Ironically, the open secret was that while the new clubs were trying to find their feet, 'they crumbled and disintegrated, nullifying what appeared to be a prestigious idea'.²²⁸ This instead brought misery and disillusionment amongst the non-racial rugby enthusiasts, and fights and disputes erupted. These fights were often prompted by, for instance, differences in team selections, administrative matters, general club operations to mention but a few. Subsequently, the traditional East London rugby clubs did not only dramatically decline in performance standards but some died natural deaths towards the last decade of the twentieth century.

This left room for other sports codes such as soccer to reign supreme and render some people, especially the white folk, an opportunity to perpetuate their own agendas. Many, for instance, often misleadingly argue that blacks do not know rugby, and they never played it before. Uli Schmidt typified this group when he declared in 1994 that rugby is not in black people's culture and therefore 'they should play soccer'.²²⁹ One of the rugby journalists, Mark Keohane, (now the Springboks communications manager), noted that whites often argue that neither rugby nor

²²⁸Interview Mgwebi. Many other respondents like Puzi, Temmers, and Ndondo also said this.

²²⁹See *Cape Times*, 'SA blacks not made to play rugby, says Uli Schmidt', 26 October 1994.

cricket has historically been played by blacks in South Africa, yet by 1999, one third of the country's three hundred thousand registered rugby players were black.²³⁰ Reverend Stofile also reported a similar factual finding as early as 1992, arguing that the belief that more whites than blacks play rugby in South Africa is only 'a statistical myth which was blown to pieces during unity talks...'.²³¹ However, these Schmidt type perceptions and several other racial insinuations were to become a greater part of the South African sports scene, especially rugby football, despite the unification.

Development and Transformation in SA Rugby

In as much as there were many theories that sprang up to explain this predicament, it was clearly notable that something went wrong somewhere during the process of unification. Whilst the majority of the black clubs were gasping their last breath, the traditional white clubs were flourishing. The non-racial rugby enthusiasts started questioning the system that they themselves invented and embraced. A crisis committee led by Norman Nozewu was established to investigate young rugby transformation in the region.²³² The NSC also put pressure on SARFU pointing out that the promised rugby development and transformation of the administrative structures seemed to be going slower than expected.

In fact, SARFU itself was facing the difficult task of having to deal with Louis Luyt, the Transvaal Provincial rugby and later SARFU's blatantly controversial president. It was a big concern that in reality, SARFU itself took a long time to communicate its development plans in reasonable detail to its member unions. At one point one administrator complained that they had 'no idea of what the greater picture look like'.²³³ The Luyt's confrontational style in dealing with political matters was also lending weight to perceptions that rugby administrators and the game's follower's were insensitive to the plight of the sectors of the South African community, which was to be the beneficiary of any development programme.

²³⁰See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, pp.2-3.

²³¹See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', Stofile, (at the time the executive member of the South African Rugby Football Union), 28 November 1992, p.3.

²³²Interview Mgwebi.

²³³See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, pp.2-3.

Given such issues, the majority of non-racial sports people grew to believe that the former nonestablishment sports structures were merely being absorbed by the well-established former establishment sports structures. This left a question whether the unity was really to integrate black and white sports or rather a ploy by the establishment side to simply assimilate blacks into the mainstream white sports set-up. This is could be debated for sure, but there is apparent evidence to this effect.

However, it is imperative to admit that the non-racial sports movement was itself central to the transformation of sport in the country. Thus accusing the former establishment personnel only without analysing the effect and influence of the nonestablishment fraternity will not be a fair. However, in undertaking the latter exercise, careful analysis of not only the sports sector, rather the broader political underpinnings of the non-racial movement itself, needs to be considered. For instance, many view that it was and it still is unconceivable for the black population to suspect that there were elements within the non-racial movement that sought to *sellout* the cause of black rugby, thus proving SACOS's allegations right. Given the credibility and credentials of the non-racialists that were central in the unity of South African sport, the latter view is questionable. *Ababantu ngabantu ababe negalelo elikhulu kakhulu kumboxo wabantu abantsundu nasekukhululeni abantu abacinezelekileyo kwelilizwe. Abangekhe ke ngoko bathengise ngento yabantu abamnyama nakweyiphipina imeko*, [literally meaning: these people had a meaningful contribution to the development of black rugby and in the liberation of the oppressed masses of this country and therefore, cannot simply *sellout* blacks and their rugby for any price].²³⁴

However, references to individual corrupt tendencies such as jostling for positions, misuse of resources at grassroots level within the newly established rugby units following the unity process of course cannot be entirely dismissed. When he talks about people's misconceptions about the use of the term "development" in relation to South African rugby, Reverend Stofile notes that not everything is well in the country's sport transformation. Part of this, he blames on blacks themselves

²³⁴Mveleli Edwin Ncula, speaking at the VERU veterans anniversary in Alice in March 2002. Interview Mgwebi; Mhani; Ncinane; Abrahams; Interview Lappley "Swarie" Sontshi, 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 16 November 2000 (Henceforth: Interview Sontshi); Mtya; Ndondo; Twaku.

saying 'I know that it is easy for the situation to be defended even by those from our communities who now have a stake in it'.²³⁵ The latter refers to those who 'earned themselves lucrative positions out of the unity process, though regrettably at the expense of the unsuspecting players'.²³⁶

However, having recognised the above dimension, it cannot be denied that there were some and in fact there are still some dishonest individuals and or groups within the former establishment fold, coupled with their longstanding supporters within and outside this system. The situation was rather difficult and challenging because it appeared that there was a concerted effort by a large number of the white folk, ranging from sportsmen, administrators, sponsors and the media to large degree, to accomplish a particular mission. It is a proven fact that media has the greatest influence in any society. Thus, when a move of this nature is so strongly supported by the latter, the pressure to those on the receiving end of this plight could only be more difficult. For instance, having achieved unity, many whites, through the assistance of the mass media, continued to undermine the non-racial rugby such that some could boldly suggest that 'black clubs should join whites clubs'.²³⁷ In his response to this call, the Reverend Stofile, at the time one of the executive members of the SARFU, said

...The unity we are talking about is with integration in mind. Not assimilation. Why should blacks join white teams? The correct thing to say is that new teams should emerge from the unity process. Such teams should be on a non-racial basis. Obviously such legacies of apartheid as the Group Areas Act, socio-economic disparities... will hamper such efforts for some years. But we should work towards those ideas now so that when apartheid dies one day...it is still very much alive now...nation-building becomes easier than it would otherwise be. So our invitation to ... William and company is: let us learn together to understand the history of rugby in this country in non-racial minds. Our clubs, provincial and national archives and museums must begin to reflect that in South Africa not only whites played rugby and achieved great honours or displayed great skills. From such an approach will come the material liberation of officials, players, spectators and all. Out of such a mental liberation will result an accelerated development programme at all levels. The end-result will be non-racial SA teams where players...not colours...score tries for their country. At that point there will be new emblems, flags and anthems that represent the majority of South Africa's people. What those symbols will be, history will tell. For now, let us all work hard at forgetting divisive relics of the apartheid past and present.²³⁸

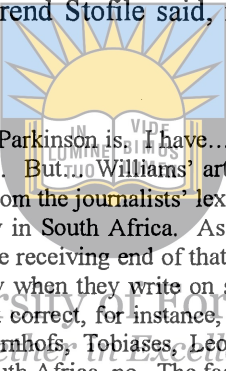
²³⁵See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference', 1999.

²³⁶Interview Tengimfene.

²³⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', Stofile, 28 November 1992, p.3.

²³⁸See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Getting rugby on to a non-racial track', Stofile, 28 November 1992, p.3.

There is little doubt that indeed some whites at the time, and perhaps maybe even today, really lacked the interest, will to participate in genuine transformation of South African sport. This should be expected especially considering the fact that there is a large number of those who are still finding it difficult to accept the changed society broadly, let alone accept that sports transformation is but one of its components. These did not only show utter arrogance but also, their level of commitment to and understanding of the concept of “non-racialism” itself. Through the popular culture, mass media in particular, they launched a concerted effort to mock the new cause of non-racialism in South African rugby. In 1992, one of the *Daily Dispatch* sport reporters wrote an article that appeared to promote ‘these malicious ideas’.²³⁹ In an attempt to put the issues of South African rugby and society ‘on a non-racial tract’, the Reverend Stofile said, responding to the *Daily Dispatch* article written by Glyn Williams:



I do not know who...Michael Parkinson is, I have...his article from which... Glyn Williams of the *Daily Dispatch* quoted... But Glyn Williams' article will not help unity in South African sport very much. To borrow from the journalists' lexicon, his article does not give an accurate picture of the history of rugby in South Africa. As such, it is misleading to the public and irritating to those always on the receiving end of that history. I plead to Mr Williams and his colleagues for more sensitivity when they write on sports matters, more so when they write about rugby football. It is not correct, for instance, to claim that the Springbok sides of the multi-national era of the Koonhofs, Tobiases, Leopards, Proteas etc ever represented SA rugby. A section of it, yes, South Africa, no. The fact is no black rugby player has scored for South Africa in the last 100-odd years. But we must work hard at thinking about how to build a non-racial SA team and nation on such a basis as will take in all our people. Past glories and pleasantries, which keep others out should be avoided. How many people know that blacks have been playing provincial rugby for more than 100 years in this country? How many know that the belief that more whites than blacks play rugby in South Africa is only a statistical myth, which was blown to pieces during unity talks? ...²⁴⁰

It was rather unfortunate that troubles started to crop up within the BRFU as early as its first years following the establishment of the first historic single, united and non-racial rugby body in South Africa. This transformation, of course like any other form of change, was confronted with many challenges. It should be emphasised that some of the problems were not easy to handle. Amongst these challenges were power and control, coordinating and organising fixtures for the different levels of competitions. The issues of accommodating the clubs that failed to acquire the Premier League status, and managing the various rugby programmes was paramount.

²³⁹See Roberts, *Transformation facing South African sport*, 1989; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sport*, 1990; interview Mjo; Tengimfene.

²⁴⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, ‘Getting rugby on to a non-racial track’, by Stofile, 28 November 1992, p.3.

After the promotion-relegation matches were completed, a second layer of competitions to cater for the clubs that failed to attain the Premier League status had to be created. The first division league was organised where the latter, coupled with some of the junior teams of the former establishment fold, were to compete. Initiating a knockout competition for the latter clubs and also accommodating the township clubs such as Swallows, Thembu United, Wallabies and 15 Attackers achieved this purpose. However, the clubs such as Bush Buck, Spring Rose and others failed to attain the first division status and a second division was also created for them.²⁴¹

Within these three levels of competitions, namely, the Premier League, First and Second divisions, clubs within the first two divisions were expected to play on a "home and away" basis. This, as earlier indicated, posed different problems for these rugby groups: travelling expenses for those from the disadvantaged black areas, whilst poor facilities in the townships were a major concern to the white clubs. One of the daunting challenges, that the latter and the BRFU executive faced was that the white teams within the first division such as East London Police Services rugby team, Cambridge, Buffaloes and others, constantly refused to honour the away fixtures at Mdantsane. They often complained that their opponents were either poor in standard, or the fields were unplayable and too hard for them, or that the township spectators were intimidating them.²⁴² This developed to be a tricky situation for the BRFU executive and management because in most cases these claims were found to be baseless and to be mere excuses by the white folk who did not want to accept change. Similar accusations were, however, made in other parts of the country and these often tested the strength of these newly established unified non-racial rugby units. The leadership of the provincial unions frequently crossed swords over many issues and this was, however, to be expected, especially seeing that the same was also observed even within the SARFU circles. For example Grundlingh says

...Establishing a sense of unity in the boardroom, however shaky, was one issue; ensuring that the policy was accepted and implemented lower down the ranks, was another. In certain areas in the *platteland* and the Western Province pressure had to be applied to bring recalcitrant white sub-unions into line. Incidents on the field underlined the difficulties of merger. It was with considerable trepidation that some clubs from predominantly white areas ventured into often volatile African or coloured townships to fulfil their league fixtures. Although such fears were often without foundation, a few matches were indeed marred by unruly crowd

²⁴¹ Interview Puzi; Mabija; Mhani; Ndondo; Mgwebi.

²⁴² Interview Mgwebi; Mhani; Puzi.

behaviour and racial animosity. In Karoo town of Graaf Reinet, for instance, a game between a white team from De Aar and the local coloured team had to be abandoned before the end of the first half as 80 angry spectators stormed onto the field, disagreeing with the decision from the referee and threatening to attack the white team. "Kill them, kill them," the spectators were reported to have shouted. "Today we will be looking through the ribcages of the *Boers*! We are going to necklace them. Close the entrance gates so that we can show them who is the boss!" The referee sprinted to his car and the players rapidly retreated to the change rooms. Similar incidents occurred in the Eastern Cape and on occasion the police had to disperse the crowd with teargas. In "ordinary" rugby games players are often given to needling the opposition; it was too much to expect no flare-ups and racial baiting between players from communities, which had a long history of antagonism.²⁴³

Subsequent to these reports, coupled with longstanding conflicts after this, East London white clubs stopped travelling to the black areas altogether.²⁴⁴ However, at this time, many black clubs had to deal with their "own mediocre performances" that they were showing against the whites clubs. They performed so badly in the unified league such that many got heavily demoralized, resulting in some dropping out. This, however, could be attributed to a number of factors: lack of finances to travel to and from East London, a 50 Kilometre distance away, lack of adequate facilities and time to organise quality practice sessions in preparation for the highly competitive leagues that they were participating in, as most of their players were workers, and the general loss of support and motivation from their members due to destitution, loss of interest, new life commitments and most importantly, the lack of young and junior teams to sustain the clubs.²⁴⁵ In fact this is the main reason that is cited as cause of "death" for the Swallows RFC.²⁴⁶

A member of the last Swallows team, Thobile Mtya says his club struggled in the integrated First Team Reserve League because it did not have young players to reinforce it especially when senior players started to retire gradually. It seems though that the clubs' stance on recruiting players is much to blame for this drawback. Mtya says the 'young people were uneasy to join... and or in fact felt intimidated by the Swallows RFC because it was regarded as a big club... and this was a serious problem... because the team concentrated much on "ready-made star-players"... the latter were often recruited from various places. In fact if you know that you are a

²⁴³See Rapport, 19 July 1992 (translation); Volskblad, 13 July 1992; Eastern Province Herald, 18 & 22 July 1994; Die Burger, 21 July 1992 in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.5.

²⁴⁴Interview Mgwebi; also see the *Rapport*, 19 July 1992; *Die Volksblad* [translated] 13 July 1992 in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995.

²⁴⁵Interview Mgwebi; Mjo; Puzi; Twaku; Temmers; Mtya.

²⁴⁶Interview Mhani; Mtya.

rugby star even if you are not from the greater East London area, you would find it easy to join Swallows because this meant some privileges in the form of securing a job and or a house. This was its strong tool to entice star players from various places outside East London'.²⁴⁷ The last Swallows captain, Dumisani Mhani concurs saying

...I want to acknowledge that we were also at fault because we solely concentrated on our first team and you would realise that even our second team was full of already mature players. So, in essence we failed ourselves because we didn't put more emphasis on our development sides. This unfortunately led to a situation where when those mature guys decided to retire in rugby, we didn't have replacements for them. In fact, at the time the club was playing very low standard game and this contributed in demoralising some players. At one point a batch of about ten mature players decided to retire in playing rugby and that became a crisis situation and this was what killed the Swallows in the late 1990s...²⁴⁸

Many respondents indicated that the traditional township rugby indeed suffered a big knock during the post unity era and there are various reasons quoted to this effect. However, of paramount interest is the observation that while the latter was breathing its last, rugby in the rural communities was booming.²⁴⁹ For instance Mhani asserts that

the standard of rugby in the township is so low to such an extent that many rugby enthusiasts like myself chose to go watch rugby *emakhaya* [in the rural villages] these days instead of going to the NU one Grounds. The township rugby is no longer interesting because the people who are administering it are the individuals that we didn't even recognised during our time... these people are now in control of things... There are few known and respected rugby people that are still involved in the game administration here. This therefore left the township rugby in a crisis situation and in very low standard. It has severely declined and I don't even watch rugby here [Mdantsane], I only watch the BRFU sub-unions and the All Stars RFC. The rural rugby is just far improved compared to what I see here elokishini [in the urban location - Mdantsane] and that is why I would rather go watch rural village rugby at home [Tshabo Village, near Berlin]. It's the Border sub-unions such as the old Keiskammahoek; Stutterheim; VERU which comprised of Alice, Fort Beaufort and Fort Hare; Queenstown; Transkei; Tsholomnqa; Mooiplaas; Berlin and its surrounding villages and of course the East London that still offers entertaining rugby. In fact, the rural unions show an edge because their club rugby is evidently superior...²⁵⁰

Ncinane concurs with the latter view, saying the fact that the rural based unions ruin supreme in the BRFU's subunion championships bears testimony to the low-key rugby within the urban areas. Since unity, the rural unions emerged with full force and 'the champion last [in the 1999] season was the Transkei rugby union,

²⁴⁷Interview Mtya.

²⁴⁸Interview Mhani.

²⁴⁹Interview Mhani; Puzi; Ncinane; see also *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border rugby distorts facts on black participation, accuses Mdantsane rugby', 12 August 2000.

²⁵⁰Interview Mhani.

against all odds and this year [2000], is the Keiskammahoek rugby union, beating clubs from townships and urban areas...against all odds. That means clubs rugby is getting back up again'.²⁵¹

The former Border Game Development Manager, Mahlubandile Puzi argues this "turnabout" did not come unexpectedly. He says one of the main factors that contributed to strength of the rural clubs and in contrast to the weakening of the township clubs is that the latter 'depended mainly on players that originated from the rural areas and with the development programme giving the opportunity to the rural people to achieve the excellence level without moving away from their natural habitat. These players moved back to their original places, that is, in the rural areas and they left or effectively abandoned the township clubs'.²⁵² In fact, in his progress report on the Game Development Programme, which he presented in the Border Rugby Development Conference, Puzi declared that '[O]ver the years we have witnessed the improving growth rate of rugby in the underprivileged societies to 30% and the effectiveness of supportive systems like competitions and elite squad programme in improving the retention capacity. The paradox is that rugby is stronger in the former lesser i.e. rural societies. Despite the lack of basic facilities and under severe socio-economic circumstance the intense passion and unremitting appetite for the game, makes this to be the focal point'.²⁵³

Mhani concurs arguing that 'the other thing that has contributed in killing rugby in East London was that basically, the roots of the most township people are in the rural villages. The people who played good rugby in the township went back to the villages to boast their respective clubs and sub-unions, developing and organising more adequately than ever before'.²⁵⁴ Thus, the rugby standards in the latter communities remarkably improved compared to that of the township and the rest of the urban communities. Therefore, whilst the township rugby was in a bitter struggle

²⁵¹Interview Ncinane; also see Border Rugby Football Union Files at BRFU Offices, Absa Stadium, East London.

²⁵²Interview Puzi; see also Puzi's progress, 1998.

²⁵³See Puzi's progress report, 1998.

²⁵⁴Interview Mhani.

for survival, 'the rural rugby was revitalised, with our younger brothers playing rugby back home and boosting village rugby'.²⁵⁵

The fact that rural rugby received unprecedented support from the BRFU in the form of being accommodated within the sub-union competitions and financial assistance through the development programme funds, afforded it the much-needed impetus. The BRFU's initiative with the assistance of South African Breweries, to create a competition for sub-unions further strengthened rural rugby at this gave many players from these communities an opportunity to "showcase" their talent. In the past there were no competitions for the rural rugby clubs and sub-unions and the whole set-up was just not as organised as it is today. 'Rural people enjoyed themselves in their own ways for instance some enjoyed themselves by playing cricket, or with various forms of music and dance, traditional concerts, and other forms recreational activities, as rugby was not a real big thing at the time. Hence it was easy for people like me to be recruited by the township clubs like the Swallows, Black Lion and others'.²⁵⁶ At the time there was a big gap in terms of rugby organisation between the location and or township rugby and that of the rural communities. For instance there was no much expectations from a rural rugby player than it were to a township rugby young man. There was a lot at stake for the latter. There were more organised competitions and the opportunities for the location and township players to be selected for MDARU, ELRU, Border and to the most, for the SARU team.²⁵⁷

A big challenge was therefore left with the township clubs to develop and draw players from their own inhabitants. 'They will have to produce players within the urban communities and to accomplish that mission they will have to start at the schoolboy rugby level'.²⁵⁸ This is however, not an easy challenge to deal with given the fact that rugby is not the only sport that the urban youth is exposed to. Within the total of three hundred and fifty registered clubs that the BRFU claims as its affiliates, only about fourteen are within the greater East London, while for instance, there are

²⁵⁵Interview Mhani.

²⁵⁶Interview Mhani.

²⁵⁷Interview Mhani.

²⁵⁸Interview Puzi.

sixty-two and thirty-six in the Transkei and Keiskammahoek respectively.²⁵⁹ The BRFU's Commercial Manager, Guy Hedderwick refers to this rural rugby growth as phenomenal. He says

...during rugby unity in 1991 there were two thousand registered black senior rugby players but now there are eleven thousand registered senior black players. That is what unification has done, taking the game to the people and allowed it to explode within the province. This process has been very important and quite drastic. The eleven thousand five hundred black rugby players represent more rugby players in the entire Australia on their books. So there is a significant amount of rugby playing people in this area. We have got thirteen thousand senior registered rugby players in total including blacks and whites and that on itself is twice as more as any other province in the whole country. We then have the Premier League, the First Division, twelve sub-unions that actively participating in various competitions, with three hundred and fifty clubs and five hundred and ninety-two rugby playing teams. That is quite phenomenal really.²⁶⁰

However, it seems that not everybody agrees with the latter view. Some rugby enthusiasts feel that BRFU has not done enough to develop rugby in the township and at worst, some feel that Hedderwick is some how distorting information especially on black rugby participation. For instance, Norman Nozewu, a former Thembu rugby player non-racial rugby administrator says the BRFU's view that it 'leads the way in changing the South African rugby could not be further from the truth' and the fact that Border has more rugby players than the whole of Australia is a blatant untruth and distortion of facts.²⁶¹ However, what can be said is that according to the BRFU's records, Hedderwick's statistical information seems accurate.

BRFU and SARFU's Development Programmes

By 1992, it was apparent that this had reached crisis levels, with clubs and the Union having had to review the whole unity process. These affected clubs regrouped and put pressure on the BRFU, raising their concerns that mainly centred on the manner in which the process of integration was carried out. It is apparent that indeed things were not really working as previously expected. The NSC also put pressure on SARFU accusing it of focussing on international tours and neglecting development

²⁵⁹Interview Guy Hedderwick, Border Rugby Football Union offices, Waverley Park, East London, 11 April 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Hedderwick); Ncinane; Puzi; and see the *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border leads the way in changing SA rugby' 19 June 2000; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border distorts fact on black participation, accuses Mdantsane rugby', 12 August 2000.

²⁶⁰Interview Hedderwick; see also *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border leads the way in changing SA rugby' 19 June 2000; *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border distorts fact', 12 August 2000.

²⁶¹See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border distorts fact', 12 August 2000.

and transformation dishonouring its commitment, promises and mandate during unification negotiations. In fact development and transformation were the prerequisite to sports unity in South Africa.²⁶² Thus, NSC withdrew its support for the South African Rugby tour of England in 1992, 'charging SARFU had neglected development in the sport back home'.²⁶³

The BRFU also inevitably found itself in this quagmire, especially because the NSC's head, Mluleki George was also its president as well. His "ill-involvement" (at least in as far as the white folk) in politics whilst Border rugby president, made his colleague, Ronnie Grobler call for his head. Grobler, who was at the time the Co-President of the BRFU called on George to resign, saying that he 'rather continue his activities in politics where his involvement is certainly greater'.²⁶⁴ In response to this, the president of the King Williams Town Rugby Union, Albert Tyhulu, condemned Grobler's call saying 'the belief that political activities and sport could be divided was a myth', adding that in the past 'sport was divided on racial basis precisely because of politics'.²⁶⁵

Tyhulu further indicated that George was accountable to many sportsmen in the Border region 'who would not like to see him keeping quiet when things are not going well in sport' adding that Grobler had 'no right as an individual to call for George's resignation without consulting his executive and constituency. 'This type of authoritarian rule has no room in the new dispensation'.²⁶⁶ Echoing and reintegrating what the broader black society was raising about SARFU's commitment towards rugby development, Tyhulu further denounced SARFU saying 'the much talked about development programme is just a lip service exercise as it was only the appointment of our Mathemba Balfour as national development officer that the SARFU appeared to be doing anything about rugby development'.²⁶⁷ Tyhulu further called for development programme to be implemented in all rugby areas in the country.

²⁶² See Roberts, *Challenges facing South African sport*, 1990.

²⁶³ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'NSC to meet Sarfu to tackle rift', 3 November 1992.

²⁶⁴ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992.

²⁶⁵ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992; interview Mtshizana (also shares this view); see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.9.

²⁶⁶ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992; interview Mtshizana (also shares this view); see also Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.9.

²⁶⁷ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992.

This situation continued with accusations and counter-accusation on this question such that the Secretary General of the BRFU, John Ncinane called on rugby official to 'cease mud-slinging in the press', inviting them to attend official discussions on these issues. He was mostly concerned about the press statements that were made by several Border rugby officials, arguing that these were 'threatening the unity of rugby' in the area and the rugby *indabas* were necessary and relevant platforms 'for officials to voice the feeling to each other'.²⁶⁸ By this time, it was apparent that the Border rugby fraternity learnt that the situation had actually reached crisis levels, thus called for urgent attention. A crisis committee chaired by Nozewu was established so as to attend to these problems.²⁶⁹ The NSC was also going to be represented in this committee, specifically on the discussions on the issue of rugby development in the Border region.²⁷⁰

At national level, SARFU and NSC also undertook a similar exercise. In November 1992, the *Daily Dispatch* reported that the two were to meet in Cape Town 'in an attempt to heal rifts in rugby'.²⁷¹ This meeting followed several acrimonious exchanges and heated words between the NSC and SARFU after the former withdrew support for South African international rugby tours. The worst scenario was a possibility that international ties with South Africa were to be reviewed. There was a high probability that sanctions were to be re-instated. The *Daily Dispatch* reported that 'the freeze on international rugby contact with South Africa looks destined to be re-imposed, with the scheduled SA – Barbarians tour of Britain...officially off'.²⁷² This came as a result of the opposition by the NSC's Mluleki George, on the grounds that the money should rather be used for development'.²⁷³

However, SARFU officials denied these allegations and appearing 'stunned when faced with NSC call to disrupt international rugby links. Friction between the two parties heated up when Danie Craven launched a bitter salvo against Mluleki

²⁶⁸ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992.

²⁶⁹ Interview Mgwebi.

²⁷⁰ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'NSC to meet Sarfu to tackle rugby rift', 3 November 1992.

²⁷¹ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'NSC to meet Sarfu to tackle rugby rift', 3 November 1992.

²⁷² See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Outlook bleak now Barbarians tour', 3 November 1992.

²⁷³ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Outlook bleak now Barbarians tour', 3 November 1992.

George for 'using rugby as a vehicle to score political points'.²⁷⁴ The SARFU's General Manager at the time, Arrie Oberholzer, in an official statement denied that his Union was 'prioritising international tours to the prejudice of unity and development'.²⁷⁵ He further indicated that the ironic part of the engagement to international tours was promising huge revenue collections. Oberholzer said the New Zealand and Australian tours to South Africa that SARFU was contemplating to undertake in August 1992 (and many future one's) were predicted to have a potential television sponsorship amounting to about six million rands.²⁷⁶

Given all the means to deny the fact that SARFU was actually slow or unclear of its real plans to initiate development programme, late in 1992 Louis De Villiers urged that 'rugby must grow up', acknowledging that a 'massive development is needed, however, this exercise should not be left to the likes of Louis Luyt'.²⁷⁷ The paradox on the side of SARFU was that when the large sums of money reaped from several sources were available it decided to channel them to other programmes. For instance, according to Louis De Villiers, the controversial All Blacks and Wallaby rugby tours were 'generating enough money for SARFU to institute a meaningful national development programme for the first time'.²⁷⁸ This was 'despite the fact that it sold the TV [Television] rights for far less than it had anticipated'.²⁷⁹ Given this development, SARFU'S finance committee chairperson Nic Labuschagne excitedly declared that 'at the beginning of the season (after unification) we were broke. We have said that we will put some R3m towards development. Now (after the two tours and prospective overseas income) we hopefully will be able to put R6m aside'.²⁸⁰ SARFU was deriving income mainly from sponsorships, the sale of TV rights and levies on tour matches, with a limited financial injection from International Rugby Board (IRB), coupled with payments from proceeds of the SA tours overseas, just as the French tour late in 1992.²⁸¹ However, given the above outlined financial state, for some reason, SARFU took time to outline its rugby development plans.

²⁷⁴See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁷⁵See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁷⁶See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁷⁷See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, pp.2-3.

²⁷⁸See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, pp.2-3.

²⁷⁹See *Finance Week*, 23-29 July 1992; *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, p.2.

²⁸⁰See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, p.2.

²⁸¹See *Finance Week*, 20-26 August 1992, p.2.

To the majority of the black rugby enthusiasts and some outside observers, the NSC's frustration about rugby development was understandable. During the national rugby negotiations, the newly formed SARFU committed itself into developing rugby in the underprivileged areas. However, this programme was yet to take off far into the third year and it was only after the appointment of Mathemba Ngconde Balfour that something seemed to be really happening.²⁸² The unfortunate part about this was that the SARFU officials were prepared to use Balfour's appointment as an excuse for its failure to deliver on its unity mandate, especially on the lack of development in black areas. For example, in 1992, the SARFU, through Oberholzer, who said in his official statement: 'as we have repeatedly stated, and as has been accepted by them [NSC], development is a process and not a "happening"... Indeed... Balfour is only in the opening phase of setting up comprehensive development programme, having received his SARFU designation only two months ago...'²⁸³

Oberholzer was re-emphasising his Unions' stance on the relationship between black rugby development programme and international tours. He said that SARFU had at all times emphatically stated its participation at international level was, among other things, aimed at generating funds for development in the most active rugby regions among black players such as the Transkei, Border and the Eastern Province. Oberholzer, insisted that the NSC was 'well aware of this', adding that 'all sports, being cricket, are in the infancy periods regarding development'.²⁸⁴ Thus he argued that SARFU's rugby development programme was 'no further behind the efforts of other major sports with strong black participation like athletics and tennis' and accused the NSC of "underscoring" its 'dissatisfaction at SARFU for the expenses of sending the multiracial SADF team abroad and the Development Squads to Fiji'.²⁸⁵

In line with Oberholzer's argument, Stofile however, notes that 'Border area is not Mpumalanga or Northern Province. This is the home of rugby for all communities. As such, it should not take ten years for rugby here to reflect the

²⁸² See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Call for George to resign condemned', 2 November 1992.

²⁸³ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁸⁴ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁸⁵ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

demography of the area'.²⁸⁶ Countering Oberholzer's views, the NSC argued that the money utilised for international tours could have been put to better use for development at home. With the NSC withdrawing its support and at worst threatening to disrupt SARFU's international links, thus the Barbarian team tour to Britain that was to be undertaken in mid-November 1992 had to be cancelled.²⁸⁷

Frustration on the side of the NSC and the underprivileged population at large was based on the fact that during the unity negotiations, the newly formed united and non-racial rugby body of South African, SARFU, committed itself into the development of the game in the underprivileged communities of South Africa, coupled with radical transformation within its circles and of its units. In fact, as indicated earlier, the agreement that rugby was to be promoted amongst these communities was a key element in the process that led to unification and SARFU officially launched its historic programme in March 1993. 'A sum of 13 million rands was spent in the first year and a great deal of activity marked the programme: more than 116000 young, predominantly African and coloured, rugby players attended clinics and coaching courses, and 6000 coaches, 650 referees, and 1772 administrators from all the country were involved in arranging and supervising proceedings'.²⁸⁸

It was noted that 'with all the frenetic activity, the programme outwardly appeared to be off to a very satisfactory start', however, appearances proved to be deceptive.²⁸⁹ 'Poor organisation led to certain development efforts to be bordered on fiascos. While some of this chaos can be put down to teething problems, internal bickering and jockeying for lucrative executive positions, on the development committees were problems of a different order'.²⁹⁰ One caustic verdict was that 'little men with nary a construction thought, have to see to their livelihood, not latent talents'.²⁹¹

²⁸⁶See Border Rugby Football files, especially the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference', 1999.

²⁸⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁸⁸See *The Star*, 16 August 1994.

²⁸⁹See *The Star*, 16 August 1994.

²⁹⁰See *The Star*, 16 August 1994.

²⁹¹See Rugby 15, October/November 1993.

As it was to be expected, the newly launched development programme faced enormous challenges. Subsequent to years of apartheid-induced neglect, rugby had to start from scratch in many townships. Lack of or exceedingly poor facilities were major obstacles.²⁹² By November 1992, SARFU had set aside a sum of six million rands for the development of rugby in the disadvantaged areas but due the compelling needs in these communities, this figure had to be doubled. Mathemba Ngconde Balfour, at the time the SARFU's director of the Development Committee noted that this figure, though it seemed impressive, it was falling short to provide the 'basis requirements at national level' by a staggering fourteen million rands.²⁹³

However, the reality is that not all the problems were financial. 'In certain areas people with as little conception of the game as the boys they supposed to coach were appointed as coaches'.²⁹⁴ Moreover, there was some political undercurrent of resistance to rugby as a game associated with the police and apartheid.²⁹⁵ The enormity of these problems raised the possibility that SARFU might lose heart and that the programme might backslide after the first flurry of activity. Indeed, in 1993 some observers were of the opinion that with the World Cup in the offing, the development has lost much of its former urgency. Administrators, it was reported, viewed "development as a necessary evil" and at best tolerated as with a naughty child. You know it's yours, but for heaven's sake, keep it at bay.²⁹⁶

However, it was argued that the development programme did have some success. The press was keen to give publicity to black youngsters who showed rugby promise, and it was almost as if the media was half-relieved at being able to report in a positive vein.²⁹⁷ However, not everybody had the same attitude towards rugby unity in the country. For instance, the nonestablishment side had its divisions and different viewpoints on South African sports and the issue of sports unification. As shown previously, the reconstruction of South African society, and with its South African

²⁹²See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.6.

²⁹³See *Daily Dispatch*, 'The hard and expensive road to real sport unity', 5 November 1992.

²⁹⁴See *The Argus*, 18 June 1994; *Sunday Times*, 7 January 1994.

²⁹⁵See *Sunday Times*, 16 August 1992.

²⁹⁶See Rugby 15 October/November 1993.

²⁹⁷See *Die Burger*, 12; *Die Volksblad*, 30 May 1994 in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.6.

sport, was far more important than playing international sport for SACOS.²⁹⁸ Grundlingh writes

...Perhaps more important than the number of black boys excelling at the game was the way in which the programme raised questions about the place of rugby in South African society as a whole. For organisations like the SACOS, which had adopted a position of doctrinal purity and had stayed outside the unification process, it was precisely the contrast between lush, well-manicured sporting fields in white areas, and the sheer struggle for survival in nearby dusty black townships, that added a grotesque dimension to the spectacle of establishment sport and vindicated their position of "no normal sport in an abnormal society". SACOS argued that sport played on this basis was not truly non-racial, that the unity that was achieved was "sham-unity," and that despite the political changes in the country the existing social and political disparities were perpetuated in the new order...²⁹⁹

The NSC, however, claimed to use 'an all-inclusive mechanism instead of race-based classifications' to help realise its country's full sports potential.³⁰⁰ It also defined a South African sports person as a person 'who cut across the racial divide', by enunciating a policy based on two philosophies that would unit South African sport on a non-racial basis. Firstly, that all that disciplines which are Olympic in nature form an authentic Olympic movement for this country under the banner of the National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NOCSA). Secondly, a policy based on unity, development and preparation is of paramount importance in helping bring South Africa to its rightful place in the community of sporting nation.³⁰¹ The NSC viewed unity as combining establishment and nonestablishment sport and encouraging each sport to constitute itself on a non-racial basis and under a single controlling body.³⁰² In uniting people from different backgrounds, problems are obviously encountered. At the time the NSC's General Secretary, Mthobi Tyamzashe concurs, arguing that bringing together individuals from an advantaged side and others from a disadvantaged side should not only be viewed as merely 'putting milk into water or vice versa, but several factors had to be considered in the process.'³⁰³

It was in this light that Tshwete adopted a pragmatic view, and whilst fully acknowledging the discrepancies, he nonetheless argued that sport could act as a 'healer' in a country torn by race, culture and other differences. See Tshwete's photo

²⁹⁸ See Roberts, *Challenges facing South African sports*, 1990; *City Press*, 7 June 1992.

²⁹⁹ See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.6.

³⁰⁰ See Proceedings of National Symposium, 1993.

³⁰¹ See Goslin, 'Human resource management as a fundamental aspect of a sport development strategy in South African communities', *Journal of Sport Management*, 10, 1996: 207-217.

³⁰² Roberts, 1990; *Daily Dispatch*, 28 November 1990.

³⁰³ See Proceedings of National Symposium, 1993.

in the following page.³⁰⁴ For this to happen, it was necessary to move away from the notion that rugby was mainly an Afrikaner game and soccer mainly a black game in South Africa.³⁰⁵ Patel saw this as a long-term process. Although he had his reservations about some aspects of the development programme, he realised that a situation, which had grown over years could not be turned about overnight. Nevertheless, he regarded the unification process as an important breakthrough, which was to ensure that 'SARFU belongs to the future children of South Africa'. It was therefore, he asserts: 'unreasonable' for those who had 'planted the tree of unification to expect to immediately reap the fruits of the tree'.³⁰⁶ The changed political scenario in South Africa did not only demand unity, but also equal opportunities in sport in terms of participation and development. Unifying sport structures therefore created a demand, especially in black areas not only for facilities but also for trained staff in sport management and coaching, which were necessary to facilitate sports' reconstruction and development role.³⁰⁷ However, it is noted that by 2000, almost a decade since South African rugby unification was achieved but there is not much tangible gain that SARFU can pride itself with.

Since it was the adoption of strategic repositioning that led to South African sports' revival of international links, lifting of sports moratorium on tours even before the advent of majority rule and the country's sports were readmitted to international sport community. Whether the sports and sports unification process were capable of adding significantly to dissolving racial tensions and specifically, whether rugby was, in real terms able to play a part in easing the burdens of the South Africa's disadvantaged majority remained a moot point till the historic Rugby World Cup 1995. During this event, large numbers of South Africans bonded together for a common purpose behind "their dream team", the Springboks. "Amabokoboko- our Boks" – reported the Sowetan, the best-selling black newspaper in South Africa at the

³⁰⁴ Having successfully fought for rugby integration, together with the Border Unification Committee, Tshwete came to embrace these efforts by receiving the newly established non-racial BRFU blazer as a gesture, recognizing his untiring efforts to unify the South Africa rugby. This photo was supplied with courtesy of the *Daily Dispatch*.

³⁰⁵ See the *Weekend Argus*, 5 March 1994.

³⁰⁶ See Rugby 15, August 1993; *Weekly Mail and Guardian*, 13 May 1993.

³⁰⁷ See Reconstruction and Development Plan, 1993.

time. The team at last belonged to all South Africans, black, white, African, Afrikaner. 'It was a defining moment in the uniting of a nation, or was it?'³⁰⁸



Steven Vukile Tshwete - 1991, courtesy of the Daily Dispatch

³⁰⁸See Economist, 'Issues of rugby and race', EBSOHost: Academic Search Elite Website, 1996, volume 340, issue 7980, p.2 & p.35.

However, as to be expected, not everybody felt the same way. For example, the old resentments flared in August 1996, after white Springboks supporters at three international matches ‘waved the orange, white and blue of the old, pre-democracy national flag’.³⁰⁹ While the team manager condemned this untransformed behaviour, the captain, Francois Pienaar, said it was not his business to tell fans, which flag to wave, with SARFU saying nothing at all for days following the incident. To add to growing racial polarisation, Trevor Manuel, at the time an ANC Member of Parliament and later South Africa’s first black Finance Minister, was spotted in the All Blacks outfit, fervently supporting the New Zealand All Blacks team during its tour to South Africa in 1992, just the way many blacks used to support the Springboks’ opponents in apartheid days. In fact, after this incident, Manuel was also reported saying that he could not support representatives of a ‘white minority game’, the issue that *Die Burger* howled as ‘shameless racism’, with all probability that it was rightfully so, as itself, a paper with some expertise in that field.³¹⁰

Given such challenges that SARFU had to deal with, the accusation of the lack of rugby development also soon became a topical issue. In fact, by 1992, many rugby enthusiasts amongst the underprivileged communities were accusing SARFU of doing very little to address this concern. At worst, it was even apparent that some SARFU officials either deliberately neglected this issue or were actually failing to properly conceive and comprehend the very meaning of the concept “development”. Stofile acknowledges this, in his “message of support” to the Border Rugby Development Conference in 1999. Explaining the meaning of the term “development” as described by NSC and later by SARFU, he said the latter ‘was meant to refer to a process of assisting people from underprivileged communities to catch up with those from the establishment. As such, the term referred to players, coaches, referees, administrators etc’.³¹¹ He further argued that this ‘term was never meant to be a definition for people from black communities who must be developed until they retire or die’ and ‘was never meant to rename a low ceiling of opportunities’ for blacks either.³¹²

³⁰⁹See Economist, ‘Issues of rugby and race’, 1996, p.2 & p.35.

³¹⁰See Economist, ‘Issues of rugby and race’, 1996, p.2 & p.35.

³¹¹See Economist, ‘Issues of rugby and race’, 1996, p.2 & p.35.

³¹²See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that ‘Premier Stofile’ sent through during the ‘Border Rugby Development Conference’, 1999.

Ironically, it seemed that it was not only the white folk that was perpetuating the imbalances between these sectors of rugby community. Some non-racialists were not only in many ways contributing to this plight, but possess the courage to defend their devious actions against their fellow folks. Stofile is helpful here when he says 'this can even be defended by people from, our communities'.³¹³ For instance, at one point, John Ncinane in his speech for the opening of the Border Rugby Development Conference in 2000, he defended the development "efforts" of the BRFU, applauding the latter structure of the "new or and developed Keiskammahoek stadium" that is in fact nonexistent. Rather, what is there is only a few concrete slabs erected around a bushy "rugby field".³¹⁴

Certainly, with all probability, given the institutional strength of the establishment body, and when rugby was uncoupled from wider political concerns, the development programme was to suffer correspondingly. In fact, the establishment group campaigned fiercely for the new rugby body, when formally established, to enshrine within its constitution that it be a body 'free of political considerations'. The latter was adopted and in fact its constitution eloquently stipulated that it was an "apolitical body". However, circumstances compelled SARFU to address the political concerns regardless of this constitutional clause. This was never an easy thing to achieve and forcing SARFU to respond favourably to such, nonetheless meant that the struggle for better opportunities was just continuing. In fact, it was on this basis that Bruce Kidd previously warned the NSC that it should never allow depoliticising sports in South Africa.³¹⁵ The numerous outstanding tasks to remedy the situation within the South African rugby were undoubtedly calling for political intervention and solutions. There is evidence that South African rugby lurched from crisis to crisis in the post-isolation period, with the off the field matters and wide range of controversies continuing to dodge SARFU.³¹⁶

³¹³See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference', 1999.

³¹⁴Having resided and an occasional visitor of the area, I am personally aware of the state of the stadium Ncinane is referring to.

³¹⁵See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

³¹⁶See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.6.

East London Rugby and Post-unity Dynamics: Changed Residential, Educational and Transport Patterns

The changed political situation in the country opened many avenues in the life of the previously oppressed black population. De Klerk's announcement of the release of political leaders and liberalisation of politics in the country was subsequently coupled by the scraping of many apartheid laws that suppressed blacks over numerous decades. Apartheid policy as an official government policy was central and within itself, had a number of repressing laws, which in this context, the GAA appears to be mainly relevant. This in short meant that black families were, for the first time, allowed to live and own houses in the areas that were previously reserved solely for whites. Thus black schoolchildren also had the opportunity to access the privileged schools in these areas. In fact, others attended these schools whilst residing in their old residential areas, as long as they can afford the almost high-priced fees as set out in these respective schools. In addition to the costly school fees that parents had to pay for their children, transporting them became another burden. The issue of fees was and is still critical in many students accessing these schools and a wide range of activities they offer besides the classroom activities is often used to justify this amount of money that is paid in these schools.

Most of the privileged schools have a strong sports culture that is also augmented by the availability of high standard facilities, coupled by generally dedicated schoolteachers. In fact, this could be attributed to the schooling system that encourages these schoolteachers to promote the extramural activities in the form of teaching its students sports skills and coaching across sporting codes. Another added advantage of these schools is that they offer Physical Education (PE) as one of the core school subjects and this task is often eased because they, as previously indicated, have the facilities and qualified personnel to carryout this task. The primary schools such as for instance, Selborne Primary, George Randell, Crewe Primary, Beaconsfield Primary of East London, Dale Junior of King Williams Town, the Fort Beaufort Primary and many others across the country. Each of these schools often possess

sports facilities that are far better to that of Fort Hare University's, Border Technikon's, and University of Transkei's put together.³¹⁷

It is in this light that these schools, as indicated earlier, are in a position to produce high quality players across sports codes though rugby and cricket is their main focus. At one point Dale College, Selborne College, Queens College and the other privileged schools had at least fifteen to twenty various aged-group rugby teams each during the rugby season, with each team having a dedicated teacher coaching it. The same applies during the cricket season and this set-up undoubtedly brought outstanding results for them, their students alike and the province broadly.

Hence these schools have recently taken the centre stage in as far as sport development in the region and beyond. Stofile acknowledges this, in his "message of support" to the Border Rugby Development Conference in 2000. Pointing out the serious short falls of the "development programmes" of the BRFU, he argues that the small sprinkling of promising players that have come to the fore 'have not really come out of a Development programme. They either are a product of ex-establishment clubs or come from model – C schools', thus, a product of chance rather than that of planning.³¹⁸ The former Thembu United RFC player, Gompo, Border and later the non-racial MDARU administrator, Norman Nozewu concurs with the later view. In his response to BRFU's Commercial Manager, Guy Hedderwick's claim in the *Daily Dispatch* in 19 June 2000, that Border leads the way in changing South African rugby and that 'schoolboy rugby in the province has undergone a rapid metamorphosis'.³¹⁹ Nozewu argues that this 'could not be further from the truth,' because this Hedderwick's thriving schoolboy rugby solely refers to the 'traditional upper class rugby-playing schools' and or the former "model C schools".³²⁰ Nozewu further says:

Nothing is mentioned about black traditional rugby-playing schools like Mzomhle High, Wongalethu High... Forbes High and Welsh High. Let us pardon him because I can see that he still judges and sees everything through white lenses. The development Hedderwick is

³¹⁷See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference', 1999.

³¹⁸See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference', 1999.

³¹⁹See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border rugby distorts facts', 12 August 2000, p.19; see also *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border leads the way in changing SA rugby', 19 June 2000; interview Hedderwick.

³²⁰See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border rugby distorts facts', 12 August 2000, p.19; see also *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border leads the way in changing SA rugby', 19 June 2000; interview Hedderwick.

claiming to be the achievement of Border Rugby (Pty) Ltd in the former models C schools has nothing to do with Border Rugby... It is in reality the achievement of the schools' rugby coaches themselves. It is interesting to find out from Hedderwick which players of note have been developed by Afrikaner Broedebond-controlled schools like Grens. Which of his 12 full-time development officers have coached in schools like Selbourne, Queen's, Dale, Cambridge or Hudson Park? When is rugby development coming to black primary and senior schools in nearby Mdantsane? ...³²¹

It is generally known that the white schools were and are currently boasting and claiming a large number of players, though a handful of blacks, within the provincial and national teams in a number of sporting codes. Kate Dunn acknowledged this, noting that, though after a reasonable number of years since rugby unity, in the country's schoolyards, 'apartheid-era imbalances continue to boost whites in sport. While there are a few dark faces on the lush playing fields of the country's private schools, most of the boys wearing the school team uniforms are white. Apartheid's schools for blacks still do not include decent sporting facilities, and impoverished black parents haven't the money for sports equipment, for paying coaches, or for transport to local, regional, or national games'.³²²

In fact, this deprivation is at many levels, as Dunn illustrates through the use of the Transvaal Cricket Board's (TCB) 1997 mentoring programme. This programme was used as a model to "match" white team players with promising young players in black townships and one of the participating young boys, when asked his needs as an athlete, he wrote three times: 'I need food'. Another boy asked his mentor to fill the administrative form for the father he had never known, crying out, 'someone to help me with my faults in life, not only in cricket', whilst another wondered whether the white parents he sees at their matches 'ever have to work, as his mother hadn't the time or interest to attend his games'.³²³ This is indicative of the obstacles that black youth and in fact the entire black population had to face in their everyday lives in South Africa. This therefore buttresses argument that socio-cultural activities like sport mirrors and are in fact indeed the microcosmic of the macrocosm

³²¹See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border rugby distorts facts', 12 August 2000, p.19; see also *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border leads the way in changing SA rugby', 19 June 2000; interview Hedderwick.

³²²See Kate Dunn, "Endgame for South Africa's white teams": The Transvaal Cricket Board started a mentoring programme to match white team players with promising young players in black townships', *Christian Science Monitor*, 1999, Volume 91, Issue 37. This article appeared in the EBSCO host Website: Academic Search Premier Elite engine: <http://search.epnet.com>.

³²³See Dunn, "Endgame for South Africa's white teams", Volume 91, Issue 37.

of a broader society that are practised. Peires is helpful here when he says 'South African sport have been closely linked to its society'.³²⁴

With the unfolding transformation, rugby in the traditional black club rugby was set to suffer immensely. Chapter three of this work described how and by whom, black rugby clubs were established? The strategy that laid the basis for the latter was dramatically altered by the changed social patterns. This is not to suggest that the old primitive ways of organising rugby were still intact. In fact, with the changing social patterns, the latter gradually changed over time. The primitive "regional" organisation and familial bonds were broken down as many families opted to and or circumstances beyond their control compelled them to reside in "town" and or locations (in this case, East London and Mdantsane) on full-time basis, abandoning their old "homes" in the villages. At worst, some entirely cut off relationships with them altogether. The rather primitive social groupings as described by Mayer and Pauw thus slowly disintegrated with time, meaning that the old *amakhaya* and *amagoduka* "phenomenon" soon became "a thing of the past".³²⁵ Thus organising clubs in this ancient manner came to an end.

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The school children, especially those within the privileged schools in the East London area were exposed to many extramural activities to choose from. They could choose their own rugby clubs when they reach the stage to participate in this level of competition. In fact, there were also many opportunities to play for their respective aged-group, provincial teams for the youths, compared to the past couple of decades. Some of these students found the attraction in the former establishment clubs and in fact, many argued that the playing conditions within the white clubs were more suitable for them compared to that of the traditional black clubs. This could be attributed to the fact that in the school teams and within their provincial aged-group teams they were exposed to, learnt and could not resist "whites' influence". As a

³²⁴See Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981.

³²⁵See Mayer, *Townsmen or Tribesmen*, 1962, pp.294-318; Pauw, *The Second Generation*, 1962. In his postscript, Mayer details the new life patterns of "Red and School people" following the forced removals from East London locations to Mdantsane during the early 1960s through to the 1970s. The effect of the move to the "Homeland"; incapsulation and urban ecology; the changed significance of clansmen, neighbours and kin; structural urbanization and uncertainties the erosion of the Red confidence incorporation in the urban system are some of the critical questions that Mayer is analysing in this section.

matter of fact, a large number of the black youth who study in previously white only schools, often get assimilated into the white people's systems and ways of doing things. To them, the process of being accommodated and included within this new set-up was regrettable achieved on an "assimilationist" basis. Their acculturation and enculturation process within the South Africa's multicultural society seems to be yet a major challenge not only to these young boys but the country at large, especially in its quest to implement its inclusion policies at all levels. Having been a segregationist society for numerous decades, SA had to eradicate and in fact its not exaggerating to say this country is not only yet to abolish these previously exclusionist policies, but also to radically deal with its citizens' practices, views and perceptions of this issue.

It was with this background that a large number of youth within the previously white only school often argue that the black clubs do not offer a reasonable level of competition and are in fact, having unfamiliar systems compared to those that they are otherwise accustomed to in the white school teams and in the white clubs' set-ups. Thus, with these beliefs, the traditional black clubs were only going to continue suffering.

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It is true that this was not the only challenge that these disadvantaged clubs had to contend with. Without making excuses, black clubs lacked and are still without the basic amenities such as well-maintained rugby fields, training facilities, own transportation and sometimes dedicated, experienced and or qualified coaches. The issue of training fields and facilities became critical to the survival of these clubs within the competitive environments that they found themselves in. They could not hold decent practice session in poor pitches. Their fields do not have the lighting facility for players to hold training after work and schooling, as many of their players were workers in the distant East London town, about 25 kilometres away. The training sessions 'grew thinner and thinner' with the often-tired batch of workers abstaining.³²⁶

This situation was further aggravated by the fact that a large number of the youth that remained studying within the old "black areas" found soccer and other

³²⁶Interview Mtya.

sports codes more attractive, at the expense of the rugby. In fact, Peires noted the popularity of soccer amongst black communities as early as the late 1970s and 1980s.³²⁷ Nozewu in the *Daily Dispatch* also reported this in 2000 in response to the statement issued by BRFU. He says '[W]hat I know, and many people will agree with me, is that while rugby has been breathing its last, soccer has been thriving on the Border. In Mdantsane alone where I stay, there are more than 100 soccer clubs compared to not more than five rugby clubs and everywhere, even in open spaces in the township, you come across youngsters playing soccer. Rugby is a thing of the past...' ³²⁸

Ironically, this competition amongst the sporting codes did not come unexpectedly given the fact that following the unity of sport in South Africa, one the NSC's critical mandates was to mobilise for a mass-based sports movement and this was going to be coupled with exposing the majority of blacks to various sporting codes that were either less popular or inaccessible previously amongst this population.³²⁹ For instance sports such as hockey, softball, and many others soon got attention from the black youth. For instance, at one point the Border Softball team, which was and still comprises more than half black players, on merit, was considered to be one of the strongest in the country. Softball South Africa's choosing Border as the hosts of the Softball World Cup in 2000 bears testimony to this.³³⁰

These sports codes became a viable alternative to these bewildered young sportsmen in this region. This continued to happen whilst white clubs recruited the remnant potential young rugby players that could have otherwise played for black clubs. This left many of these clubs without junior teams and this was the predicament that they could not afford to find themselves in. Hence, when the experienced players got mature and eventually retired, many black clubs found themselves wanting without the second layer of personnel in the form of eager juniors to replace them. At the time, the location youth that had some interest in rugby could not either identify itself with the old traditional clubs anymore or was in fact, not viewing them as candidates to carry forwards their rugby careers. The former is

³²⁷ See Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.9.

³²⁸ See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border Rugby Distorts Facts', 12 August 2000, p.19.

³²⁹ See Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African sport*, 1990.

³³⁰ See *Daily Dispatch*, May 2000.

illustrated by the emergence of a vibrant club known as Rock of Ages in the squatter camp near the NU 1 at Mdantsane.³³¹

Many rugby enthusiasts in the area argue that they were expecting this youth to revive one or some of the long perished clubs of the location rather than establishing a “new” club altogether. However, in explaining this issue, some of them rightfully note that ‘these young boys don’t know anything about Swallows, Black Lion, Spring Rose and or any of the “dead” traditional location clubs’ and thus, could not identify themselves with the them.³³² Creating a “new brand name” thus became a definite certainty. It seems that the writing was on the wall, the youth of the area had made its choice: to create their own brand-names or stick to their old family clubs or play other codes and or join the privileged white clubs. It is apparent though that the latter two options are the most favoured.

This cultivated fertile grounds for the white clubs to flourish and got a wonderful opportunity to lure the black learners within their ranks. This could be seen in clubs such as Hamiltons, which after the rugby unity, merge with the East London Technical College rugby team establishing what is now known as the Hams-Tech RFU. Many of the traditionally white clubs followed suit, recruiting a number of young promising players from the privileged schools. In as much as this became ‘a blow to the traditional black clubs’, as it is often argued by the latter that if things were going the other way round, these players, especially those that are residing in the locations would be now playing for them. However, this brought some sense of racial integration, which is often easily confused with “non-racialism” that rugby enthusiasts inspired for.³³³ However, an integration and or “non-racialism” achieved in this manner will always be indeed questioned and challenged.

This situation only put more pressure on the already disadvantaged black clubs, thus doing nothing to develop them than subjecting them to and acting as catalyst to their natural deaths. This sort of transformation was also achieved on unlevelled grounds. Sports within the black population, just as in all other aspects of

³³¹Interview Mtya; Mhani; Mgwebi.

³³²Interview Puzi; Mtya; Twaku; Mhani.

³³³Interview Ndondo; Twaku; Matyeshana.

their life in the post-2 February 1992 de Klerk's historic announcement and even after the first democratically elected government, seemingly is not transforming and developing as expected. These life conditions remained unchanged and compelled blacks to yield and drift towards the white folk with little effort by the latter group to meet the former somewhere in the middle. For improved quality of life and better housing, the black population had to move to the previously white areas. For quality education, sports facilities and other societal services, blacks had to either travel to or relocate altogether to the previously white areas and this is not only a costly exercise but also in a way seems that this population was perhaps from inception doomed to an ever lasting suffering.³³⁴

The Non-racial Rugby in the Democratic SA

The traditional black clubs in the East London area and the entire blacks rugby continued to face difficulties despite unity and after the first democratically elected government. They lacked the basic amenities such as the proper training fields. They used the school fields and few community fields, which did not have the lighting system.³³⁵ Rugby clubs also had to compete with soccer teams for these few fields because the latter was rather dominating in number and community interest. This condition made it impossible for the clubs to have enough time for proper training necessary for the level competitive rugby that they found themselves in.

It is apparent that black clubs desperately need support to adequately compete with their former establishment counterparts. These clubs could not sustain themselves within the BRFU leagues within which they participated. However, some received some token development funding from the SARFU through the BRFU's development wing. The manager of game development in the Border region, Mahlubandile Puzi confirmed that the "new" clubs following rugby amalgamation and mergers were granted the SARFU's "Club Aid" in the form of money and equipment. Black clubs that played in the premier league were getting a sum of twelve thousand rands per annum for transport and other day-to-day management.

³³⁴ See Border Rugby Football files, the letter that 'Premier Stofile' sent through during the 'Border Rugby Development Conference'.

³³⁵ Interview Mtya; Mgwebi; Twaku; Mhani.

This continued till to date, at least to a certain chosen ones. However, one of the main challenges confronting the few clubs that are still eligible for this funding is that they only receive this assistance way into the first half of the year and this makes it difficult for the more destitute blacks clubs to sustain themselves within the league during the first four to five months of the season.³³⁶ Another challenge that these clubs had to deal with is the question of professionalism and the use of primitive and less effective management practises of their respective administrators.³³⁷ An improvement in the latter could perhaps help them plan creatively in terms of sustaining themselves.

However, the fact that development programmes for the greater East London area were logistically centred largely within the East London city. They were sort of detached from the people that they were mostly created for. This was to a certain degree due to several factors that are perhaps beyond human control. The young township and rural boys had to be consistently transported to town instead of developing them and the rugby fields within these residential areas. This, created problems not only for these boys but also to the development officials, who had to use money to transport them instead of channelling these funds to other projects within the broad development programme. The most noticeable setback as a result of this was the recurrent failure of many of these boys to honour practice sessions, and thus ended up excluded from these programmes.

Another issue that the former nonestablishment rugby enthusiasts constantly raise is prejudice. They accused the coaches and those responsible for further nurturing the young boys within the development and BRFU's teams of playing the former in unfamiliar and or unsuitable positions. Thus, this issue undoubtedly frustrated and denied these young prospective rugby players of progress and development.³³⁸ This did not only frustrate the latter and their communities, it somehow ironically discredited the very same development programme initiatives. With many boys participating in the latter programme, few products could be identified within the provincial teams. This was not only happening in the BRFU,

³³⁶Interview Ndondo.

³³⁷Interview Twaku.

³³⁸Interview Mgwebi; Twaku; Mtya; Ndondo; Mnyute.

other provinces also evidenced a similar trend. However, BRFU's development wing together with its entire management can be commended for the initiatives to curb this problem. With the instigation of Mahlubandile Puzi, BRFU's Development Manager, an internal programme to "fast track" talent from the disadvantaged communities, in the name of "All Stars" [rugby club], was initiated in 1998.³³⁹ Puzi says

...All Stars is a programme... it is not just a club. It is an extension of the development programme. It stands to give opportunities to players that come from the rural backgrounds that have got a potential to play at premier league level but because of their backgrounds, and given circumstances surrounding their backgrounds and their access to opportunities... causes these people to delay coming through... we collected these players...and gave them an opportunity... also it [All Stars] is catering for the products of the development programmes that have reached excellence level and have gone above the under 21 level and ready to play premier league rugby but because of their location, for example, if you have a player that has graduated from a development programme and you send it to the Cambridge RFC, he is not used to those people... because of his rural background, he is going to battle getting to the practice sessions and back home after that... now instead of him progressing, this talent will degenerate and he will be lost to rugby. Now, we felt that if we bring together all the identified talented players and let them play together in one team...thus help each other because they are playing in good company...thus giving the opposition a fair test and each game they play becomes a good "match-making"...hence the All Stars...³⁴⁰

This programme was conceived in the light of the fact that it was and it is still difficult for many rugby players from the disadvantaged areas to take advantage of the opportunities available to the privileged urban and often white players, as Puzi says above. The urban players have more chances of reaching higher levels of rugby development, due to the fact that they can access various amenities necessary for the game and perhaps, their proximity to the BRFU's headquarters serves as an added advantage.³⁴¹

Thus, the All Stars programme was meant to bridge this gap by offering opportunities to the rural players that were graduating from the development programmes. The central EL players were not really accommodated within this programme except those that were already within this "All Stars" programme.³⁴² 'We have an agreement with Border RFU that, we will not recruit players from the central EL. But we will only give opportunities to young rugby players with rural background. That is why All Stars is mainly black at the moment but if we get the

³³⁹ Interview Puzi; Ncinane.

³⁴⁰ Interview Puzi.

³⁴¹ Mike Stofile, speaking at VERU veterans' anniversary, 2001.

³⁴² Mike Stofile, speaking at VERU veterans' anniversary, 2001.

players from the former establishment sector and of the rural set-up, they will be given the opportunity to play as well'.³⁴³

However, Makhenkesi Stofile seems to accept the programmes such as the All Stars one with reservations. He argues that: The starting point: focus more on our clubs and our schools. School should play matches in our areas to inspire and recruit more youngstars to the game. The Premier League should not be the focus. It should be the result of success in developing our clubs.³⁴⁴ In defending this issue, the current BRFU Vice-President, John Ncinane says 'All Stars was formed in order to speed up and to short-circuit the black players in order to get the senior Border side and ultimately play for the Springbok team... again, since the Border selectors do not go to scout for players in the black clubs in their leagues... they complain that they are often engaged in premier league matches, thus their schedules are always saturated. This leads to a situation where the Border squad becomes selected only out of the premier league clubs. We have therefore introduced All Stars so as to see whether the selectors' attitude will change given this eased access to black players. The All Stars clubs is playing in the premier league, so we are looking forward to see whether this will be of any appeal to the selectors'.³⁴⁵ The open secret about traditional black clubs is that they were and to a greater degree, are still viewed by critics as mediocre performers and this perhaps discourages selectors from thinking of scouting players from them. Puzi is also helpful here:

...since unity, we have had [black] clubs that came through the ranks that never had an impact at premier league level. It was a just as a case of clubs going into the field mainly to try to avoid the opposition from scoring many points against it, whilst white oppositions always go for maximum points. It was some kind of a ladder for them. These [black] clubs were there and it was good for them to be there because was a good experience and exposure. But if you look at their achievements, nothing much could be said and the individual players within them never developed...³⁴⁶

It is apparent that not everybody really applauded this BRFU's initiative. Many, like Makhenkesi Stofile feel that this is not really how development should be approached. Norman Nozewu does not mince his words, saying BRFU is distorting facts when it comes to black participation in rugby. In fact, in as far as he is

³⁴³Interview Puzi. Ncinane also offered this information.

³⁴⁴See Stofile's letter of support to Border Rugby Development Conference in 1999.

³⁴⁵Interview Ncinane.

³⁴⁶Interview Puzi.

concerned, he harshly condemns the very focus of rugby development as instigated by BRFU, questioning the reasoning behind channelling rugby development programmes in what he refers to as 'rural herd boys as opposed to township fellows that already play the game'.³⁴⁷ However, Puzi has an equally ruthless response to this view:

...yes, this rightfully indicates that we are indeed not recruiting from the central East London accept only the products of the development programme that originates from the area, because we don't want to kill the clubs that are existing here already by taking their players away. But to talk about "Rural Herd boys" ... is an insinuation. Its actually undermining the integrity of the rural people, forgetting the fact that most of the people, who actually played rugby in the townships, were originally coming from these very rural areas...³⁴⁸

Having learnt how black rugby was organised initially, one cannot agree more with the above response. Of critical importance is the interest in establishing the success and challenges of this "All Stars" programme. As its brainchild and leader, Puzi seems to be happy about its progress, saying 'All Stars have only been introduced this year, 2000, but within this year they have achieve great heights and if people could consolidate what is already been achieved and take great steps ahead, All Stars will be a force to be reckoned with'!³⁴⁹ However, some criticise it for what they view as a contradiction and a defeat of the cause for non-racialism that NSC and the broad non-racial moment stood for. Ncinane's response to this issue is that:

All Stars is not a racist club. It is silly to say so because All Stars is a club that accepts anyone from rural areas. If ...because whites are not staying in rural areas and... there were, they would be allowed if they want to ... its unfortunate that they don't stay in black townships and rural areas and unfortunately they cannot participate in All Stars RFC. After all, the intention of this club is to redress the imbalances of the past. The people that suffered most in rugby development are the black people from rural areas. So if they say so, so be it!³⁵⁰

On the question of non-racialism, Ncinane opts to assume a rather pragmatic view and says:

the process of unification was meant to achieve...and ideally meant to achieve ... the non-racial sports in this country. We were trying to be non-racial but at the same time, acknowledging that sport was linked to apartheid systems of governance that started in 1948. So it is not going to be easy for the next twenty years. We will be talking about it...trying to be one rainbow kind of structure in rugby. That I think, I don't want to be specific and say after ten years...it is a long process but not an event. There were attitudes and there are still people with attitudes even now, in both... blacks and whites. We hope to achieve it, not very

³⁴⁷See *Daily Dispatch*, 'Border Rugby distorts facts', 2000.

³⁴⁸Interview Puzi.

³⁴⁹Interview Puzi.

³⁵⁰Interview Ncinane.

soon, we hope to insist in the process of bagging each other, pushing each other...insisting that the rugby must be totally non-racial, non sexist and so on.³⁵¹

Puzi does not agree more with his boss' view. To Puzi, strengthening the existing structures seems paramount to him as opposed to 'pulling each other down'. He says 'we have to enhance the rugby passion that is there and make the best out of it, instead of fighting against each other, especially with emerging new ideas that some of us come up with. For example, this initiative of All Stars, if its producing results on the field of play, irrespective of who is in charge and who has came up with the idea, lets support it as long as it is advancing the ideas and principles of the non-racial sports that we are advocating. Because of this programme of the All Stars, its paramount aim is to produce provincial and national players. If it's able to that, just as you can see in the like of Vakalisile Nako who is playing for All Stars and also the current BRFU scrum half and Ian Fihlani, who is the current BRFU wing, Vusumzi Mbulali, who has also played on numerous occasions in the Border A games during the Vodacom Cup series. These players are all the products of the All Stars programme. In the under 21 ranks and the Border B side, you find a lot of All Stars players as well. Imagine if we had left these players in their rural areas, their talent could have just degenerated in the uncompromising desert air'.³⁵²

Professionalism, Prejudice and Racism in SA Rugby

Given the abovementioned challenges, the NSC was certainly faced with a huge task of actually fulfilling its mandate of transforming the SA sport into a mass-based movement. As years rolled down throughout the post unity and democratic SA, the NSC was dealing with totally tricky situation of not only transforming the county's sport but also convincing the former establishment of the essence for the total commitment to transformation and development in an effort to deliver SA sport into its logical conclusion, which is the complete non-racial and egalitarian "sport for all" scenario.

The concepts transformation and development seriously needed more clarity, as they seem to be meaning different things to different people. However, living up to

³⁵¹Interview Ncinane.

³⁵²Interview Puzi.

these expectations became an intricate challenge, particularly that SA sport had to contend with modern sports dynamic developments such as professionalism within sports bodies and the whole question of globalisation. John Ncinane is helpful here when he says 'the era of professionalism in rugby has begun. Our mindset must be made that we are now moving from (sic) [from] known to unknown value system... It is therefore that reason that after proper and careful analysis, that talent identification process and capacity building of our cadres both in the field of play and in administration must be started as a matter of extreme urgency so that we must not be caught by surprise'.³⁵³ Makhenkesi Stofile concurs, further conceptualises and "contextualises" this saying

the advent of professionalism has imposed a great threat to poor areas. Resources are now focusing on a few professionals. One professional player makes more income per month than a whole Sub Union. Because money and resources continue to be in few White hands, only those favoured by them will see the light of the day. Take the 1999 World Cup. Where were knowledgeable Black commentators that only green horses were relied on by SABC TV? Where are our own role models? Are we not sleeping through a cultural propaganda that continues to associate the poor with mediocrity and the rich and White with excellence? What are we doing to our children [?] Where are all the SAR (sic) [SARU] referees and coaches?³⁵⁴

It is clear that challenges of this era were not only economical but rather involved a range of socio-political factors. These range from blatant prejudices, poor planning on the level of rugby structures and the apparent lack of proactive initiatives from the rugby playing communities and the rugby enthusiasts themselves. In his speech during the Game Development Conference in East London, the BRFU's Junior Vice-President, Ncinane says

on the call of BRFU, the SARFU has built and renovated many facilities during the past five years, but it is disturbing to note that most of these facilities are not bringing any change to our sport because they are not maintained and no attempt and influence from Sub Unions to the respective municipalities...[there are] no links... and taking advantage of maintenance systems adopted by the provincial department of Sport, Art & Culture in their RDP Sport facilities throughout the Province. ...the facilities that were meant to advance the cause of rugby are used as kraals to keep cattle, sheep and goats... a good example of this is Keiskammahoek and Chalumna and ... good example of maintaining the sport field can be seen here in Stutterheim and in Mdantsane.³⁵⁵

It is clear that these were things that they could have been avoided if strategic collaborative effects and capacity building initiatives amongst people in these

³⁵³Ncinane, speaking in the BRFU's Game Development Conference in 1999.

³⁵⁴See Stofile's letter of support to Border Rugby Development Conference in 1999.

³⁵⁵Ncinane, speaking in the BRFU Game Development Conference in 1999.

communities were prioritised. In fact, some of the proposals that were tabled in the same conference had substance. For instance, Ncinane's suggestion that links be established between building new sports field projects and the already existing maintenance mechanisms. There was no doubt that lack of coordination of these activities and responsibilities had adverse effects on rugby in these communities, particularly the disadvantaged ones. Ncinane says these are:

disturbing concerns which makes our rugby at Sub Union level the practical victims of mockery because when comparing the strength of Sub Union during the pre unity era and the post unity era, you will definitely notice that the standard [of] Sub Unions has dramatically dropped up to even lower ... [than] the standards of Premier League clubs and first Division clubs...looking at the following aspects as down fall on the part of Sub Unions: Looking at Sub Unions as mainly just coordinating structure for clubs on behalf of Border Rugby and nothing else; lack and inefficiency from the top officials of Sub Unions; Club mindedness from both players and officials of Sub Union; Vastness of rural areas, which makes the Sub Union to incur more expenses especially when preparing for a Sub Union match...³⁵⁶

Though many of these challenges were not only financial, there was and in fact there is always an intricate link between rugby development and the availability of the former resource. Even the previously financially viable structures experience this pressure and with the continued scarcity of money, provinces sought ways to deal with the situation. Some of the measures used were not always favourable to the development of the game, especially given the advent of professionalism in rugby. For instance, in their attempt to deal with the fiscal challenges, some provinces combine development funds that they were receiving from the central controlling body with their professional wing funds, thus the former could only dramatically suffer. This situation was observable in many provinces including the BRFU, though its rugby development programme showed some relative successes. The Game Development Conferences across the country passed the resolution that provincial units need to have two separate kitties for rugby development and for professional wings.

Another notable challenge that the NSC and perhaps the broad non-racial movement had to contend with was ironically, the issue of racism and prejudices, as not only emitted by the former white establishment folks but rather racism of another kind. In several circles, some elements of racism from within the non-racial fold were

³⁵⁶Ncinane, speaking in the BRFU Game Development Conference in 1999.

apparent. If the old saying that “history repeats itself” is a thing to go by, the early treacherous tendencies as observed between the coloured and African groups of the black population in the late 1960s, though now both these groups embraced non-racialism, could not come as a shock to many when they began simmering again.³⁵⁷ Many reckon that the coloured population within the post unity sports structures showed a strong commitment to recruit, mobilise, and support for itself and for itself alone at all cost. If the statistics showing development programme’s “results” is a thing to go by, the above inferences could only be reinforced.³⁵⁸ This has gathered momentum over the years and in fact some continue to believe that this is manifesting itself in many ways. However, the appointment of Sas Bailey as SARFU’s Game Development Manager apparently strengthened this suspicion. His conduct in the eyes of some rugby enthusiasts did not only suggest a potential to undertake this apparently unfair practice, but rather could only strengthened it.

Many questioned the sudden domination of the coloured population in SA sport teams, as products of developed referees, coaches and almost in every sector of SA rugby fraternity, though they are relative a small proportion of the general SA population.³⁵⁹ There is no doubt that when things of this nature begin simmering, especially within the non-racial movement, things can only become more complicated and difficult. Whether these allegations are of substance or not, the fact that they are coming up indeed warrant extreme diplomacy and the sensitivity they deserve. The data on rugby development in SA indeed creates an interest especially for those who appreciate and understand the history of black rugby.

Notable also is the manner in which the appellation “black” tended to be used or abused in SA. There is little doubt of the potential abuse of this term as it conflated within it everybody who was previously categorised as a nonwhite South African, that is: the African people, the coloured people and the Indian folk. In as much as these groups put a united front in combating apartheid in South African, they remained heterogeneous and this should always be appreciated. It is not simplistic to note that the involvement in such a united front was catalysed by deferent intensions,

³⁵⁷See Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, p.201.

³⁵⁸Ncula, sharing SA Rugby statistics on rugby development status quo in 2001, at VERU veterans’ anniversary, 2001.

³⁵⁹Mveleli Edwin Ncula, speaking in the VERU veterans’ anniversary, 2001.

particularly that these groups were oppressed relatively differently by the white minority rule, which always sought to further perpetuate “a divide and rule” scenario. Indeed, many accounts relating to “reversed” prejudice and racism suggest that some officials within these took advantage of the latter situation during the post democratic South Africa society.

Without weighing the challenges that SA rugby had to and perhaps is yet to face, racism and prejudices within the former non-racial movement family is undoubtedly tricky and calls for urgent eradication. However, it will be simplistic to charge all the continued imbalances within the black population, with Africans being on the receiving end of such, in the post-democratic South Africa only to racisms and prejudices. The outright withdrawal of many the large numbers of the most previously most active rugby enthusiasts within the African population meant a serious blow not only to rugby but also to the larger population of the young generations within these communities. This youth not only lost the generation of role models and mentors but also a human resources or guardians to actually support, lead and make sure that the identified talent is taken care off and seen through the age groups of their rugby participation. The later to me seems to have been one critical area that the African youth radically lacked, whilst the opposite can be said of the other groups. Thus, when observed bluntly from a distance, could be either viewed as prejudice and or indeed planted the seeds of this tendency to manifests itself. There are a number of young potential champion sportsmen that have come through the ranks of development and or at least from schools, but only vanished into thin air with time. Names such as: Kaunda Ntunja who captained SA Schools Rugby Team in 2000, Zola Qotoyi who was at once invited into the National U/19 training camp in preparation for the Junior World Championships in Santiago, Chile in April 2001; Thobela Mdaka and Bandile Ncunyana, whom were both selected to represent SA Sevens Rugby Team on several occasions; Dumile Ntlola, who made Border Barbaas Team on several occasions in the mid 1990s, Andile Mxenge, who captained Makhaya Ntini, Jacques Kalis in cricket in the late 1990s.

The critical questions to be asked include: where do these young boys go, who’s responsibility is it to nourish and guard them as they grow in their sporting careers, are the sports federation and all the stake holders doing enough to lend the

necessary support that they deserve, who are the stake holders in the first place? Responses to these questions might not always be concise and easy as we want, but the fact of the matter is that somebody should take responsibility, at least to take care of the already identified talent. The whole issue of talent identification is one critical issue that can never be undermined and it can be safely said that currently, the strategy to address this task is yet to be found.

Many rugby enthusiasts believe that the current emerging players in the name of rugby development are not always necessarily a product of the latter programme but rather emerging from other sources. At worst, some feel that these players are a mere product of chance than proper planning. Proper coordination of resources and collaboration with the schools are yet to be achieved in SA sport, particularly in the Border area. It is clear that the old ways of exposing youth to the game thereby identify talent within the primary and secondary schools needs to be reviewed. There is little doubt that the return of the 'old Wednesday afternoon matches' within the traditional black schools should be realised.³⁶⁰ These matches were the backbone of traditional black rugby and many rugby enthusiasts believe that they will go a long way in not only reviving the game in these communities but rather develop and sustain this sport. Makhenkesi Stofile, the former rugby administrator is helpful here:

The current players that the BRFU is priding itself with as its development products are a mere product of chance rather proper planning. The starting point: more focus on our clubs and our schools. Unless school play matches in our areas to inspire and recruit more youngsters to the game. The Premier League should not be the focus. It should be the result of success in developing our clubs. We have the people and spirit. What we need is strategic planning and organisation. We also need to be honest about our failure and gains. To exaggerate will fool nobody but ourselves...³⁶¹

Conclusion

This chapter outlines the dynamics of rugby transformation of a critical era of South African political history. The 1980s down to the millennium promised a

³⁶⁰ See Stofile's letter of support to Border Rugby Development Conference in 1999; interview Mjo; Dunga & Magqabi; Interview Mgijima Theophilus Sam & Khumbulele Wotshela, Mgwali Village of Stutterheim, 9 March 2001 (Henceforth: Interview Sam & Wotshela); Sontshi, Tengimfene; Neunyana; Temmers; Twaku; Matyeshana; Mhani; Mtya.

³⁶¹ See Stofile's letter of support to Border Rugby Development Conference in 1999.

complicated possibility in the social, economical and political development of the country.

The preliminary section of this chapter describes the complicated route to South Africa's sports unity. There is an indication that there are close links between the country's social and political situation. The NP government's manoeuvres against the strengthening of the struggle by the oppressed forces had a direct bearing on developments in sport.³⁶² The level of political polarisation almost compelled sports administrators to take significant decisions about the future of rugby in this country. This was seen in the 1960s through to the 1970s. By this time lines were clearly drawn between the supporters of the struggle against apartheid and those supporting the establishment sports bodies such as the SARB and the government policies.³⁶³

The strengthening of apartheid was seen on the extent of gruesomeness of this ideology. This manifested itself in many ways. The Sharpeville massacre and a State of Emergency, where many people were detained, harassed and political organisations banned, were but some of the ways the regime tried to crash the non-racial movement. Indeed many non-racialists had to operate underground and or exiled. Sports administrators were not immune to this situation and black rugby suffered big losses. However, after this unique repression of the early 1960s, which to an extent overwhelmed the radical challenge to apartheid, there was a revival of resistance in the late 1960s and 1970s. This did not only manifest itself through a rapid growth of trade unionism and strong wave of BCM, but also the re-birth of a powerful non-racial sports movement within the country. The formation of the non-racial SACOS in 1973 indicated this new development. 'Within ten years SACOS, working closely with SANROC and international groups, exerted an iron grip over South African sport, as one establishment body after another was expelled from international competitions because of apartheid.'³⁶⁴

³⁶²See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.55; see also Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981, p.1; see also Tshwete, 'Challenges Facing Non-racial Sport', pp.14-21, in Roberts (ed.), *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, 1990.

³⁶³See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.56.

³⁶⁴See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.57.

This chapter discusses how SACOS evolved and what were its affiliate units. Amongst these was the SARU, which rather seems to have had a controversial relationship, with its mother body. Some described this relationship was often described as 'sometimes complicated'.³⁶⁵ Nonetheless, SARU grew to become recognised as the only credible and authentic rugby body for blacks in South Africa and which formed part of the 'people's camp'.³⁶⁶ Its association with the progressive forces within the country not only gave it credibility, but also gave it the new impetus. In the mid-1960s, many unions and clubs from Loriston's SARFF and SARA defected to SARU in large numbers. This move was in a large extent motivated by the birth of KWARU of Port Elizabeth in 1971.

Since everybody generally do not always welcome transformation the same way, not all black communities viewed the birth SARU the same way. While SARU became firmly established as part of the MDM, the SAARFB and SARFF responded to the pressures of the time by moving closer to the white establishment. They played as Leopards and Proteas respectively and upheld the multinational sports policy of the apartheid regime in the 1970s. By 1977, the African Board, now already renamed SARA, SARFF and the establishments' SARFB, together formed SARB. Relations between these two camps remained antagonistic right through to the 1990s'.³⁶⁷ It was the NOSC and the ANC's Steven Tshwete's intervention that paved the way for rugby unity following a long history of segregated South African sport.³⁶⁸ Most Importantly, now it can be safely said, just 'as it had been the case for over a century of years, *politics* had the final say. However, the fundamental difference now, was that the balance of power had swung considerably in favour of the long

³⁶⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.57.

³⁶⁶G Adler, "Of Shop Floor and Rugby Fields": The Social Basis of Auto Worker Solidarity,' seminar paper presented in RW 7003 Seminar Room. This paper is drawn from two chapters of Adler's Doctoral Thesis: "'The Factory Belongs to All Who Works in it': Race, Class, and Collective Action in the South African Motor Industry, 1967-1986,' Columbia University, 1994), university of Witwatersrand Institute for Advanced Social Research, 1994; also see Peires, "'Facta non verba'", 1981, pp.7-9 for Kwaru breakaway and incidents thereafter; also see Dobson, *Rugby in South Africa*, 1989, pp.115-116; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990.

³⁶⁷See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59; Roberts, *Challenges Facing South African Sports*, 1990; see also Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

³⁶⁸See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59.

subjugated since the days when Isaiah Budlwana Mbelle and other pioneering administrators head set out to establish the first non-racial rugby bodies in the 1880s and 1890s'.³⁶⁹

This chapter shows that segregation in SA sport has a long history. From its inception, it had until the early 1990s, been administered under a dichotomous system: the establishment side and non-establishment side.³⁷⁰ This situation was persistent till the last decade towards the twenty first century despite resultant changes. It is this reason that the NSC and ANC had to intervene.

This chapter also outlines the challenges that faced the non-racial sport movement in SA faced during the late 1980s and 1990s. Critical issues examined here relate to the urgent need for unity within the non-racial movement, the consolidation and serious commitment towards achieving non-racialism in South African sport. This was not an easy task. Most importantly was that the intractably link between South African sport and its politics. This therefore invariably meant a strong breeding ground for ideological conflicts amongst and within the non-racial sports movement.

This chapter explains the nature of the non-racial movement in SA in the context of SACOS "versus" NOSC. The period between the early 1970s and the late 1980s, the SACOS held the flag for the progressive forces but beyond this, things changed. The new non-racial body, NOSC emerged. Though it had played a vital role over the years, SACOS 'was yet to meet the general expectation of becoming a mass-based sports movement'.³⁷¹ What was clear was that there was frustration with the pace of the mass organisation of non-racial sport under the leadership of SACOS. Subsequently, people within the MDM established the NOSC. The NOSC claimed not to be in opposition to SACOS, but rather, prepared to work with it in bringing about a truly mass based, democratic sports movement in the country and assist with

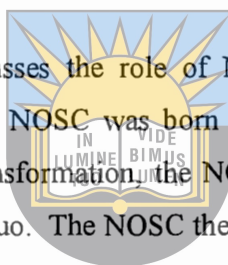
³⁶⁹See Grundlingh, et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59.

³⁷⁰See Goslin, 'Human resource management' 10, 1996: 207-217.

³⁷¹See Roberts, *Sport and Transformation*, 1989.

the development of non-racial sport, particularly in the African townships and rural areas where larger numbers of sports people were lured into the ranks of multinational sports. However, one thing is certain, two bulls cannot be kept in one kraal. The NOSC argued that its existence was not going to be in opposition to SACOS, there was no doubt that its establishment triggered contestation between them. In fact since inception, the NOSC's relationship with SACOS remained tense. The major bone of contention between the two was the NOSC's refusal to acknowledge SACOS as the authentic sports wing of the liberation struggle. In fact, both failed to reach agreement on each other's relationship to the liberation struggle.³⁷² This SACOS-NOSC impasse was not the only the non-racial sport movement's challenge. The SARU-SACOS relationship was not smooth.

This chapter also discusses the role of NOSC in transforming the South African rugby. Given that the NOSC was born out of frustrations with SACOS's stubborn approach to sport transformation, the NOSC proponents saw a need for a radical challenge of the status quo. The NOSC therefore emerged to play an essential role of taking what it viewed as a rather stagnant transformation process forward and further build a mass based sport movement in SA.



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These developments were not only limited to the sporting fraternity. They were evident across the SA society. At this time the country was also undergoing a dramatic political repositioning, with De Klerk announcing the lifting of the long lasting ban of the major political formations and the release of its leaders on the 12 February 1990. However, while some view this as a turning point in SA politics others accepted it with mixed feelings and caution.

The SA sport unification process, the pragmatic role and challenges that faced the NOSC is discussed. Hardly a year following its establishment the NOSC had already positioned itself as the most significant sports organisation that existing in South Africa. One of the NOSC's biggest challenges was to convince the majority of the oppressed sports persons that it was indeed a viable alternative

³⁷² See Roberts, 'Can sport cross the final hurdle', *South*, 20 December 1989; Roberts, 'Introduction', *Sport and Transformation*, 1989, pp.1-3; Roberts, *Challenges facing South African Sports*, 1990, p.59.

Rugby unity in the Border region is discussed in detail. The nature and strategy that was used to achieve the new democratically elected and unified sport federations both at national level and in provincial units are analysed. Challenges that came with unity such as the issue of duration of the process itself, resources allocation, provincial demarcations seemed paramount.

This chapter reviews the condition of the traditional black clubs within the context of SA sports unity and transformation. In the preceding chapter, the standard of the traditional black club rugby was discussed. It seems that with rugby unity, much focus was paid to the “national” level in terms of transformation and development, at the expense of the grass roots rugby. Notably, the SA sport unity unfolded on “assimilationist” basis. The traditional black provincial and club rugby became the victims of this process. However, the establishment sports did not only grow and develop but flourished at these new developments. Given the volatile nature of SA political nature, what was meant to be rugby unity became rugby “assimilation”. It becomes apparent that black rugby players were not only fully prepared to deal with this transformation but were merely made to adopt the “*boere* rugby culture”.

A complete overhaul of the SA rugby seemed to be a compelling exercise, and consequently, all “barriers broken and bridges built”. Nevertheless, this was not to be. To add salt to the wound, the underprivileged clubs were made to merge under the guise of creating stronger and competitive teams.³⁷³ It seems that this “suggestion” was generally never taken kindly by many clubs across the country. Nonetheless, it was done. Thus many traditional black clubs vanished.

However, it must be said that the unification of the SA sport was an important and necessary exercise. In fact it was unavoidable given the country’s political transformation at the time. Analysing SA sport unity in the twenty first century calls for a careful extermination and consideration of a range of community of changes that goes with it. Issues like the advent of professionalism in sport, globalisation, the birth

³⁷³ Interview Ncinane; Puzi.

a new democracy in our country coupled with the possible socio-political and economic changes that goes with need to be considered. These invariable have strong influence on how people are to play sport in the gross roots. Hence rugby development and transformation of the SA rugby need to be focal point. However, success and or failure to these become are a different topic.

Like all forms of transformations, SA sport unity had its fair share of setbacks. The traditional black club rugby almost dwindled. In contrast, whilst the majority of the black clubs were gasping their last, the traditional white clubs were flourishing. The non-racial rugby enthusiasts started questioning the system that they themselves invented and embraced. Norman Nozewu's crisis committee is indicative of this situation. Many traditional rugby clubs were vanishing and this was a major cause for concern. Another challenge that non-racialists had to deal with was the use and or abuse of the appellation "black" by certain sections of the latter population. The coloured folk seem to be the main culprit of this practice. In fact benefited a great deal out of this at the expense of their African compatriots. Perhaps the Africans' lax and or naïve attitude and approach to this transformation proved to be too costly and thus cannot be immune from incurring the blame too.

The post unity challenges such as the advent of democracy, professionalism, prejudice and racism had to be dealt with vigilantly. The NSC was certainly faced with a huge task of actually fulfilling its mandate of transforming the SA sport into a mass-based movement. As years rolled down throughout the post unity and democratic SA, the NSC actually learnt how delicate and tedious it is to transform the county's sports machinery. Another mammoth task it faced was that of convincing the former establishment block of the essence for showing the total commitment to transformation and development in an effort to deliver SA sport into its logical conclusion: the complete non-racial and agalitarian "sport for all" state. This invariable meant new strategies and of course some painstaking strategic repositioning.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

By now, it should be clear that black people in South Africa, specifically in the Eastern Cape's East London and Border region, have a long rugby history. To a certain degree, this work has attempted to set the record on black rugby record straight, using oral evidence and analysis of the available documents including newspapers and the few scanty academic and non-academic articles on the subject. Paramount has been the discussion of rugby culture and the standard of black rugby in the East London area. This study also highlights some of the unknown and perhaps highly underrated stars, more than the few known black players have emerged in these communities over the years. For instance Lapple Sontshi, Sobhizana, Mngikana, Sdondi Ceko, PV Maneli, Ryn Manuel, Norman Ntshinga, Peter Mkhata and many other flyhalves need to be given the recognition that the great Majola has received. Again, the brilliance shown by Australia's George Gregan, Joost Van de Westhuisen and many others was first shown by the likes of Cyril Simo Mzwandile Mjo, Gibson Gawulayo and many others. Black rugby tests, matches, interprovincial tournaments and the vibrant club rugby have been used to illustrate this unknown aspect of SA rugby story. Black rugby has been shown to have a potential to integrate communities and races.

In analysing this long history, several questions need to be asked. What kind of a community was East London at the time of the birth of rugby in the area? How did rugby originate and develop within the black and specifically the African communities in the Eastern Province and Border, specifically East London? What was the value attached to rugby by this population? By whom and how were early rugby clubs formed? Where and why were these clubs formed? What were the challenges facing them? What was the nature of "sport and society", "sport and politics" and "sport and economy"? How did early rugby structures relate to the community and political formations within their communities? What was the role of the national rugby controlling bodies and their respective provincial units in the development of black rugby? How were these rugby structures transformed over the years? What did the African-Coloured test matches mean to these groups and what conclusions can be drawn about the country's political and social situation at the time,

particularly in relation to how these groups valued rugby? How did Border perform in interprovincial tournaments over the years? What role did Swallows RFC play in the development of rugby in the area? What was the role of women and the East London missionary primary schools, Welsh High School, other Border secondary and teacher training centres and Fort Hare in the development of rugby? How did black rugby respond to the South African segregationist realities, and survive the harsh transformation of the country's politics through to the emergence of apartheid decades later? How and when did non-racial forces emerge and what was their influence? What was the influence of the non-racial movement in South Africa, specifically within the sporting community? What were the subsequent responses of the apartheid government and its allies? How was this sporting impasse dealt with en route to sports unity in the country? What were the influences behind sports unity specifically in rugby in the early 1990s? What can be said about the apparently intractable link between politics and sport in South Africa? How did the advent of democracy, unity, development, transformation, sports professionalism, and globalisation affect how sport is played at the grassroots? How did SA rugby and specifically East London rugby respond to these complicated changes?

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Chapter one showed that there is reasonable consensus that the rugby game was first brought to South Africa by the British military. In fact, the arrival of the British in 1795 initiated a new era in sport in South Africa and it was around this period that organised sport began to show signs of developing.¹ On 23 August 1862, the first recorded rugby match, between the military and the civilians, took place at Green Point Common in Cape Town.² However, the beginnings of black people's sport were obscure.³

¹See Leck, N, *South African Sport*, 1977, p.4, in Anderson, 'An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport', 1979, p.35.

²See Leck, *South African Sport*, 1979, p.4.

³See Anderson, 'An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport, 1979', p.35.

A Guide to South African Sport asserts that segregation in SA sport can be traced back to the early Dutch settlements.⁴ This continued in the British period: 'Whites and blacks simply did not mix socially, and thus would not mix on the country's sports fields. This was the legacy of history for which the founder members of the first [white] sports clubs, provincial and unions and national bodies cannot be held responsible', *A Guide to South African Sport* claims.⁵

This speaks to the longstanding myth that Afrikaners not British were responsible segregation in sport. The British seemed content excluding black sportsmen and operating within the system of white domination and racial segregation from the beginning. Throughout the nineteenth century though racism in SA sport was not entrenched by legislation, it was nonetheless firmly rooted. It was only after more than five decades, with the coming to power of the National Party government in 1948 that the lines became more finely drawn in sport as in other areas.⁶

Black people shared similar experiences. Thus what East London black communities underwent was similar to what happened elsewhere in the country. Like many other early locations, East Bank and West Bank had mixed African and coloured residents. People in these communities, especially the coloured population, lived amongst Africans for many decades and many also lived amongst whites. In this mixed racial community rugby clubs and enthusiasts found their expression. They lived and played together and of course quarrelled with each other over the years.

Chapter three showed how rugby was organised in East London. The East London rugby clubs had a number of coloured players though the latter population also had its own clubs. Swallows RFC, Early Rose RFC, Black Lion RFC, and Winter Rose RFC had coloured players for many years while very few or no Africans

⁴See Nedbank Group, *A Guide to South African Sport*, 1987, p. 164.

⁵See Nedbank Group, *A Guide to South African Sport*, 1987, p. 164; see also Anderson, 'An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport, 1979', p.35.

⁶See Anderson, 'An Investigation into the Effect of Race and Politics on the Development of South African Sport, 1979', p.35.

played for the coloured clubs. There are various reasons for this but paramount is that neither group consciously excluded the other. Even at provincial level, there were two separate units for coloureds and Africans, which constantly played against each other especially when preparing for their respective provincial tournaments. In many instances a few coloured players ended up representing both BARFB in the interprovincial tournaments and BCRFU, as shown in chapter four. Johannes Temmers of Winter Rose RFC springs to mind as one of the coloured players that consistently achieved the double provincial colours. However, this interaction was not seen at club level, where indeed coloured players played for both coloured and African clubs, but without the clubs themselves playing against each other.

Modern sports amongst black people first emerged in schools and education centres like Lovedale, Healdtown, St. Matthews, Welsh High School and the Mission Primary Schools at East Bank in East London, Nyaluza of Grahamstown and many others. St. Andrews College of Grahamstown claims to be the oldest rugby playing school in South Africa, first playing the game in 1887. There is evidence that black club rugby in East London emerged to some degree as a response to other black playing areas like Port Elizabeth and Grahamstown as illustrated by the birth of the first black rugby club in the area, Swallows RFC. However this does not take away from the immediate influence of the white game in East London, which many black people enthusiastically watched and supported.

Chapter four of this study reveals the close links between East London black rugby and the broad Border region and its educational centres such as Lovedale, Healdtown, St. Matthews, Fort Cox and Fort Hare and the community of Alice. The East Bank Mission Primary schools were the nursery of rugby greats that graduated to Welsh High School. These primary schools played 'well-contested rugby matches on Wednesdays' and that was where famous black players such as Lappley Sontshi, Ryn Manuel, Simo Mjo, Sdondi Ceko, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Ntandazo Rufas Mabija, Sipho Tanana, Bunga Richard Ncunyana and many others were formally initiated into rugby following *Oombambo*-teams.⁷ Rugby players and administrators that originated outside East London and were formed in rugby-playing Fort Hare and the

⁷Interview Mjo; Tanana; Ncunyana; Temmers; Sam & Wotshela; Magqabi & Dunga; Sontshi.

mission schools of the Eastern Cape include the likes of the famous Eric Majola, Dumile Kondile, Norman Ntshinga, Louis Mtshizana, Sipho Siwisa and Victor Siwisa, Pat Cossie, Ban Malamba, Grant Kgomo and many others.

This study has looked at the origins of clubs and their founders in East London. Chapter two showed that the oldest clubs were established in Port Elizabeth, with Union RFC founded in 1887. The oldest black club in East London is Swallows RFC, established in 1911, with Dr Mpilo Walter Benson Rubusana as one of the founding members and first president. A few decades later Swallows RFC's sister club, Early Rose was formed.

Early Rose RFC was the first of many new clubs, as shown in chapter three. This indeed became a perfect excuse to breakaway and organising players on the basis of their places of origins became central in East London locations. As the migrant labour force increased more clubs emerged. The nature and character of life in the East London locations meant that people organised themselves in a particular way, and clubs invariably followed the same route. Obviously there are crucial lessons from this: despite bad playing conditions, black people loved and enjoyed rugby; the black elite population within these communities took centre stage in assisting the illiterate labour work force to formalise and institutionalise club rugby within their communities. Young boys followed their older role models and rugby matches were "family affairs", embedded in the black population's social life. Young boys played as *mbambo*-teams. There is no doubt that when this element of community participation was weakened the game also suffered, as was apparent during the era of forced removals and even following rugby "unity" in 1991 where most rugby was played in white fields in East London as opposed to NU 1 grounds at Mdantsane, where black people had had convenient access for a number of years.

While rugby enthusiasts from different clubs played a significant role, there is no doubt that Swallows RFC played a pivotal role in the development of rugby in the East London location. Women, not only in terms of their financial and maternal roles, were closely involved in black rugby development over the years.

Though other sports were also played, rugby was the main sport of the large black population that lived in neighbourhoods such as *Tsolo, Meken, New Brighton, Moriva, Gomoro, Maxambeni, Ngcabanga, Thulandivile*, and other small sections of the EBL and WBL, from the later 19th through to the 20th century. Many rugby enthusiasts claim that 'there was no way that a young man' could have escaped rugby fever in the East London locations.⁸ However, 'rugby was never played on a Sunday at East Bank'.⁹

Chapter five of this work shows that the story of black rugby has never been a calm one. It was marked by infighting, splits and breakaways, fraud, favouritism, prejudice and racism but amazingly it did not only grow over the decades, but it thrived. This is significant considering that the establishment also posed challenges such as deliberate neglect and poor facilities or no facilities at all, and that it embarked on a series of repressive measures such as forced removals.

The black middle class played a crucial role in working with the minimal resources available and in some instances fought against this subjugation by the establishment. It consisted of teachers, lawyers, local administrators, politicians, and religious leaders. Some were sportsmen in their own right. However, some members of the black elite played a more ambiguous role. Clubs that were closely allied to those in power benefited most and those that were not were left to either attempt to ally themselves with the powerful in the hope of favours or be excluded from the system. Chapter five outlines the 1958 Border split in this context. Swallows RFC, the club of the township people, enjoyed major benefits from this and used these as a mechanism to lure talented players from various centres, thus undermining the very organisational basis of clubs in the area.

Splits witnessed within black rugby over the years were prompted by various factors. In most cases they were used as surrogates for covering up other things and when questioned, rugby enthusiasts often seek to justify and explain them with the noblest reasons they can find. It is clear that these splits had very little to do with political influences as has often been assumed. There is no doubt that these splits

⁸Interview Magqabi.

⁹Interview Tanana; Magqabi & Dunga; Ncunyana; Twaku; Sam & Wotshela.

retarded the growth and development of black rugby, though the dedication of ordinary players and supporters meant that the game even so survived.

It is clear that there is lot that can be drawn and learnt from these splits. The 1958 split, in particular highlights various features of black rugby over the years. It is clear that, the black elite, with the energy and talent that the segregationist government was ignoring; these men expressed themselves in community leadership, including rugby.

It is apparent that many people in black communities were feeling the oppression and were determined to make a contribution in fighting, and sport, rugby in particular, as an aspect of popular culture was used as an arsenal to this regard. Mtshizana is indicative of this typically enlightened population and the manner in which he led the African Board bears testimony to this. He seems to have had a clear mission to accomplish: use the popular culture to enlightened those in the dark, while at the same time covertly facing the oppressive regime head on. For instance, following his assumption of his duties as the new boards' president, Mtshizana did not hesitate driving his charges towards non-racial pathway. He proposed the change of the name of the SABRFB to SAARFB; he also sent back the old NRC Cup sponsored the latter organisation on the basis that 'mines were exploiting black labour'¹⁰; asked all the black players under his jurisdiction to boycott the white government's celebrations of the Union of South Africa in 1960, on the grounds that blacks had nothing to celebrate; also contacted SASA about the position of his board in as far as non-racial sport is concerned and in fact the effective abolishment of the racial test matches by his board. The extent to which how tactful the white government was, is seen on how some oppressed people willingly fought gallantly against their own brothers. Siwisa cousins, Victor and Sipho saga is helpful in understanding the nature and the extent of ideological differentiation within black people.

The manner in which this transformation unfolded illuminates strikingly fascinating lessons. Central to this is that SA sport has a long intractably link with the broader country's political situation and that indeed, it was not the black population

¹⁰Interview Mtshizana.

that initially introduced politics in sport and or effectively “mixed” the two if there was any possibility of separating them in any case.

This study also shows that the early corrupt group that in fact instigated the split within the Gompo rugby union, Border and ultimately the entire SABRFB in 1958 was the same group that diligently calculated the ousting of Mtshizana and other “progressive” forces within black rugby leadership and ultimately fiercely fought for the survival of SARA when the majority of other black rugby players and rugby enthusiasts have moved over to the non-racial SARU and SACOS. Names like LF Siyo, S Xiniwe, Sipho Tanana, Sonwabiso Geleba, LZ Lamani, Mxotwa, and later WSM Bashe, Isaiah Linda, DM Jongilanga, Sipho Gordon Qumza spring to mind while the progressive block comprised of the likes of Mtshizana, Sparks, Charles Nqakula, Ntandazo Mabija, Ndikho Mnyute and many others. This also was indicative of the early emergence of cheap tribal politics of “*Imbokotho ne Khonkco* (Grinder and Chain) that were diligently displayed by the fight between the Lennox Wongama Sebe group and chief Thandathu Mabandla of the Ciskei territorial authorities in the later 1960s and 1970s. Notably is the fact that many of the SARA administrators were Swallows RFC members and in fact while all the rugby clubs had moved over to the non-racial SARU, Swallows RFC remained the stand one out within the SARA ranks and this earned them a sell-out stigma. While this act can be explained and or justified, it is widely evident that of course those that are in power and position of influence do not necessarily view transformation that seek to challenge their very power the same way their subordinates would otherwise see it.

Looking at the nature of black rugby players and rugby enthusiasts generally, as early as the days of Dr MWB Rubusana, many grew to be respected figures in their communities. More than half the informants consulted for this study were at once in their lives involved in politics somehow. As it would be expected, given the nature of SA politics, there was no two way, one would either support the establishment and its puppets or stooges like Sebe, Mathanzima, and other coloureds and Indian collaborators, or join the progressive forces in the fight against the regime. Many progressive rugby players and enthusiasts were in fact former Robben Island detainees, while the groups from the other side made strides within the Sebe and Mathanzima governments. This became the basis of choice when the non-racialist

challenged the racist organisation of SA sports in the late 1950s down to the early 1990s. These were the difficult times in the history of the rugby football in this country. This full-blown fight against the gravely oppressive system did not escape rugby and its people. Many were detained, tortured and some eventually left the country. Names like Simo Mjo, Sobhizana Mngqikana, Ndikho Mnyute, Vukile Steven Tshwete, Ryn Manuel, Dumile Kondile, Norman Ntshinga, Louis Mtshizana, Ben "Ta-Ben" Tengimfene quickly spring to mind. Black rugby suffered a great deal but the apartheid's forced removals almost put a nail in the coffin of "Mr Black Rugby". Were it not the intervention by the workers from the small firms of East London, rugby in East London could have been left on the lips of its admirers. The birth of the Industrial Unions rescued the game following the demolition of EBL and WBL, and of course of paramount importance, the home of black rugby in East London, the "great Rubusana Park".



Chapter five also outlines the famous interprovincial tournaments that formed the backbone of black rugby for many years. Without downplaying the role and contribution by other provinces within black rugby, Border and the EP Africans as it was the case with the WP and the EP coloured rugby units, proved to be real forces to be reckoned with for a number of decades. Though the EP (both African and coloured units) and WP respectively, exhibit an unquestionable edge over the rest there has been always a spectacle in their encounters. However, with the collapse of these provincial African encounters, especially the 1969 interprovincial tournament in Umtata marked the tragic death of black rugby. Ironically to some this development meant the beginning of a totally different new chapter of black rugby in SA. The era of non-racial sports and the subsequent collapse of the racial bodies like SAARFB (later SARA), SACRFB (later SARU) and SARFF. In 1977, KWARU was born following an in-fight within the PERB, which infiltrated to the core of the EP rugby. It all started when the notorious PERB refused the Spring Rose RFC's request to postpone matches on the weekend the longstanding black rugby star Eric Majola was to be buried following his untimely death in a car crash. This culminated into a situation where the majority of Africans rejoined the old SACRFB ranks, now named SARA that they left couple of decades before. Nine out of ten PEARB rugby clubs within the EP left it and following numerous futile appeals to the national body ultimately joined the non-racial SARU. Following this development many other

black clubs across the country including those from East London joined SARU and this meant that a considerable number of influential Africans were rejoining to SARU's ranks for the first time since the Bantu Board had split from the ranks of the predecessor coloured board in the 1930s.¹¹

The role of Fort Hare students and the VERU in the development of non-racial sport in the Border region was insurmountable. It is generally believed that following the major split of KWARU in Port Elizabeth to the non-racial fold, these students almost took it up to themselves to spread the principle throughout the Border region. Though it was not always easy, they showed determination and conviction and faced the most threatening circumstances with guts. Hiding behind the shadow of the VERU, which in fact, they contributed to establish, Fort Hare rugby team became central in keeping the light even through the darkest corners. The result was not very far fetched as ultimately the whole Border region sang one song under the banner of SARU. The region was not going to stop leading the country's rugby transformation as many milestone changes were first seen in the area.

This study however, found that by the turn of the 1980s rugby in black communities especially the traditional rugby strongholds were rapidly being infiltrated by soccer. Chapter six shows that in as much as high quality rugby game continued was played under SARU, there were signs that things were no longer the same, in schools teams and communities clubs. By the late 1980s, the rugby playing base within black communities had shrunk such the Wednesday school matches no longer adequately honoured, there was a handful of African rugby players at SARU "national" level and club rugby was surviving out of mature personnel drawn mostly from "factory floor" as opposed to students as it was the case previously.

Several postulations in an attempt to understand this predicament include the idea that the political situation in the country at the time called for everything else to be secondary to fight against the apartheid regime. The oppressed majority in the form of workers, students, men and women, young and old embarked on a campaign

¹¹See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.59; also for details of the KWARU breakaway, see Peires, "Facta non verba", 1981; Adler, "Of Shop Floor and Rugby Fields", 1994.

to bring down the apartheid system and this ultimately gave birth to the UDF in 1984. Though the latter view cannot be undermined, it is also important to acknowledge that any form of degeneration evidenced within black rugby is not as a result of a single big event but a long process of transformation over decades. This could never be attributed to any lone factor but to a broad community of changes. The politics of the country might have played a central role but the very nature of the struggle and transformation of any society presupposes that certain aspects, crucial as they might be, had to be compromised, black rugby was no exception. The infighting within black rugby; the splits and “unity”, and, political development, forced removals and many other apartheid oppressive laws and fight against them, the changing world order over time, democracy, club mergers and sports unity coupled with changes in residential, schooling and transport patterns played critical roles in black rugby in either developing or destroying it.

Given all these, there is little doubt that the perpetual splits and subsequent regroupings that tended to characterise black rugby over the years coupled with forced removals had the worst effect on it. The fact that the latter two are characteristic of breaking down the structural organisation and their very influence, make them the most horrible factors to look at. Paramount then becomes the nature and approach used in merging, and or incorporation, and or unifying the different groups reconstituting them and or attempting to accommodate them within a single structure. It seems these were crucial issues that were overlooked when for example KWARU in the 1970s and many other black players and their respective units joined SARU; and subsequently, when SARFB, SAARFB and SARFF “merged” to establish SARB and of course when SARU and SARB ultimately “unified” to give birth to the SARFU in 1991. It seems that when KWARU and other African players joined SARU there was little or no concern about the rugby culture that characterised these two different groups. It is important to acknowledge that there were and in fact there will always be peculiar differences between the coloured folk and Africans, regardless of magnitude. Failure to recognise and appreciate such differences amongst groups of this nature will only thwart every attempt to unify any group or group with different backgrounds and at worst this could lead to populism.

For one reason, either the SARU leadership at the time or KWARU and the broader African population that joined SARU fell victim of this. This might have stemmed out of sincere foresight or the fact that the situation was so volatile that though pertinent was deliberately disregarded in the name of advancing the course of non-racialism. KWARU's motto: *Facta non verba* [Deeds not words] perhaps is helpful in demonstrating the degree of commitment by its leadership to the course of non-racialism in sports at whichever cost.

It seems though that KWARU and many other Africans thereafter were "content" paying an expensive price of allowing them to be swallowed by the little uncompromising predominantly coloured SARU leadership. Though KWARU and many other predominantly African provincial rugby units (and clubs) within SARU ranks such as Border had proved to be a force to be reckoned with both on the field of play and in administration, little effect they had in neutralising and transforming the coloured leadership. It was only in the late 1980s that the likes of Makhenkesi Stofile (elected as Vice President of SARU in 1989) of VERU, Silas Nkanunu and a few others actually started to break the ceiling of the SARU's national leadership. However, though these African administrators were numerically inferior, they had a benefit of airing the views on equal footing and they did so efficiently and significant.

However, while KWARU and Border (and their respective clubs), the strong holds of African rugby were doing well on the field of play, with KWARU for instance playing well enough that it won SARU's premier cup, the South African Cup (SA Cup) and Swallows RFC of Border Rugby Union representing the latter in the SARU Top Eight Clubs annual championships on several occasions, for some strange reasons, these players apparently "failed" to impress the national selectors. An open secret is that there has been a glaringly few African players that earned SARU colours between the late 1970s down to unification in 1991. A lone Border - SARU national team player in the late 1980s, Thobile Mtya is helpful here: 'For instance, when we were playing under SARU having very good players indeed. Things were really tough then particularly when we were to be selected for SARU national team. It was very tough for players then to get to the team because even if one was very talented he would be overlooked because most of the SARU selectors were coloureds and were in PE and Cape Town. It was only MR Zwelibanzi in the Border region. This is why

there was a big gap and that there would be only one or two players selected for the SARU national from the Border region'.¹² The same can be said about African players across the country and this development thus becomes a stern reminder of the *early* ambiguous interactions between SABRFB and SACRB, SARU's predecessor in the 1960s.

The issue becomes apparent, the union between the African and coloured rugby population was "assimilationist" in nature. This study learns that the same happened again in 1991 when the black players were meant to be amalgamated with the establishment SARB. Black players were never prepared for the white or rather Afrikaner rugby "*biltong* and *boerewoers*" culture. There is no doubt that the old exclusionist tendencies remained and at worst racism and prejudice gained added impetus. A critique of SA rugby establishment by Tommy Bedford, one of the few English speaking Springbok captains, Tommy Bedford in 1989 is helpful here. Bedford asserts that for over 25 odd years white rugby had worked 'mainly to promote the Afrikaner, his Church, his Party, his Government and the *Broederbond*, but all of it was to the detriment of rugby, sport and South Africa.'¹³ The somewhat shady circumstance Bedford is describing here cannot be separated from the general complicated socio-political development of the SA society over the years. Grundlingh is helpful in analysing the dynamics of this development: 'the coupling of rugby symbolism and ethnic nationalism, the middle class character of the sport, the spectator appeal of rugby and its ramifications – including gender implications – and the reinforcement of notions of masculinity, and ultimately effective political control of the game'.¹⁴ There is little doubt that a combination of these features has elevated rugby into the Afrikaners' "national sport", the issue that this study has shown to be actually grossly inaccurate.

Black rugby within the black societies had been very closely linked to and in fact it mirrored the socio-political underpinnings within these communities. This has manifested itself in various ways stretching from the day-to-day features of livelihood to the most complex issues that governed black people in the apartheid South Africa.

¹²Interview Mtya.

¹³*Die Suid-Afrikaan*, December 1988 –January 1989, p.6 in Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline: Rugby and South African Society*, 'Playing for Power', 1995, p.131.

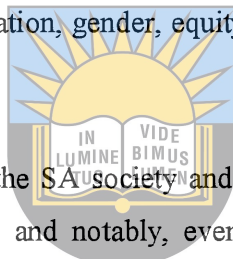
¹⁴See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.131.

This brings to light the apparently controversial relationship amongst blacks, especially between the coloured and the African rugby boards. With all fairness, it should be acknowledged that the political climate at the time catalysed fertile ground for suspicions and at worst, sometimes treachery. Without endorsing the latter, it is vital to note that the apartheid regime had versatile tricks to deal with its victims, “divide and rule” principle significantly upheld. Thus, pointing fingers at each other, especially from within, might be an incorrect step to take. In fact, that would actually accomplish what the regime aspired for a long time. Thus, this situation had to be dealt with in a sophisticated and diplomatic nature. A democratic SA underpinned unity and equal rights, was paramount to this process. Thus the old stereotypes and practises were “*rucked-over*” and a new rugby order created.

It is expected that when breaking barriers, bridges have to be built to allow continuity and smooth operation. SA rugby unity was no inxception. The same principle was supposed to be followed when SARU and SARB allies came together to form a new unified, non-racial and democratic structure. It was expected that these two bodies were to be entirely abolished and a new rugby order takes the fore. The latter suggests that SARU was expected to play a crucial ideological role while SARB with its sound financial footing render the fiscal power. These roles of course were primarily administrative in nature thus leaving the ordinary rugby player in the lineout maintaining a “rigid line rule”. It was apparent from the onset that failure to or lack of commitment towards achieving non-racialism in SA sport could only reinforce the old apartheid exclusions and further perpetuate rugby disparity on racial and class basis. Hence it was important for the non-racial proponent to intensify their role of educating the establishment population of the importance of achieving the non-racialism in the country sport. If these roles have been adequately played in the first decade following unity is another thing. However, the fact that after a solid ten years following the birth of SARFU and unity, SA rugby is still immersed and languishing in one controversy after the other makes a response to the former question only more apparent.

When looked closely, these issues mirrored the complicated process of South Africa’s sports unity, which in many ways, was associated with the country’s social and political state of affairs. Issues such as sports development and rugby

transformation (later selection with bias and quota system) formed the basis and in fact underpinned the principle “unity”, democracy, equity, non-racialism and the end of segregation in SA rugby and in the entire sporting fraternity. Rugby, for one reason took the lead and played a crucial role not only in the transformation of the SA sporting arena but to the entire liberation and freedom in the country. The apartheid regimes’ manoeuvres in its attempt to cling to power and as opposed to the intensification of the struggle against this process by the oppressed forces had a direct bearing on developments in sport.¹⁵ It is with this reason that the country has to continually encourage its citizens to think, talk and fight the universal social tribulations such as prejudices, racism and oppression gallantly to the end. This is happening at the time SA as a nation is also in dialogue, with issues such as prejudices and racism, globalisation, gender, equity, black empowerment etc., are not only topical but a first priority.



The transformation of the SA society and specifically, rugby transformation was not universally conceived and notably, even the non-racial forces themselves differed ideologically and approach. There is no doubt that the longstanding SA non-racial sport body SACOS has done a stunning job in organising sports amongst the oppressed for many years. However, it was its rather stubborn view towards transforming of the country’s sport in the late 1980s that cultivated fertile ground for its collapse and brought about the birth of a new organisation, NOSC. The birth of NOSC though its proponents claimed that they were not in opposition to SAOCS, posed a big challenge to unity within the non-racial forces in the SA. Thus the collapse of SACOS meant a significant victory for NOSC but this development was at an expensive price. Many SACOS members adopted a hands-of approach to sports participation, levelling accusation to NOSC followers that they are “sell-outs” because it was advocating a “sham-unity”. There is no doubt that this somehow weakened not only the “motive forces” but the entire cause for non-racialism in SA sport.

¹⁵See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.55; see also Peires, “Facta non verba”, 1981, p.1. Another version of this paper also appeared in *Work in Progress*, April 1981; see also Vukile Steven Tshwete, ‘Challenges Facing Non-racial Sport’, pp.14-21, in *Challenges Facing South African Sport*, Roberts, C, ed., 1990.

This also strengthened the already privileged establishment block within the newly established “unified” sports structures. Since its inception, SA sport had until the early 1990s, been administered under a dichotomous system: the establishment (white) side and non-establishment (black) side, affiliated to an all-purpose organisation, and the former was privileged in every respect.¹⁶ The legacies of this situation were and are still apparent decades beyond unity despite pledges for and commitment to transformation of the SA rugby.

Though that black rugby-playing base suffered stiff competition to soccer in black communities and when unity arrived it had already shrunk significantly. However there is little doubt that the latter makes more sense when looking at the fact that the traditional black clubs were merged together during unity. This reinforced false beliefs that blacks have no rugby culture and need to be introduced to it by whites. The black population in areas including Border, EP, Boland, WP, Griqualand and Transvaal to mention just a few have a long rugby tradition and are the “Mecca” of rugby in this country. Thus rugby development programme initiatives in these areas should not take decades to show results as if they are Northern Province, Mpumalanga, North West where rugby to be started and introduced from nothing.

This study showed that SARFU’s development programmes did little in actually bringing the long oppressed and segregated population close to its white privileged counterparts in many aspects. What SARFU and Border rugby claim as their successes of development programmes are in actual fact the products of the formerly white only privileged schools such as Dale, Selborne, Gens, and many others. Thus their “successes” are in many respects a product of chance as opposed to structured and coordinated programmes. Time has come for SARFU and its units to critically review its approach to development and transformation initiatives. An open dialogue on these issues needs to be undertaken as opposed to defending the system that it apparently dysfunctional. Dishonesty and futile attempts to justify the unjustifiable issues is robbing the SA rugby a wonderful opportunity to grow and develop that the political and economical standing situation of the country is offering

¹⁶See Goslin, ‘Human Resource Management’, *Journal of Sport Management*, 10, 1996: 207-217.

it. Controversies keep coming and go and it seems there is little commitment amongst rugby administrators to transform. Both the former establishment and nonestablishment blocks are not immune of this malady. For instance, the use and or abuse of the appellation “black” by certain sections of the black population. The coloured folk that is apparently dominating SA rugby, for instance, coaching, refereeing, and administration seems to be the main culprit. The latter group has benefited a great deal from this process and of course at the expense of the largely “unsuspecting” African compatriots. Perhaps the Africans’ lax and or naïve attitude and approach to rugby transformation disfavoured them and thus invariably cannot be immune from incurring the blame and well.

Given such teething troubles the NSC was certainly faced with a huge task of not only dealing with the latter issues but to actually fulfil its mandate of transforming the SA sport into a mass-based movement. As years rolled down throughout the post unity and democratic SA, the NSC learnt that things are only getting tough and new strategies coupled by painstaking repositioning becomes inevitable.

It must be appreciated without fear of contradiction and ridicule that the unification was a necessary exercise and in fact unavoidable, especially when the country’s political transformation unfolded. Chapter six shows that unification’s importance role cannot be questioned but its obvious that the manner it was carried-out did not go down well with everybody. However when analysing the SA sport unity process, a community of changes needed to be considered especially given the era this exercise was undertaken. For instance, the advent of professionalism in sport and globalisation, the birth of a new democracy in this country, coupled with changes in the political and perhaps possible economic climate of the latter society. These invariable had a strong influence on how people were to and are currently playing sport in this country especially at gross root level. Hence rugby development and transformation of the SA rugby have to be the first priority.

There is no doubt that during sport unity many people unceremoniously retired from rugby football. A lot of people got disillusioned and some simply lost interest to SA rugby. For instance, when asked about the contemporary rugby developments and or what happened following unity, many of the informants in this study claim to be

ignorant about them and a striking observation is that they refer to unity as “this unity”.

It is therefore paramount that when rebuilding this game aiming to make it a national sport means that the multitudes of rugby enthusiasts in the form of players, administrators and most importantly, spectators need to be brought on board. One way of doing this is to revive the traditional “township” club rugby fixtures. The longstanding rugby enthusiasts need to be invited to rugby football again.

There has to be vibrant development programmes and commitment to transformation so that black people can well feel comfortable within the new rugby culture and environment that they find themselves in. Partly creating this environment calls for urgent focus paid to removing all the old exclusive barriers in SA rugby such as segregationist tendencies that include racism, prejudices, lack of representation and transformation within SARFU and its unit, lack of equity. SARFU needs to be committed to transformation and non-racialism. Fast tracking provisions to bring deserving and promising black players and both national and provincial administration should be offered with opportunities to do so without prejudices. The “All Stars” like projects of the Border Rugby Union needs to be promoted instead of being viewed as squandering development funds. However, financial accountability of such funds needs to be highly enforced. Selection with bias and quota system should be explicitly explained to white players, coaches, administrators and spectators alike the same way the SA government does when advocating black empowerment; affirmative action and many redress processes. This could assist the SA rugby fraternity especially the black population into rapidly identifying itself with the new club rugby culture and that within the SA teams, while at the same time assisting white players to better understanding the premise and logic behind the former.

The “Way Forward”?

Though the club rugby playing culture in East London and Mdantsane in the late 1980s was still vibrant, the situation was rather desperate and indeed a cause for concern. Prestigious clubs of the area such as Black Lions, Bush Buck, Spring Rose, Thembu United to mention a few were in distressing situation. Their playing

standards were comparably lower to the Gompso days. They were now relegated to lower divisions and could no longer compete at the highest level against Swallows, Winter Rose, Wallabies and others. Ironically, while rugby was breathing its last, soccer was quickly gaining popularity in East London. Rugby was no longer played as the most popular sport in schools, the longstanding important rugby talent nursery. Rugby was losing its vital role as an organic part of local and popular culture. This once most famous sport was facing serious extinction in most black communities across the county.

This formation of the NOSC in 1989 and its advocating for sport unity between the nonestablishment and the establishment sport bodies marked the beginning of change in SA sport generally. However, this transformation did not come without a cost. Soon after this process many sport persons on the grassroots felt left out and many rugby clubs vanished following club merging with each other and others “dying natural deaths”. The traditional ways of playing and enjoying rugby within the black communities was no more. The community cohesion that was witnessed in the past and many community clubs were lost. However, it cannot be noticed that one of the ironic consequences of the unification has been the broadening of the scale of rugby. Whilst people lost their important local velocity in terms of community cohesion following unity, not everything was lost. Of course when individuals or a group people come together to amalgamate into one big group some of their respective peculiar oneness possibly disappear in the process. Most probably, more often than not there could be no going back anymore. It should be recognised what it was like, what happened in the process of change and also try to understand that change so that the *wayforward* can be found in the best possible way available. One of the significant aims of this study is to understand the history of black rugby so as to better appreciate the dynamics of the present day SA sporting environment. It is believed that the contemporary developments of the SA sport find meaning and direction from their historiography.

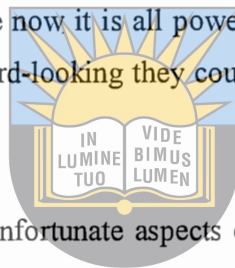
Sport, especially SA sport from its inception has been intractably linked to the country’s social situation. Thus any analysis done on this issue has to take cognisance of the huge society of changes: political changes, social changes and economic changes that have happened on a global level over time, particularly the era towards

the first millennium. Professionalism in sport for instance, is and has got a massive sort of impact on how people on the ground are and will play sport. South African sport has always been based on a British system since the missionaries arrived and the white colonies schools and communities have been nurseries to players and now that wide base is no more, though the issue of centres of excellencies and sports academies are being encouraged. However the latter calls for larger sums of money, which is often a challenge to access especially in destitute areas such as Border. Without doubt this is having a significant impact in how talent is identified and what the game is going to look like at the top level and in the bottom in the future. In the post modern world where image is visibly bombarded by certain channels in the Olympics, sport has huge value in terms of commercial value, marketing and advertising. There is also the issue of intellectual property that the broadcaster possesses. There is no doubt that this has and will have a huge impact as can be seen already on the rugby players' earnings and what happens at the bottom level.

Chapter six has shown that analysing sport and society in the twenty first century calls for the appreciation of this broad community of changes in a specific society. In particular, the SA sport inevitably had to deal with two revolutions almost at the same time: the coming to into democracy after a hundred years or more of segregation, apartheid and discrimination and attempts to redress this, is a huge key issue on its own; at the same time in doing this, there has to be a way to try and deal with the changing economy and societies on a more global level which are having a huge impact on sport and how it will look in the up coming couple of decades as it competes with other important issues. A viable “wayforward” needs to be looked at especially when clubs are vanishing in the Eastern Cape, the heartland of rugby and cricket amongst black communities. Thus when clubs are disappearing it becomes a serious problem for SA rugby, particularly if it wants to position and maintain this tradition in a new democracy.

Those who opted doctrine purity towards unity often argue that unity was nothing but to put it crudely, a *sellout* of the non-racial sport struggle. Looking at the unification process and the way it was handled made some within the non-racial movement quite uncomfortable, especially hastiness with which Steve Tshwete collected people together. However, it is conceivable that there was no other way

looking back ten odd years later. The mountain of opportunities unity has presented to SA sport, both administrators and players is insurmountable. Both in terms of player-base and financial benefits which are overwhelming and the situation only could have improved if rugby administrators did not waste time but grabbing this opportunity to develop and expand the game as a national sport as opposed to their continued clinging on to the past petty issues: infighting, racism, prejudice and lack of transformation. Without disregarding the latter, unity was unavoidable once the political negotiations in the country got underway because it was part of the big picture. In terms of money that has come into sport as a result of all these processes including sports unification. It is a blame levelled against sports enthusiasts, the federations and the administrators for not making use of the opportunities to transform further than they have because now it is all power relations. If they had been more focussed, organised and forward-looking they could have gone much further in sport development.



However, one of the unfortunate aspects of unity was that the leadership of non-racial and the black sports bodies went up to the top but in between them there was often old infrastructure and administration that was effectively running things. The latter was mostly the old white racist administration that did not necessarily care about black sportspersons. SA rugby had this problem for a while and it has taken a long time for the whole structure to assertively implement new policies. At the top level were the former nonestablishment persons who were like political representatives of non-racial and black sport and they assumed positions but at other levels there was still former establishment personnel, without representation of black people, that acted as gatekeepers. This situation is yet to change more dramatically. These left SA rugby to constantly keep coming back to the same thing, it did not move forward. It was not opportunistic in a way that helped rugby because of its racism and lack of transformation, instead Luyt and SA rugby encouraged the flying old the flag and singing *Die Stem* defiantly. They were yet to accept and move on with the changes of the day.

In fact at the top things were not much better with Louis Luyt making life difficult for his fellow black colleagues and black sportsmen alike. It was only after the first World Cup that the glass ceiling started to crumble in rugby SA with Luyt

resigning following his ridiculous indictment of the state president, that transformation began to make more sense. Silus Nkanunu, Mveleli Edwin Ncula, Songezo Nayo took reign at SARFU as President, Chief Executive Officer and Deputy respective, replacing Louis Luyt and Rian Oberholzer who became the General Manager. Up until then there was lip service about development and transformation but the power was not yet shifted fully towards the majority of the SA rugby playing population in SA. SARFU instead held a number of sports *indabas*, conferences and auditing progresses in provinces since unity. However, it seems resolutions from these were put to little use by the national body. The open secret that came out of these audits, for instance the 1999 one indicated the level of ignorance of the direction SA rugby was taking by the various provinces. Many did not even know the constitution of SARFU, its mission and policies pertaining to development and transformation, which not only delayed the process of change, total integration but also gallantly fought to maintain the old exclusivity practices, prejudices and racism. Ironically, it all pointed to SARFU's failure to lead its units purposefully.

There were much more important things that rugby had to contend with rather than petty issues as described above. For instance SA rugby had a longstanding apartheid legacy of underdevelopment within huge areas of black communities. It is known that apartheid was more than a system of legally entrenched racial discrimination; it also completely skewed the distribution of access to resources. Facilities for whites were far superior to those of blacks. This gave the lie to the popular belief that apartheid provided “separate but equal” opportunities.¹⁷ Having made rugby its “national” game, the Afrikaner establishment had little concern for the rugby as played by other population groups. Although black rugby had a long history in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape, its unions functioned separately from the white ones. The inequalities between white and black rugby was graphically reflected in the contrasting conditions in which the game was played.¹⁸

Thus it makes sense that after unification of all the racial grouping within one rugby umbrella body, there has to be a strong partnership between sports federations’ development wings, business, communities and government at all levels, especially

¹⁷See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.123.124.

¹⁸See Grundlingh et al, *Beyond the Tryline*, 1995, p.123.124.

the local government structures for the purpose of initiating and or consolidating radical development programmes, the development, provision and maintaining sports facilities in the underprivileged communities. The daunting challenge that communities and sports federations face is often the question of maintaining the already existing facilities. It is generally known that providing new facilities is a long-term goal for all communities and also an expensive adventure. It is important therefore to maintain well the little that is already available and this calls for a strong partnership between all the stakeholders, with the communities where these are located having to play a pivotal role in this regard. In the past, some facilities have been erected in the underprivileged communities but unfortunately, they often deteriorate very fast because they are either badly managed and maintained or were built poorly, if in poor locations.

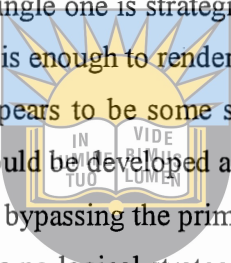


The development programmes by various SA sport federations including SARFU were to some degree driven by people who more than anything, viewed their contribution based on the amounts of rewards coming with it. Some of them did not have reasonable experience in sport administration and in fact the manner in which they were recruited is questionable. It is therefore the right time to review these personnel and in fact, many former rugby players who might be of great value to the development of rugby were not utilised. The relationship between the latter and development officers in various federations has not been good. More often, the former concentrated much on job security rather than expanding their programmes and seeking every assistance and support from those better placed to help them. Much more focussed programmes need to be undertaken where now resources as a matter of priority, have to be channelled to areas that have unquestionable traditions of playing rugby football, for instance Border, Eastern Province, Griqualand, Boland, Western Cape, Transvaal to mention a few. This is no contradiction to the goal of making all SA sport “sport for all” but rather seeks to suggest a more focussed approach at achieving it.

It seems though that the concept “development,” was from the onset badly conceived by many stakeholders and at worst, even by those who claimed to be developing others. Reverend Stofile, Graham Abrahams and Cornelius Thomas put challenges to all those who claim to be involved in these development programmes.

More often, the various federation officials, especially the white folk seem to believe that every black player has to be developed or one way or another the latter needs to be subjected to a development programme before he or she actually get recognition, while white players are developed into contracts. Nick Mallet's comments about Breyton Paulse and Dion Kaizer that the duo was 'selected on the basis of the quota system and indeed played like one', while the whole world realised that the pair was of world class standard and Paulse's nomination as the best South African player during the 2001-2002 season bears testimony to this fact.

It is apparent that not much is known about who should be "developed" and the fact that, for example, out of the twelve fulltime rugby development officers employed by the BRFU, not a single one is strategically linked to any primary school and or high school in the region is enough to render the very goals of the development programme dubious. There appears to be some serious misguided quest of whom, where and at what stage one should be developed and for what purpose. The fact that rugby development seems to be bypassing the primary schools and high schools is an apparent indication that there are no logical strategic objectives behind this important exercise.


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There is very little or no rugby at all played in the primary schools and high schools on Wednesdays and Saturdays as it used to be a couple of decades ago, throughout the greater East London area and the rest of the area that BRFU claims to be catering for. It is known that the best stage of exposing and initiating a person in any activity is in the pre-pubertal stage and a little older, thus makes sense for these development initiatives not only to be introduced during this stage of growth but also be the key focus. However, currently, the same is true and this needs to be addressed with the urgency it deserves. As shown in chapter three and five, primary schools at EBL of East London were 'embarking on well-contested rugby matches' in as early as the 1940s.¹⁹ This tradition continued for many decades, with the Welsh High School and other secondary schools throughout the Border area and of course across SA society, embarked on this old tradition of popular rugby encounters that many rugby enthusiasts so nostalgically remember. This tradition was also seen in Mdantsane township in the late 1960s, following the forced removals of the multitudes of people

¹⁹Interview Mjo; Tanana; Magqabi & Dunga; Ncunyana; Twaku; Sam & Wotshela.

from the East London locations to the distant *Umdazani* area. This continued through to the mid 1980s, the era of the troubled schooling in black areas generally in the country.

The signs that the schooling systems were beginning to crumble in these communities were seen in the mid 1970s, with the students political activism, like many other social aspects, assuming the major focus in the South African society. The era of the widespread student uprisings, also had a major effect in the development of rugby in many black communities.²⁰ This generally marked the dramatic collapse of school rugby in these areas, and traditional well-known township schools such as Mzomhle, Hlokoma, Wongalethu, David Mama, Ngcelwane and other schools around the Border regions like Thembalabantu, Nompandolo of Zwelitsha, Siseko of Debe Nek and many others lost this longstanding rugby playing culture.

This left traditionally white schools and primary such as Selborne, Cambridge, Port Rex, Stirling, Beaconsbury, Hudson Park, Grens, Dale College, Graeme College, Stutterheim, Gonubie, Charles Morgan, George Randell, Dale Junior and others being the sole representatives and torch-bearers of school sports in the area. The proper context of the previously 'white only schools' so called "School Sports" regular columns in the *Daily Dispatch's* serves as an eloquently portrayal of the myth that black communities do not play sport. These are therefore the same schools from which provincial teams are often drawn from, even the so called developed players. More often, it appears as if there is no black player that could be taken seriously if he or she did not at once in his or her life passed through the corridors of these privileged schools.

At worst, black players with resounding potential are often undermined because of the schooling background, with the majority from the schools in black areas almost condemned into everlasting neglect and marginalized on the basis that 'they lack good grounding coaching' from their schools, especially those from Mdantsane and other rural areas.²¹ Language is another form of exclusion that white coaches use to justify less representative teams. The few black players that get selected are frustrated in training camps where Afrikaans is predominantly used as the

²⁰Interview Puzi; Mhani.

²¹Interview Mhani; Mgwebi.

medium of communication. This form of exclusion is in fact evident even at a higher level of rugby participation and Rudolf Strauli's refusal to select Ian Fihlani in the Sharks super twelve team, a celebrated Border Bulldogs and SA Sevens team winger, that Strauli himself acknowledged when he coached him while he was a Border senior team coach. However, even after Fihlani's successful SA Sevens tour in 2001, Strauli argued against his selection citing poor language. These are sad realities of the ever-racist SA rugby and its coaching machinery.

Mechanisms to address this leaves nothing but much more stricter enforcement of the quota system and selection with bias towards the disadvantaged black population. Otherwise this will continue perpetuating the old order where almost all the players that are selected for the provincial and national teams are drawn from the previously whites only schools. However, as long as this situation perpetuates, there will be very little or no result coming out of the much talked about development programmes. It is therefore of paramount importance that the BRFU and USSASA consolidates their relationship and programmes, not only to avoid future redundancy but to make do with the limited resources at their disposal. The current USSASA programmes and strategic partnership should be encouraged and further consolidated. This is a longstanding challenge in Border rugby and it was first formally noticed during the 1999 SARFU provincial rugby audit. The outcomes of the audit showed that there was no relationship between Border and USSASA; and historically whites-only schools were still not playing against schools in black areas. This proved to be a serious problem in terms of integration as most whites were still regarding "development" as a programme for blacks only, and white schools were bypassing the provincial structures in their programmes. This prompted the chairperson of the audit committee to say that he 'regards this matter in a serious light, especially that Border is a leader in sport in South Africa', and the resistance to change was taking place unchallenged by the BRFU administration.²²

Though BRFU and Boland can be for a certain be degree commended for their willingness to select black players, however limited. BRFU has selected a handful of black players after unity and 2000 in the form of Big Fotoyi, Charlton Kennedy, Alistair Alexander, Mick Fritz, (played provincial rugby before quota system was

²²See the Border Rugby Development Conference: 1999 Audit Report, 1999.

formally introduced); Khaya Malotana, Ian Fihlani, Haly Ciko, Devril Boucher, Ondela Kiva, Bandile Ncunyana, Tobela Mdaka, Vusumzi Mbulali and Dan Mfuku. The BRFU players that made it to the SA under twenty-one include Charlton Kennedy, Khaya Malotana and Bandile Ncunyana and the SA under nineteen Border representatives include Kaunda Ntunja, Vuyani Foslara, Lubabalo Mtimka, and Sam Willard, Khaya Malotana made it through to the Springbok senior team.

It is a known fact that schools in the underprivileged societies do not only lack facilities and proper sport systems, they seriously lack a motivated human resources to deliver school sports within their institutions. Schoolteachers willing to sacrifice some extra hours after school training and coaching learners on different sports codes is a thing of the past. In an attempt to deal with this predicament, sports federations, schools, communities and government needs to formulate a strategic plan to consolidate the existing programmes and thus creating room for more interested parties such as the former black rugby players some of whom SARFU recognised in 2000, should be utilised. This might call for more financial expenditure out of the limited development funds, especially with the excess personnel within the departments. However, it is clear that something has to be done to address this matter with the urgency it deserves. Fiscal injection should be gravely galvanised because young people are an important stakeholder in the future of SA rugby. Stofile is helpful here:

...The starting point: more focus on our clubs and our schools. Unless schools play matches in our areas to inspire and recruit more youngsters to the game. The Premier League should not be the focus. It should be the result of success in developing our clubs. We have the people and spirit. What we need is strategic planning and organisation. We also need to be honest about our failure and gains. To exaggerate will fool nobody but ourselves...²³

Big business needs to be mobilised into partaking in these initiative in terms of sponsorship and mentorship. It is a known fact that up until now, big businesses in South Africa are still focussing on sponsoring cricket and rugby and the provincial unions should therefore take advantage of this situation and consolidate their development programmes. This should be coupled with accountability and honest commitment to transformation and non-racialism on their part. This can only be achieved through strong and accountable leadership. Mismanagement of the

²³See Stofile's 'Letter of Support in the SARFU's Rugby Development Indaba', 1999, p.1.

development funds as seen in destitute BRFU should be avoided and when actions of this nature occur, they need to be severely punished.

It is clear that developing sports within the young people could not really mean much if other overall life skills are left out. The programmes resembling Professor Ken Dovey's Institute for Social and Individual Development (Isida) programmes, as described in chapter six should be encouraged and promoted within the underprivileged communities. This will also call for every club in the premier league to create workable development or reserve teams so that they always have a second layer playing pool to choose from when necessary, with their senior sides being mentors to these youths. In fact, this should be enforced throughout all the clubs that play within the BRFU, especially those that even receive some assistance through SARFU's Club Aid Programme. There is no doubt that with all these, rugby in East London, Border and SA at large can go a long way in growth and development.

In short, a radical plan to revive club rugby in the traditional black rugby playing areas should be a priority. It will be out of this plan in conjunction with a vibrant rugby playing culture in the schools that black rugby can be truly resuscitated in East London and in the in South African black communities.

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The author conducted all the interviews cited in this work, unless where otherwise indicated. With the exception of Fikile “Bill” Dunga – Vukile Magqabi and Mgijima Theophilus Sam – Khumbulele Wotshela’s “paired” interviews, all were conducted on one-on-one situations. These interviews were recorded and sometimes recorded and written. They were also conducted in both Xhosa and English depending on the respondent, though mostly, “codeswitching” was prevalent. The author also did the translation and transcription himself.

Bush Buck RFC

Bishop Mgwebi (former Bush Buck player in the 1960s; later administrator till unity and at the time of interview Mgwebi was a volunteer in the BRFU as a development teams convenor) interviewed at Border Rugby Football Union Offices, East London, 9 November 2000.

Sipho Tanana, (former Welsh High School, Lovedale, Bush Buck, Gomo, Border player; and club, Gomo, and provincial and national [SAARFB & SARA] rugby administrator, at the time of interview Tanana hinted that he is now a businessman) interviewed at 16 Edge Road, Beacon Bay, 9 May 2001.

Ntandazo “Juju” Mabija (former Welsh High School, Lovedale, Bush Buck, Gomo, Border player; and club, Gomo, and provincial administrator and delegate, at the time of interview Mabija indicated that he is a retired school teacher) interviewed at 669 Zone 10 Mdantsane, 30 November 2000.

Louis Leo Mtshizana (former Wallabies RFC of Umtata [and provincial player: Transkei]; Bush Buck RFC of EL player; and a delegate to Gomo Union and Border, Border Secretary, President of SABRB and SAARFB; at the time of interview Mtshizana was still practising an attorney at law in Mount Ayliff) interviewed at Sterkspruit, No.1 van Tonder Street, 23 June 2001.

Swallows RFC

Bunga Richard Price Ncunyana, (former Welsh High School, Swallows, Border and Springbok under the auspices of SAARFB, in the 1960s) interviewed at 3607 Zone 8 Mdantsane, 19 October 2000 & 19 December 2000.

Ndimhle Lawrence Ngqondela (former Swallows player, club and provincial administrator, was once President of Swallows and Border) interviewed in his office at 2nd Floor, Room 8, Education District offices, Gladstone House, Gladstone/Albert Streets, East London, 11 April 2001.

Patsa Joe Matyeshana (former Swallows, Border and SARA- Leopards in the 1970s, at the time of interview Matyeshana said he is working for Coke Cola) interviewed at 1920 Zone 17 Mdantsane (at my home), 19 November 2000.

Sonwabiso Geleba (former Swallows player; club, provincial and SARA administrator, at the time of interview Geleba said he is a businessman) interviewed at 105 Zone 9 Mdantsane, 08 January 2001.

Cyril Mzwandile Simo Mjo (former United Higher Mission Primary School, Welsh High School, Swallows, Border, SABRFB & SAARFB scrumhalf in the late 1950 and 1960s, and at the time of interview Mjo was an independent broker following his successful spell with Old Mutual) interviewed at Old Mutual Building, Green Acres, Port Elizabeth, 4 May 2001.

Thobile Mtya (former Jongilanga High School of Kwelerha Village, Swallows, MDARU, Border and SARU flank, at the time of interview Mtya said he is coaching Border Rugby Women Provincial team) interviewed at 29 Oxford Street, East London, 9 November 2000.

Dumisani Mhani (former Young XV and Home Boys rugby clubs of Tshabo Village, Hlokoma High School, Swallows, MDARU, Border player; later qualified for International Rugby Union Coaching level, and at the time of interview has was the coach of the Fort Hare rugby team, SA Under 19 Assistant coach and has also coached Border Senior side) interviewed at No 1326 Zone 14 Mdantsane, 27 June 2001.

Thembu United RFC

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Lappley Sontshi, (former Welsh High School, Lovedale, Thembu United, Gompo, Union, Border, and SABRFB Springbok player, at the time of interview Sontshi said he is was retired school teacher), 3 Avalon Road, Beacon Bay, East London, 16 November 2000.

Vukile Magqabi, (former Welsh High School, Adams Collage, Thembu United player; club and provincial administrator and a rugby referee of note, at the time of interview Magqabi said he is still practising as an attorney in East London) interviewed at 303 Zone 9, Mdantsane, 8 January 2001.

Fikile Dunga, (former Welsh High School, Lovedale, Thembu United and Border player, club and provincial administrator) interviewed at his house at 303 Zone 9, Mdantsane, 8 January 2001.

Winter Rose RFC

Theophilus Mgijima Sam (former player and captain of Winter Rose, Gompo, Border teams, and later a club, sub-union and provincial administrator, at the time of interview Sam said he is a retired school teacher) interviewed in his home at Mgwali Village, Stutterheim, 9 March 2001.

Khumbulele Wotshela (former school, club and provincial player, at the time of interview Wotshela was a retired school teacher and successful photographer) interviewed at Mgwali Village, Stutterheim, 9 March 2001.

Christian Ndondo (former Winter Rose player and at the time of interview, Ndondo was a Winter Rose administrator and working for the Amatale District Council [Municipality] in EL) interviewed at Amatale District Council or Municipal offices, Cambridge Street East London, 9 November 2000.

Ndikho Gemijikile Mnyute (former Winter Rose, Gomo, Border player, later club coach an administrator, at the time of interview Mnyute indicated that he is a proud ANC veteran) interviewed at his home at 46 Duton Road, Cambridge West, East London, 20 November 2000.

Pulle Twaku (former Winter Rose, Gomo player, later club administrator, at the time of interview Twaku was serving in the Border Selection Committee and work for Lewis Stores as a Sale Representative in EL) interviewed in his work place at 54 Oxford Street, Lewis Stores, East London, 9 November 2000

ZG Mahambhlala (former player, club administrator and SARU delegate in the 1980s, interviewed at M&K Centre, High Way, Mdantsane, 9 November 2000.

Author Willard (former Winter Rose player and non-racial sports activist) informally talked at Twaku's work place at 54 Oxford Street, Lewis Stores, East London 9 November 2000 and 6 June 2001.

Johannes "Oomdu" Termmers (former Shining Stars RFC [a coloured team], Winter Rose, Gomo, provincial player [both coloured and back Border teams, later club administrator and coach, at the time of interview Termmers was a retired school teacher, but a "caretaker" history teacher at Alphandale High School) interviewed at his home at 54 Port Rex Street, Buffalo Flats, East London, 12 June 2001.

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Madodana John Roman Ncinane (former PERU Secretary, NSC Secretary, Keiskammahoek Rugby Union President, former, at the time of interview Ncinane was the BRFU Vice-President [later became President, but soon forced to resigned on accounts of corruption and misuse SARFU's Game Development Funds in provinces) interviewed at Holiday Inn, Bunkers Hill, East London, 19 October 2000.

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Guy Hyderwick (at the time of interview: BRFU Commercial Manager & acting CEO, later forced to resigned on accounts of corruption and currently CEO of Hellenic Football Club of Cape Town), BRFU Offices, East London, 11 April 2001

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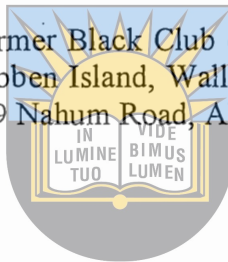
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APPENDIX D
GLOSSARY

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GLOSSARY

Eskom: This is how its former residents and those who know this place best refer to the old East Bank location.

Inkumpa: Is a form of a *township* alcohol that is often considered dangerous because it brewed by mixing a number of *food left overs* and various fruit pieces.

Ezinkqayini: *Inkqayi* is a shaven head or a baldhead and *Ezinkqayini* was the name given to the old West Bank location because of its ever-shining corrugated iron rooftops.

Ihlumelo: This literally refers to the “youth: or the upcoming generation and this world is used in this study in reference to the junior teams.

Ixamba [*Emaxambeni*]: Is a bag or sac of sugar and the name *Emaxambeni* was given to one section of the old East Bank location because, the story says, a goods train used to pass by the area loaded with numerous sugar bags and some of these sugar bags or sugar sacs would often fall by the way side and people nearby were happily to collect them home.

Gompo: This is the name of one of the *early* Ndlambe chiefs within the jurisdiction of *Imonti* [East London].

Umswehle: This is rather a hash word, which literally means nonsense.

Umswane: This is the chard is yet to be chewed and digested food within the stomach of ruminants like goats, sheep and cows and this word is used in this work to denote nonsense, just as the word *umswehle* above.