

**SOUTH AFRICA'S BLACK VICTORIANS:
SPORT, RACE AND CLASS IN SOUTH AFRICA BEFORE UNION***

by

Andre Odendaal

One of the enduring legacies of British colonialism has been the institutionalization of British sports in the former colonies. This is nowhere better reflected than in South Africa. The British garrison which took control of the Cape in 1806 during the Napoleonic wars, and the thousands of administrators and settlers who followed, brought with them sports like horse racing, hunting and cricket, and soon influenced the indigenous people into adopting them. By the end of the nineteenth century sport had become an important social institution and, fitting in with the structure and relations of Empire, South Africa was emerging as a major international sporting nation. Today, as the front-page headlines of the national newspapers regularly indicate, sport occupies a central position in South African life and has become a major issue in the country's domestic and international relations.

The development of sport in South Africa during the nineteenth century was closely linked to colonial politics and reflected in many ways in microcosm the developing South African colonial society and social structures. This could be seen on the institutional level in the organizational structures that developed, in the value systems that became entrenched in sport, in African responses to colonialism in the role of sport in the process of African class formation, and in the way the development of sport closely followed the pattern of historical development in South Africa. This chapter aims to demonstrate the close connections between sport, politics and social class in South Africa during the first century of British colonial rule by means of a case study outlining the, as yet, largely unknown early history of African cricket in South Africa.¹

Not only has the history of black sport been largely undocumented, but, fuelled by the harsh system of racial inequality, segregation and discrimination in South Africa, the myth has arisen that blacks have no real sports history. Thus spokesmen of the apartheid government claim that it is only in the last ten or twenty years that Africans have become interested and started to participate in "Western sports": "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 recognized sports."²

The unequal development of sport among blacks and whites in South Africa is, therefore, ascribed "to some natural differences in the psycho-physiological character of black people" rather than to South Africa's discriminatory racial policies and structures. These myths need to be countered because not only have black people a long, indeed remarkable, sporting history but the development of South African sport has always been closely influenced by wider political and economic factors.

*This paper will appear as a chapter in a forthcoming book edited by J A Mangan: Profit, Pleasure and Proselytism: British culture and sport at home and abroad 1750-1914 (Cass: London, forthcoming).

The first Africans to be subjected to British rule and become influenced by British values and customs were the Xhosa-speaking people living in the present-day Eastern Cape. For centuries they had lived as pastoral farmers in scattered communities, moving around constantly in search of better grazing. In the second half of the eighteenth century the so-called trekboers, the advance guard of white settlement, moving away from the Cape peninsula into the interior, for the same reason, entered their traditional grazing areas. For several decades after the frontier opened the whites and the various Xhosa groups (as well as the indigenous Khoikhoi and San, whose societies were in the process of disintegration) jostled each other for control - but no one group succeeded in asserting its undisputed authority. The balance of power swung in favour of the whites when metropolitan, imperialist Britain took over the Cape. Troops were sent into the frontier to drive the Xhosa out and in 1820 some four thousand British immigrants were settled in the area to act as a buffer between the Xhosa and colony. The assertion of British control did not end there; in the following decades numerous, previously independent, chiefdoms were conquered and incorporated into an expanding Cape colony. By the 1880s hundreds of thousands of Africans had become British subjects.

British rule had a disruptive effect on the conquered societies. A European system of administration was imposed over them and agents of imperialism such as missionaries, teachers, traders and farmers moved into the African territories, bringing the indigenous people into contact with alien European ideas and institutions. The missionaries, for example, set up schools and encouraged the people to forego their "uncivilized" customs and instead to undergo a basic Western education and to learn Christian doctrine in combination with British cultural values. People were encouraged to wear European clothes, build square houses, give up polygamy, and so on. As a result, traditional relations and authorities were undermined and new forms of African consciousness and response emerged. These were conspicuously reflected in the emergence of a market- (rather than subsistence-) oriented peasantry and a new class of literate, missionary-educated "school" people. These people developed into a new, distinct, self-conscious, elite class which began to grope for involvement in the new economic and social order and to demand political rights for blacks in the Cape political system, in line with Christian egalitarian and British liberal political values.

The political system of the Cape provided an outlet for these aspirations as the constitution promulgated in 1853 made no colour distinction. A qualified, non-racial franchise was instituted. This dispensation was based on the prevailing hegemonic and mid-Victorian liberal ideology and the practicalities of free trade imperialism, which emphasized the virtues of free wage labour, secure individual property rights based on a free market, and a system of representation. It came to be regarded by Africans as a model system for the colonies, particularly as it contrasted starkly with the other South African colonies, both British and Afrikaner, where there was little pretence of social equality and blacks had virtually no political rights. The African peasantry and the aspiring petty bourgeoisie - teachers, ministers, law agents, clerks, interpreters, storemen, transport riders, blacksmiths, telegraph operators and printers - entertained high hopes that they would eventually be assimilated fully into the evolving Cape society.

Growing in numbers, confidence and assertiveness, the elite had developed into a distinct, well established stratum of Cape society by the 1880s. This could be seen in the process of political mobilization that occurred in that decade. The first modern political organizations were formed, an independent African newspaper was started, and around ten thousand Africans registered as voters, enabling them, in certain Eastern Cape constituencies, to return candidates of their choice and, in others, to hold the balance of power. This unique group of enfranchised blacks came to occupy a special position in Cape and South African politics. The political developments were paralleled in other spheres of life as well. Numerous church, temperance, mutual aid, farmers', teachers', cultural and other associations emerged concurrently with the political groups. Politics was only one of a whole range of day-to-day activities in the wider social milieu in which³ people were responding to new opportunities, and opening up the way for the future.

II

Sport was an integral part of this whole process of assimilation and mobilization. It was one of the many aspects of British culture that the new elite enthusiastically adopted in pursuit of their assimilationist goals. British games, particularly cricket, which the Victorians regarded as embodying "a perfect system of ethics and morals", were taken almost as seriously as the Bible, the alphabet and the Magna Carta. They were eventually to supersede traditional, pre-colonial forms of recreation in popularity.

Africans were introduced to Western sports, both on a formal and informal level, in a way correlative to their other activities. Informally, the Xhosa were interested spectators at the cricket matches and horse races that came to be staged in the new frontier towns that were springing up in the conquered African territory from the onset of such events in the 1850s. A report of a race meeting in King Williams Town being "enlivened" on the fourth day by "'Kaffir races' on horseback and on foot" gives a good indication of the informal interaction that was beginning to take place.⁵ In a similar vein, an early pioneer in his journal gives details of a meeting in 1862 with a dishevelled looking farmer on a lonely outpost, three days' ride from the nearest town, who had been "amusing himself by playing cricket with Kaffirs".⁶

On a more formal level, the emerging class of missionary-educated people were introduced to modern sports at mission schools such as Lovedale, Healdtown and Zonnebloem. These schools, often racially mixed, provided an excellent education based on the English model for thousands of African pupils, and fostered the assimilationist ideal. Attendance rose from 2,827 pupils in 1865 to 15,568 pupils in about 700 schools in 1885. Recreation was a matter of supreme importance at these institutions as many of the amusements of tribal Africans were deemed "incompatible with Christian purity of life" and had to be abandoned by those embracing the new religious ideas of the missionaries. Provision was, therefore, made for the "profitable employment of leisure".⁸ Drill became a regular feature on time-tables, and sports like cricket and football were introduced. At a mission in Natal, an observer noted in 1857 that the skill of African boys in flinging assegais gave them an advantage over white boys at cricket: "they rarely fail to strike down the wicket from a distance".⁹ At Zonnebloem College, which was started by the Cape Governor, Sir George Grey, with the aim of acculturating or "civilizing" the sons of chiefs, the college records describe the enthusiasm shown by the pupils for cricket after its inception there in 1861. Within three years the school was fielding two sides and playing matches against other schools.¹⁰ In 1910 the mayor of Cape Town "remembered a time when the College had the best cricket team in the whole Peninsula".¹¹ That this mission education made no small impact on the students is well illustrated in the case of Nathaniel Umhalla, the son of the last independent Ndlambe chief, who became one of the most respected mission-educated figures in the eastern Cape. In addition to undergoing a British education and becoming literate, he acquired an English name, adopted Christianity as his religion, visited Britain, took up a job in the civil service, became actively involved in colonial politics, and, naturally, retained a life-long interest in cricket. In 1870 he was playing with two other ex-pupils in the mixed St Marks mission side against the white Queenstown Club, and 15 years later was still prominent as a player and administrator in King Williams Town. Also instructive of the origins of sport amongst Africans, the inter-relationship between religion, education, culture and sport, was a report in a missionary newspaper of festivities in 1870 to celebrate the founding of one of the earliest African Sunday School Unions. After a day and a half of church services and festivities, the nearly 700 young people involved "broke up into parties for various sports", among which the English game of cricket attracted many of the elder boys and young men". Typically, on the Queen's birthday in 1877, all the pupils at Lovedale had a day of sports in the fields.¹² Through their new education, as well as economic and religious activities, Africans were adapting to Western ways and beginning to internalize many Western values.

Sport as we know it was still in its infancy in South Africa by the 1870s, though it had by then spread to all parts of South Africa. Only a few clubs had been established in larger centres like Cape Town, Pietermaritzburg and Port Elizabeth;

among them the first African cricket club started in the last-mentioned town in 1869.¹³ No regional or national associations had been formed and there were no official leagues or competitions. However, from 1875 to 1885, coinciding with the rise of sport as a mass leisure activity in the new post-industrial revolution environments in Britain, a number of new sports were introduced to South Africa and sport became institutionalized there as well. That decade saw the formation of the first rugby, football, athletics, cycling, horse racing (jockey), golf and tennis clubs, and the inauguration of regular competitions. Then, from the late 1880s, national associations started coming into existence to place sport on an organized footing.¹⁴ The main reason for this growth was the discovery of the richest mineral deposits in the world, which attracted thousands of European fortune-seekers into the interior, stimulated industrialization and urbanization, and led to large-scale imperial expansion which was to culminate in the unification of the various territories into a single British colony - South Africa - in 1910. South Africa's industrial revolution set the stage for the rise of sport as a modern phenomenon with mass appeal, in much the same way as the British industrial revolution had done.

The African elite in the Eastern Cape were not slow in responding to these impulses. By the mid-1880s, following the white precedent, there were thriving African cricket clubs and regular competitions in almost all areas in the region.¹⁵ The first African-controlled newspaper, Imvo Zabantsundu (Native Opinion), which was started in 1884 and is still in existence today, abounded with reports. These were printed under the headings of "Ibala labadlali" (sports reports), and by 1887 the newspaper had a "sporting editor". In the advertising columns the big Dyer and Dyer merchant house placed advertisements directed specifically at African cricketers and clubs.¹⁶ The Port Elizabeth Telegraph was not exaggerating when it observed that cricket "seems quite to hit the Kaffir fancy".¹⁷

Competition was placed on a more co-ordinated footing in 1884 when teams from the main Eastern Cape centres - East London, King Williams Town, Queenstown, Grahamstown, and Port Elizabeth - took part in the first of several inter-town tournaments. These were based on similar inter-town tournaments for the Champion Bat amongst the best white teams in South Africa.¹⁸ Smaller competitions involving African sides from other centres in the Eastern Cape were also held. In addition, without any South African precedent to go by, plans were set in motion to send a combined side, chosen from the best players at the inter-town tournament, on a tour of England.¹⁹ Unfortunately, these plans went unrealized. It was to be a decade before the first (all-white) touring team left South African shores. Enthusiasm for the game continued to grow in the 1890s; just one indication of this was the 15 fixtures played by the Frontier Club of King Williams Town in a season in mid-decade.²⁰

While cricket was by far the most popular sport, the aspiring black petty bourgeoisie also took, to a lesser extent, to sports like tennis, croquet, football and rugby. By the end of the 1880s there were tennis and croquet clubs in several towns. These two sports attracted women competitors as well. At the helm of the Port Elizabeth ladies croquet club, formed in 1884, were the wives of several prominent church and political figures - no doubt Victorian ladies in the proper sense of the word.²¹ Football and rugby, which became the next most popular sport in the Eastern Cape after cricket, took root in the 1890s. More unusual was the report, also in the 1890s, of the horse races held by the Queenstown Africans on the local show-grounds. The prosperous Meshach Pelem, a prominent politician, won the one-mile pony plate with his "Little Wonder", and gained a place in another race with another horse.²²

The King Williams Town cricketers gave an indication of the proficiency of black sportsmen when, just after winning the first inter-town tournament, they challenged and beat the local white town team which had recently taken part in the corresponding white inter-town tournament.²³ At the same time the Imvo recorded a victory by the Port Elizabeth African team over the white Cradock side.²⁴ These cases were by no means exceptions. Black teams regularly beat white sides on the special occasions, usually public holidays, that they played together.²⁵

III

The development of sport in the 1880s was an integral part of the wider process of African political mobilization that was occurring in the Eastern Cape at the same time. A whole new framework of inter-related activity based on western models was emerging as people organized at every level. The case of John Tengo Jabavu, the most important black spokesman of his age, illustrates this strikingly. In addition to buying a farm, starting a newspaper and rising to prominence as a political figure, he was a Wesleyan church steward and Templar in the 1880s; he also became chairman of two of the cricket and lawn tennis clubs that were formed in King Williams Town. Moreover, he presented the Jabavu Cup for inter-town competition in cricket. Jabavu was not the exception. The early political leaders were almost invariably also leaders and members of the first sports clubs. Rank here added to their social status.²⁶ Conversely, sport also intruded directly into political life. In 1884, for example, a paper extolling the benefits of sport was read before the pioneering Native Educational Association.²⁷ A few years later, coloured people in Port Elizabeth were excluded from membership of a new black trading co-operative, the African and American Working Men's Union, because they regarded themselves as too "high" to play sport with Africans.

Sport, particularly cricket, served an explicitly political function for the black elite. They were intent on using it as an instrument of "improvement" and assimilation. By enthusiastically playing the most gentlemanly and Victorian of games, they intended to demonstrate their ability to adopt and assimilate European culture and behave like gentlemen - and, by extension, to show their fitness to be accepted as full citizens in Cape society. Through sport they could pay homage to the ideas of "civilization", "progress", "Christianity" and "Empire" that were so precious to the Victorians' call for imperial concepts of "fair play" to be respected; through sport they could assert their own self-conscious class position.²⁸ Given the realities of life at the Cape, it is not surprising that they held these idealized values dear, and that despite the obvious contradictions they glorified things "British" (the ideal) as against things "colonial" (the reality). It followed that when the first English cricket side toured South Africa in 1888/89 the black sportsmen - in an obvious political commentary - cheered them on against the local white sides. In the report on the match in King Williams Town, the *Imvo* noted: "It is singular that the sympathies of the Native spectators were with the English."²⁹

The determination of the new elite to be accepted as fellow Victorians and citizens by whites in colonial society was well reflected when the King Williams Town African team beat their white counterparts. Commenting on the win, despite a lack of experience and facilities, John Tengo Jabavu declared: "It is enough to say that the contest shows that the Native is a rough diamond that needs to be polished to exhibit the same qualities that are to be found in the civilised being, and that he is not to be dismissed as a mere 'schepsel', as it has been the habit of the pioneers to do so hereto."³⁰ Such cricket matches, moreover, were "calculated to make the Europeans and Natives have more mutual trust and confidence than all the coercive and repressive legislation in the world".³¹ On the proposed tour of England, he said it would "also afford our friends there the opportunity of realising the tone that European civilisation gives to the society of Africans".³²

Just as important as the actual games, and just as instructive of the new forms of socialization based on colonial models and the class position of the relatively prosperous educated elite, were the social activities connected with them. Sporting contests on public holidays such as Empire Day and Christmas were almost inevitably followed by social functions. As Willan has noted in his study of Kimberley, these were clearly derived from the Western model, and differed little in this respect from those that catered for white bourgeois society in that town. Often functions were held in the town hall, with the mayor or other dignitaries in attendance. Willan describes one typical such occasion: a splendid dinner was put before the guests, after which a programme of musical entertainment and speeches followed. The latter was started off with a toast to the Queen and ended with a rendering of "God Save the Queen". Musical items included "What can the matter be?" and "We shall meet again". Finally, the proceedings were brought to a close with a

hymn and a benediction.³³ In a similar vein, the King Williams Town cricketers on one occasion held a special farewell reception at a hotel owned by one of its wealthiest members - the first such African enterprise in the colony - before travelling down to Port Elizabeth by sea in the new Dunvegan Castle liner to meet their old rivals. Fellow passengers included Prime Minister Rhodes and his entourage on their way back from Rhodesia.³⁴

One could not wish for a greater reflection of the changing value systems and experiences accompanying colonization than these adventures. They reflected not only the strong desire of the elite to be assimilated into colonial life but also the opening up of class cleavages among Africans. In adopting British cultural values and seeking upward mobility in Cape society, the aspiring black petty bourgeoisie often distanced itself from the mass of Africans who remained within the traditional framework or were becoming proletarianised. Thus, when a Bill was introduced into the Cape Parliament in 1891 to prohibit certain "obscene" tribal amusements, Jabavu's newspaper encouraged Parliament, in the language of the rulers, "not only to pass stringent measures to suppress the [traditional initiation] dances, but to render it unsafe for boys submitting to the barbarous rite to appear in places of public resort, where their presence is calculated to place a bad example to young men endeavouring to cultivate good morals".³⁵

Clearly sport and the related social activities were providing the new elite with a social training ground for participation in the new society, and in typical Victorian fashion it provided both a personal and a political lesson for them. A member of the African Political Association (APO), the earliest coloured political organization, speaking on the topic of a sound mind in a sound body, emphasized just how closely sport and politics were linked:

... great lessons can be learned ... on the cricket and football fields - two forms of sport of which our people are passionately fond. No one who is not punctual, patient, accurate and vigilant, can ever expect to become a consistently good batsman. Both batsmen and spectators know that; and yet do we carry those moral lessons into our private or public life? Patient, of course, we are: but are we punctual and vigilant? Often, a Chairman of a Branch of the APO is half-an-hour late, or the Secretary has not his minutes written up, with the result that the meeting is out of temper for the rest of the evening and adjourns half-an-hour late ... Again, are we as watchful of our public welfare as the batsman is of every ball - even those which the umpire declares to be "wide"? If we were, much of our present trouble would have been forestalled.

Now turn to the football field, and watch a match, say between the (white) Hamiltons and Stellenbosch. The forwards present an invulnerable front. In the scrum they pack into one inseparable whole, and press forward with a regular rhythmic movement and a steady earnestness of purpose. They are not easily broken up. There is perfect union. Again the backs, on whom the eyes of the spectators are concentrated, obtain the ball. They rush down the field, and secure a try. Why? Because there has been a thorough combination. The passing was accurate and well timed; and finally, there was a complete subordination of self.

Our young men are good cricketers, but poor footballers. The reason for this is apparent. In cricket, individual excellence often wins the game: while the result of a football match depends much more upon union and combination and subordination of self, than the strength and agility of any particular player.

And, as on the football field, so in the battle of life. We lack union: we refuse to combine; and self is not sufficiently suppressed in the interest of the people as a whole. These failures are not, fortunately, inherent in us ... There is hope that in future the moral lessons to be learned on the cricket and football fields will be carried into public life for the benefit of the people as a whole.³⁶

The assimilationist ideals of the black elite in the Cape, however, were to become increasingly frustrated, both on the field of sport and in the wider political arena. Though white paternalism allowed for the odd sporting encounter with blacks, social segregation was the norm, and whites had no intention of relaxing the barriers. Some mixing may have occurred in mission teams but clubs remained strictly segregated. This obtained until the mid-twentieth century in other British colonies, such as Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana.³⁷

In the British African and Asian possessions the club served as a symbol, not only of social status but also of political domination, as Jan Morris has pointed out. "There it was developed as an enclave of power and privilege in an alien setting, its members patently different from the un-admitted millions not only in colour and status, but also in place. More than anywhere else, it was the place where the imperialists celebrated their Britishness, authority and imperial lifestyle."³⁸ The social exclusivity of the Victorians in the colonies went hand in hand with the most prejudiced feelings of cultural superiority - even towards other Europeans.

"We are, in fact", wrote A G Leonard comparing Briton and Boer, "the running water of a mighty river of humanity flowing unchecked and irresistible, while they are stagnant slime-covered moss."³⁹ Blacks were even further down the scale. Observing the slaughter of wave after wave of Muslim fighters by the recently invented machine-gun at the Battle of Omdurman, the young Winston Churchill said: "These extraordinary foreign figures ... march up one by one from the darkness of barbarism to the footlights of civilisation ... and their conquerors taking their possessions, forget even their names. Nor will history record such trash."⁴⁰ Echoing these Victorian stereotypes and referring directly to sport, John Buchan declared:

On the lowest interpretation of the word "sport", the high qualities of courage, honour, and self-control are part of the essential equipment, and the mode in which such qualities appear is a reflex of the idiosyncrasies of national character ...

It is worthwhile considering the Boer in sport, for it is there he is seen at his worst. Without tradition of fair play, soured and harassed by want and disaster, his sport became a matter of commerce, and he held no device unworthy ... [The Boers] are not a sporting race ...⁴¹

Yet, despite this snobbery and the long and bitter racial rivalry between English and Afrikaner, and reflecting more the power relations in colonial society and the need for imperial assimilation, the two groups became increasingly integrated on the sports field. By the early twentieth century Afrikaners were becoming influential in South African sport, and old social barriers were falling. Blacks, however, were affected in exactly the opposite way. The paternalistic treatment they sometimes received initially in social and political life grew into a rigid system of segregation in the twentieth century. Highlighted here were the contradictions in the ideologies of sport and imperialism. On the one hand, they epitomized "fair play" and the ideals of the black elite; on the other, they entrenched white racial and class attitudes and domination.

An event which underlined the limits to black advancement in sport in the Cape occurred in 1894 when Krom Hendricks, a coloured cricketer said by English Test players George Rowe and Bonnor Middleton to be one of the fastest bowlers they had encountered, was first included in the final squad of 15 players from which the side for the first South African tour to England was to be selected, but later omitted as a result of "the greatest pressure by those in high authority in the Cape Colony.⁴² Other examples of discrimination also occurred. A few weeks after the above-mentioned match, in which the King Williams Town Africans beat the white side, the Town Council barred Africans from the pavilion they had recently used.⁴³ Local authorities⁴⁴ also made life difficult for black sportsmen wishing to use local facilities.⁴⁴ Structural restraints such as these were increasingly to frustrate the developmental ambitions of black sportsmen.

The hostility on the part of many white colonists to black middle-class advancement and leisure activities was well expressed by the resident magistrate of Adelaide, who recommended, in 1908, that a law should be passed to force Africans to "understand that work is no crime". He said that the educated African's sole idea is to copy the European: "with a white cricket coat and trousers, he is great at tea-meetings, cricket and tennis parties, but he thinks that to do an honest day's work is far beneath his requirements."⁴⁵ The message was clear: blacks should not aspire to social equality; their proper role was to be a labouring class.

IV

The attack on the African elite occurred on a much wider level than merely the sporting one. From the 1880s South African policies became increasingly based on the broad principles of restricting social integration, ensuring an adequate supply of disciplined and inexpensive black labour for white enterprise, and hampering African access to skills, organization and land.⁴⁶ In 1887, for example, the Cape Parliament passed the Voters' Registration Act, which raised the franchise qualifications and excluded Africans living on tribal tenure from the vote. Just under ten thousand African voters launched a large-scale agitation to have the legislation withdrawn, but without success. Thousands were struck off the roll. The Voters' Registration Act (known as Tung'umlomo, the muzzling or sewing up of the mouth) was the first in a long series of measures intended to exclude Africans from the country's political process. In 1892, after the number of African voters had again risen to the old levels, the Franchise and Ballot Act again raised the franchise qualifications. In 1894 Cecil Rhodes piloted through Parliament the Glen Grey Act which aimed to push Africans off the land into the labour market, and excluded those people who were subject to its provisions from the vote. In 1899 the Anglo-Boer War broke out and Africans supported Britain in the hope that the Cape franchise system would be extended to the Orange Free State and Transvaal in the event of a British victory. Their hopes were dashed when the British agreed during the peace settlement to maintain a political status quo which denied blacks any political rights.

The war brought the whole of South Africa under British rule for the first time, and set in motion the process of unification which led to the birth of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Africans protested against the clauses of the peace treaty and demanded the extension of the franchise to Africans in all the colonies in any Union. African political organizations and newspapers similar to those in the Cape had, by now, also been started in Natal, the Transvaal, Orange River Colony, and Basutoland. But, again, the trend was towards the restriction rather than the extension of African political rights in the South African colonies. The constitution of the new Union took away the right of Cape African voters to become Members of Parliament and left blacks in the other provinces without any franchise rights whatsoever. Africans protested strongly against the terms of Union, but to no avail. Even a special delegation of black politicians to London could not persuade the British government to insist on amendments to the colour bar clauses before ratifying the constitution of the new South African state. Britain's economic and strategic interests far outweighed any humanitarian concern it may have felt for Africans, so the imperial government countenanced a constitutional system in South Africa which contradicted its own political democratic ideals.

The explanation for the hard-line direction in South African racial policy and the failure of Britain to protect African rights lay mainly in the political economy. The rapid economic development caused by the mineral discoveries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century was to transform and fundamentally reshape South African life. Ideologies and state structures changed in line with the needs of the developing capitalist economy. Among other things "Cape liberalism" was undermined - a step which had serious consequences for the enfranchised black elite in that colony. The demand from industrial capital for a huge supply of labour for the diamond and gold mining centres, accompanied by a growing need for labour by a Cape economy stimulated by the mining revolution, led to a change in the material base of Cape liberalism and eventually to the acceptance of a segregationist ideology. Whereas the nature of the Cape economy before had been to encourage African development and enfranchisement, thereafter African advancement clashed with the needs of a growing capitalist economy. A free, independent peasantry with access to the political machinery was not conducive to the formation of a cheap, controlled labour force, so the trend in the following years was for the whites to place statutory restrictions on African economic advancement and to restrict African political rights.⁴⁷ The failure of political liberalism in South Africa - symbolized by Union in 1910 - also marked the failure of the moderate, constitutional assimilationist strategy of the black elite, which had been tied to the fortunes of liberalism in the Cape. Instead of gaining for themselves an extended role in a non-racial political system, they were to come under increasing pressure in a system which institutionalized racial discrimination and were eventually to be deprived of the franchise rights they had enjoyed for nearly a century. Having deeply integrated South Africa into the Western capitalist economy, Britain had no intention of forcing political changes that would upset the relations of capital, even if it meant legitimizing institutionalized racism in that country.

V

Besides fundamentally affecting South African life in general, the mineral discoveries directly influenced the subsequent spread and nature of black sport in South Africa. Accompanying the many enthusiasts attracted by diamonds and gold, new games rapidly took root in the interior; national associations were formed in line with the wider process of economic and political integration that was occurring; the massively rich and powerful mining industry, which soon became the backbone of the economy, started to an ever-increasing degree to control the development of black sport. In the industrialized, urbanized, rigidly race-stratified South Africa of the twentieth century, black middle-class pursuits like cricket were to go into decline, to be supplanted by working-class mass sports - soccer, boxing and athletics - and a culture which more accurately reflected the living conditions and status of blacks in South African society.

Among the hundreds of thousands of people who converged on the new mining centres in the late nineteenth century, or started working on the developing infrastructure unfolding magnetically northwards towards Kimberley and the Witwatersrand, were many members of the eastern Cape elite. With their unique educational qualifications they generally occupied the most sought after and best paid jobs available to blacks. They naturally assumed, too, a position of social dominance and leadership amongst the increasingly cosmopolitan communities in the new industrial centres, where members of many different chiefdoms were conglomerating. No less than on the mission stations of the eastern Cape the ideas of "progress" and "civilization" remained important to the elite, who took the lead in starting new choral, church, mutual improvement and sporting associations.⁴⁸ Duncan Makohliso, prominent in eastern Cape politics, for example, started a tennis club in Bloemfontein while working on the construction of the railway line to the north. Also indicative of the eastern Cape influence were the contests inaugurated between teams from that region and rapidly developing centres like Kimberley, Bloemfontein and Johannesburg, from the late 1880s onwards.

After the discovery of diamonds Kimberley soon became one of the most important sporting centres in the country for both black and white. By 1888 (the year in which Griqualand West became the first holders of the Currie Cup competition for white cricketers) cricket organization among Africans there had developed to the extent that a team was sent to play against Port Elizabeth for the first time. Two years later Kimberley participated in the 1890 inter-town tournament against King Williams Town, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth. There were two clubs for the Kimberley Africans, each of which ran several teams. Fixtures between them were big social occasions. Reflecting the cosmopolitan, urban environment, they also played against local Indian, Malay, and coloured teams. These sides, too, were composed of migrants, particularly from Cape Town, and they in turn were in touch with their counterparts elsewhere. In 1890 Kimberley hosted a tournament of Malay sides, following a similar tournament the year before in Cape Town. In order to regulate the contests between the various local clubs, a Griqualand West Coloured Cricket Union, representing all black cricketers in the area, was formed in 1892. Two years later a similar regional rugby board was formed, with cricket personalities like Isaiah Bud Mbelle, an eastern Cape African, prominent.

Soon Kimberley-based sportsmen were initiating moves to co-ordinate competition on a national level in the same way as white sportsmen. In 1897 the South African Coloured Rugby Board was formed in the city, after Bud Mbelle, who became the secretary, had persuaded Cecil Rhodes, the mining magnate and arch-imperialist, to donate a trophy, the Rhodes Cup, for inter-provincial competition, along the lines of the newly instituted Currie Cup.⁵⁰ Following this up, Bud Mbelle, on behalf of the Griqualand West Coloured Cricket Union, approached Sir David Harris of de Beers diamond company for a similar trophy for cricket.⁵¹ The Union duly received a silver cup worth one hundred guineas, called the Barnato Memorial Trophy, in honour of another mining magnate. The new Barnato Trophy was contested for the first time at a tournament in Port Elizabeth in December 1898.⁵² But for some reason cricket did not follow rugby in forming a national body at this time, and another Barnato tournament was not held for several years. This was due to the outbreak, in October 1899, of the Anglo-Boer War, which lasted for almost three years. However, soon after the war, a South African Coloured Cricket Board (SACCB) was formed and the Barnato tournaments were resumed. Black cricketers of all shades were catered for under this arrangement for the next two decades.⁵³

The initiatives in the formation of clubs, regional associations and competitions had come from the black elite themselves, but, as the presentation of the Rhodes and Barnato trophies indicated, the mining industry began to play an increasing role in the development of black sport. It came to see sport as an important means of social control, not only helping to accommodate and channel the social aspirations and needs of the small petty bourgeois elite but also to ensure discipline and productivity among the mass of non-literate, menial workers. Under the compound system, hundreds of thousands of black male workers came to be housed in harsh, strictly controlled conditions. To deflect their attention away from the beer-drinking, prostitution and faction fighting (and, later, also political discontent) that were common in the harsh mining environments, management initiated organized recreation. The rationale behind this was clearly expressed by a Rhodesian official:

For a moment let us consider what it was that made the (pre-war) British proletariat contented, although working, in many cases, in circumstances which were scarcely more conducive to a sustained interest in their actual labours than are those in which mine boys work here. It was largely sport - or what the workman considered sport. For example, the hands old and young in every community were enthusiastic 'supporters' of some local football team whose Saturday afternoon matches furnished a topic of interest for the remainder of the week. Here the labourers' principal recreations are connected with beer and women, leading frequently to the Police Court and the risk of being smitten with one or other of the venereal diseases which are so insidiously sapping the strength of the native

population. Those who employ and those who control native mine labour should, for a double reason, try to influence the native to change in this respect. Sporting enthusiasm is not the ideal substitute for present conditions but it would be a step forward, and one, I am sure, not difficult to bring about. The native is intensely imitative, often vain, and always clannish, and all these are qualities which would further 'sport' - a parochial spirit of sport if you like - but one which would forge ties of interest and esprit de corps between the labourer and his work-place. A patch of ground a set of goal-posts and a football would not figure largely in the expenditure of a big mine.⁵⁴

In the twentieth century, recreation facilities became a common feature on the mines, with management, in addition, instrumental in initiating and sponsoring many competitions on a wider community level. In this way the basis of sport among black people was widened and ultimately black sports became working class in nature. The petty bourgeoisie, which often occupied an intermediary position between management and the mass of workers on the mines, clung to its shrinking base and upper middle-class games like cricket and tennis; but they no longer reflected the material context and became more elitist in nature, going into decline instead of expanding, and exacerbating class differences. The mines and the system of social control operating there revealed much about the underlying processes at work in South African society.

VI

By the beginning of the twentieth century, then, British sports were being played by the indigenous people throughout South Africa, even as far afield as Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where the South African settlers who had accompanied the conquering British pioneer column in the 1890s were taking the lead.⁵⁵ The first Barnato cricket tournament reflected the increasing spread of the game. Teams from Kimberley (Griqualand West), Cape Town (Western Province), East London, King Williams Town (Southern Border), Port Elizabeth, and Queenstown participated, and a side from Johannesburg was at one stage expected to take part but did not. The "Moslems" from Western Province won the trophy after recovering in one of their matches to beat Southern Border, who had made them follow-on after a first innings collapse. In its reports on the tournament, the Imvo Zabantsundu newspaper confirmed that the Cape men were by far the most accomplished players.⁵⁶

Probably closer to white society than anywhere else in South Africa in this cosmopolitan and, until recently, racially mixed city, the so-called Malay and coloured people of Cape Town became knowledgeable and proficient sports followers at an early stage. Hattersly, for example, writes of gay scenes at the horse races as early as the 1820s, where "... Malays and Negroes mingled with whites, all crowding and elbowing, eager to get a sight of the momentous event".⁵⁷ The standard of cricket was such that a Malay team was actually given a fixture against W W Read's 1891/92 English touring side. They lost by ten wickets, but Krom Hendricks took four wickets for 50 runs in 25 overs and L Samoodien hit 55, one of only two South Africans to reach 50 on the tour.⁵⁸ In 1894, Hendricks was included as a fast bowler in the final squad of fifteen for the first tour to England by a South African side, but, as already indicated, he was later omitted as a result of political pressure. Often black players took part in the practice sessions of local white clubs and visiting teams. In his book on the 1905/06 MCC tour, Sir Pelham Warner described how, at practice, C J Nicholls, "a young Malay with a fast left-hand action hit my middle stump nearly every other ball".⁵⁹ The Cape people were also keen spectators at the famous Newlands cricket ground, starting a long tradition of enthusiastic support for the game there.⁶⁰ On an organizational level clubs, unions and leagues, such as the Bailey Shield Competition, had been started by 1900.⁶¹

Even in the Afrikaner republics in the north - the then Orange Free State and South African Republic (Transvaal) - where a rigid system of social and political segregation existed, blacks were playing the Englishman's game of cricket by the late nineteenth century. In contrast to the Cape, strong deterrent laws forbade blacks in the Transvaal from walking on the same pavements as whites, and even from watching white sporting contests⁶², but these were not enough to stop them from imitating and adopting the hegemonic cultural values and games. Nor were the sometimes disapproving attitudes of certain continental missionaries, perhaps not as convinced of the beneficial attitudes of British games on Africans as their English counterparts in the south.⁶³ Reports of cricket in the republics go back to at least 1890. In that year the Potchefstroom Native Cricket Club played against the Kroonstad club in the last-mentioned town. Because of its central situation, Kroonstad was a popular venue for contests between teams from the two republics. Details also appear in the Imvo Zabantsundu newspaper in the 1890s of games between teams from Bloemfontein and Rouxville in the southern Orange Free State and the Cape counterparts in the towns just across the Orange River, as well as between sides from Johannesburg and the Cape. In 1896 the Indian cricketers in Johannesburg established the Transvaal Indian Cricket Union, and two years later the Africans formed a similar regional body; the secretary, predictably, was an eastern Cape man who had joined the influx to the Rand. In 1904 Transvaal became an affiliate of the SACCB and started participating in the Barnato tournaments.⁶⁴ In an exception to the rule in the Orange Free State, mixed contests sometimes took place at the Baralong enclave of Thaba Nchu between the local team - drawn from a small, prosperous, highly politicized, land-owning elite⁶⁵ - and the neighbouring white cricketers, possibly missionaries and British soldiers who had been granted land in the area after the Anglo-Boer War. Commenting on these matches, which the Africans won more than once, a newspaper financed by the local elite commented that whites held themselves socially aloof in order to command respect from blacks but "the fact is no Natives respect their European neighbours as much as the Baralongs at Thaba Nchu ... In other parts, where the whites will not play them the coloureds boast that the whites are afraid of them".⁶⁶

Despite the fact that Natal was a British colony, cricket did not get going there among the indigenous Zulu people in the same way as among the Xhosa in the Cape. The odd cricket reports appear in the early Inkanyiso lase Natal (Light of Natal) and Ilanga lase Natal (Sun of Natal) newspapers, but it was football that took the fancy in that colony from the start. This was largely due to the influence of the American Board Mission which dominated the Natal mission field. Cricket became, instead, the game of the Indian merchant and trading class with whom Gandhi, who lived in South Africa⁶⁷ for 20 years after completing his studies in England, was closely associated. In 1896 they formed the Durban and District Cricket Union. By 1913, when a Natal side played in the Barnato tournament, they had linked up with black cricketers in the rest of the country. The names of the players - Sigamoney, Soobriel, Kaisovaloo, Christopher, Subban, Bhugwan, etc - confirmed where the interest in cricket was centred in that region.⁶⁸

Thus, by the time of Union in 1910, cricket was being played by black people throughout South Africa, the nature of the game in the various areas having been shaped by patterns in South Africa's historical development. In this early period the development of black cricket also closely followed that of white cricket in many respects: from its introduction into schools, to the formation of clubs, to the introduction of inter-town competitions, leagues and provincial competitions through to the formation of a national controlling body. As we have seen, enthusiasm and playing standards in the Cape often matched those of Europeans. The yawning disparity was to develop in the twentieth century as racism, political oppression and economic exploitation intensified and became institutionalized in the modern South African state, leading to the decline of the black (especially African) petty bourgeoisie, and to the consequent frustration of their middle-class ideals.

- 1 When writing on South Africa one has to contend with the problem of racial terminology. "African" refers to the country's indigenous Bantu-language-speaking inhabitants. "Black" is used to describe African, Asian and so-called "Coloured" people collectively; the term has become popular as a positive means of expressing solidarity between all those people not genetically classified as "white" and subjected to discrimination under South African race laws. Words that now give offence (for example, Kaffir, Native, Boer) appear in the text only in direct quotations.
- 2 R Archer and A Bouillon, The South African Game: sport and racism (London, 1982), pp 8-9.
- 3 For details of the processes of incorporation and political mobilization, see A Odendaal, Black Protest Politics in South Africa to 1912 (M J Totowa, 1984), and A Odendaal, "African Political Mobilization in the Eastern Cape, 1880-1910" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 1984).
- 4 K A P Sandiford, "Cricket and the Victorian Society", Journal of Social History, Winter 1983, 303.
- 5 G F Hofmeyr, "King Williams Town and the Xhosa, 1854-1921: the role of a frontier capital during the high commissionership of Sir George Grey" (unpublished MA dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1981), pp 58-9.
- 6 A F Hattersley (ed), John Sheddon Dobie South African Journal, 1862-6, Van Riebeeck Society, first series, No 26 (Cape Town, 1945), 46.
- 7 Archer and Bouillon, op. cit., p 26
- 8 R H W Shepherd, Lovedale South Africa. The Story of a Century 1841-1941 (Lovedale, 1940), p 508. For more details on the missionary institutions, see J Hodgson, "Zonnebloem and Cape Town, 1858-1870" (paper delivered at Cape Town History Conference, University of Cape Town, 1981).
- 9 A F Hattersley, An Illustrated Social History of South Africa (Cape Town, 1969), p 221.
- 10 J Hodgson, "A History of Zonnebloem College 1858-1870. A Study of Church and Society" (unpublished MA thesis, University of Cape Town, 1975). I am grateful to Janet Hodgson for this and several other references to sport in this period.
- 11 The Kaffir Express, 1 December 1870, p 4.
- 12 Cape Archives, NA 467, Ecclesiastical 1875-1890, J Buchanan to C Brownlee, 21 June 1877.
- 13 "Iziqingata nexiqingata", Imvo Zabantsundu, 10 June 1897.
- 14 Archer and Bouillon, op. cit., pp 22-24.
- 15 Paper read by Elijah Makiwano to the United Missionary Conference, Imvo Zabantsundu, 19 July 1888.
- 16 "Ixesha le bhola, 1889", Imvo Zabantsundu, 17 October 1889.
- 17 Quoted in Imvo Zabantsundu, 22 December 1884.
- 18 For the early history of cricket in South Africa, see L Duffus, M Owen Smith, and A Odendaal, "South Africa" in E W Swanton (ed), Barclays World of Cricket: the game from A-Z (London, 1980), pp 103-11.
- 19 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 3 November 1884. See also "Notes on current events", Imvo Zabantsundu, 4 October 1888, and "Correspondence", Imvo Zabantsundu, 11 October, 18 October, and 20 December 1888.

- 20 "Ibala labadlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 2 July 1896.
- 21 "Izimiselo ze Kroki", Isigidimi sama Xhosa, 16 June 1884.
- 22 Odendaal, "African Political Mobilisation", pp 297-98.
- 23 "Amangesi nabantsundu", Imvo Zabantsundu, 2 March 1885.
- 24 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 2 March 1885.
- 25 See, for example, editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 16 February 1885; "Ibola e Komani, Imvo Zabantsundu, 9 December 1885; "Ibala laba dlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 21 December 1887.
- 26 Odendaal, "African Political Mobilisation", pp 299-300. For the development of rugby in the area, see J B Peires, "Facta non verba: towards a history of black rugby in the Eastern Cape" (unpublished paper, University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1981).
- 27 "Umanyano nge mfundo", Isigidimi Sama Xhosa, 1 February 1884.
- 28 On this, see B Willan, "An African in Kimberley: Sol T Plaatje, 1894-8" in S Marks and R Rathbone (eds), Industrialisation and Social Change in South Africa. African Class Formation, Culture and Consciousness, 1870-1930 (London, 1982), pp 250-52.
- 29 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 28 February 1889.
- 30 "Natives and Cricket", Imvo Zabantsundu, 23 March 1885.
- 31 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 9 March 1885.
- 32 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 3 November 1884.
- 33 Willan, op. cit., pp 248-49.
- 34 "Ibala labadlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 21 January 1897.
- 35 "Obscene Practices", Imvo Zabantsundu, 30 July 1891.
- 36 "A sound mind in a sound body", APO, 15 January 1910.
- 37 D Kelley, "A Historical Survey of East African Cricket", The Cricket Quarterly II (196), 4-10, and J Ferguson, "Cricket in Nigeria", The Cricket Quarterly IV (1966), 225, 233-38.
- 38 J Morris, The Spectacle of Empire: Style, Effect and the Pax Britannica (London, 1982), chapter 8.
- 39 Quoted in R Ross (ed), Racism and Colonialism (Leiden, 1982), p 121.
- 40 Quoted in J P McKay, B D Hill and J Buckler (eds), A History of Western Society II: from absolutism to the present (Boston, 1983), p 930.
- 41 Quoted in Archer and Bouillon, op. cit., p 18.
- 42 A Odendaal, Cricket in Isolation: the politics of race and cricket in South Africa (Cape Town, 1977), p 325.
- 43 Editorial notes, Imvo Zabantsundu, 30 March 1885.
- 44 For example, "An Oppressive Municipality", Imvo Zabantsundu, 25 November 1897; Cape Archives 3/KWT, 4/1/95; Memorandum from town clerk to borough ranger and forester, King Williams Town, 6.9.1911; Cape Archives, NA 636, file No 2207, statement by J Jones re cricketers ejected from native location, Uitvlugt, 9.1.1904.

- 45 G 19-1909 Blue Book on Native Affairs 1908, p 25.
- 46 For an historical overview, see A Odendaal, "History is on Our Side: historical perspectives on constitutional change and African responses in South Africa" (paper No 46, conference on economic development and racial domination, University of the Western Cape, October 1984).
- 47 On this, see S Marks and A Atmore (eds), Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa (London, 1980), pp 27, 246-74; and Marks and Rathbone (eds), op. cit., pp 27-28.
- 48 For a detailed discussion of the social life and activities of the black elite in Kimberley, see Willan, op. cit., Chapter 9; and B Willan, Sol Plaatje: a biography (London and Johannesburg, 1984), Chapter 2.
- 49 "Ibala labadlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 18 January 1888.
- 50 "Ibala labadlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 26 August 1897 and 9 December 1897; "A Rhodes Cup", Imvo Zabantsundu, 29 September 1897; "SA Coloured Rugby Football", Imvo Zabantsundu, 2 December 1897.
- 51 "A Barnato Trophy", and "The Barnato Memorial Trophy", Imvo Zabantsundu, 2 December 1897.
- 52 "'Imvo' Special Wires" and "Ukuzigcobisa", Imvo Zabantsundu, 12 January 1899.
- 53 Odendaal, Cricket in Isolation, p 329.
- 54 C van Onselen, Chibaro: African mine labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1933 (Johannesburg, 1976), pp 190-91.
- 55 See, for example, "Kwa Mzilikazi", Imvo Zabantsundu, 4 September 1899.
- 56 "'Imvo' Special Wires", Imvo Zabantsundu, 12 January 1899.
- 57 Hattersley, Social History, p 115.
- 58 Odendaal, Cricket in Isolation, p 325.
- 59 P F Warner, The MCC in South Africa (Cape Town, 1906), p 2.
- 60 See, for example, P F Warner, Cricket in Many Climes (London, 1900), p 192.
- 61 R E van der Ross, "The Political and Social History of the Cape Coloured People, 1880-1970", part 3 (unpublished manuscript), p 626.
- 62 Indian Opinion, 6 March 1909, p 104. These and similar laws remained in force when the Transvaal became a British colony after the Anglo-Boer War.
- 63 See Berliner Missionsberichte, 1894, p 291. In 1893, Rev Kohler of the Berline Missionary Society at Potchefstroom forbade his black congregation to participate in a cricket match at neighbouring Klerksdorp because he feared that they might get out of control.
- 64 A Odendaal, Cricket in Isolation, pp 307, 328-29; "Ukuzigcobisa", Imvo Zabantsundu, 18 June 1898; "Ibala labadlali", Imvo Zabantsundu, 6 February 1890 and 7 January 1897.
- 65 On the unique history of this area and the political activities and social composition of the population, see C Murray, "Dispossession and Relocation in the Thaba Nchu District: a proposal for a regional study in the eastern OFS" (University of Cape Town, Centre for African Studies, Africa seminar, 16 September 1981); and A Odendaal, Black Protest Politics, pp 21, 108-09, 158, 265-66.

- 66 "Colour and Sports", Tsala ea Batho, 19 August 1911.
- 67 On the social stratification within the Indian community at this time, see M Swan, Gandhi: the South African Experience (Johannesburg, 1985).
- 68 Van der Ross, op. cit., p 624.