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STRUCTURE AND EXPERIENCE IN THE MAKING OF APARTHEID

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Introduction¹

Since the 1920s, the South African state's policy of urban segregation has forced black people to live in specially racially demarcated areas. For the legislators the underlying effect was to make black people an invisible feature of the urban areas, their existence in the towns permitted only insofar as they were of use to the white man's needs. Rather than succumbing to the control of the dominant culture, black people have created their own, distinctly urban identity. An aspect of popular culture is how different responses to the same social, material and environmental conditions are expressed, given the specific social and historical conditions.² The development of football in South Africa, as an expression of popular culture, gives an important indication of how black people expressed their conditions of urbanisation in the newly created urban townships in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

This discussion focuses on the development of football in the township of Sharpeville. Sharpeville was built in 1942 as a result of severe overcrowding in Top Location, the township which originally housed black people in Vereeniging, and people were forcibly moved there over the next two decades.³ Sharpeville lies in the magisterial district of Vereeniging, some five kilometres to the west of the central business district, just over 70 kilometres south of Johannesburg. Sharpeville became the subject of world-wide attention when police shot dead sixty seven demonstrators, wounding a further 186, during an anti-pass demonstration, on March 21, 1960.

A number of areas will be examined in this paper. The first is the extent to which football teams in Sharpeville are rooted in and emerged from the neighbourhoods where they began, and the extent to which neighbourhood rivalry developed out of the enforced living areas. The paper shows how support for football teams in Sharpeville was rooted very much in the areas from which they emerged. The paper shows how this trend began to change in the 1970s as the advent of professional football and mass media changed the nature of traditional support for football teams.

The second area to be examined is that of the space allowed by separate development for African people to control, to some extent, the development of organised football among themselves. Importantly, it began a tradition of patrons or 'big men' who assumed positions of control right from club level up to the highest federations. As a result the history of black football is seen in terms of personalities and prestige, the people in the positions of power themselves.

In Sharpeville this has resulted in a system of patronage where 'big men' are able to grant people favours in return for their allegiance, thereby enhancing their prestige and status within

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the township community. Impossible in other spheres, football became an avenue where black people could achieve status and prestige as well as a recognition based on excellence in sport, at a time when the imposed culture preferred to regard them as invisible.

Football in Sharpeville

Football is clearly the most popular sport played and supported in Sharpeville. During my research there (1986-9) I came across over thirty football clubs, which excludes the many different teams from these clubs playing in local and national divisions and leagues. The majority of male interviewees in Sharpeville were playing or had played football at some point during their lives. (N = 56) Conversely, while not playing the game, female interviewees indicated a strong support for football teams and formed a significant part of any supporting crowd at football matches.

Football in the Vaal had its roots in "Top Location" - the original black settlement area in Vereeniging. I cannot pin-point accurately when football actually began there although it can be surmised that if Top Location was established in 1912, then football had its beginnings soon after, following Walvin's comment that "... no other sport lent itself so easily and cheaply to the varying conditions of urban life."⁶ Most of my informants who lived in Top Location indicate that they had played football for a variety of teams, such as the Red Pirates, which, according to shebeen owner and football enthusiast, Mohale Mokopane, was a very good and popular team during the 1930's.⁶

Football in Sharpeville began in much the same way Mbulelo Vizikhungo Mzamane describes in his book The Children of Soweto. "In it he describes how children in the townships begin playing football by forming street teams which play against other street teams. According to Sharpeville resident and ex-president of the South African National Football Association (SANFA), George Thabe, this is a general township trend and indeed, many of the top clubs in the country emerged from the street teams."⁷

Street matches are played in the street if it is wide enough or in any open space, and any round object is used as a ball "... until you get to a tennis ball."⁸ If you owned a tennis ball, you were very much in demand by the other children in the street. Steve Montjane, writing for Bona magazine, describes:

Perhaps one in twenty boys had a ball in his pocket and that would be guarded with flying fists at the slightest provocation. You had to be nice to the boy who owned the ball. For, when you find a group of chaps struggling for possession in our dusty streets, the first question was: Whose ball is it? If it belonged to someone you had wronged before or who just did not like the look of you, he would

not allow you to play. The man with the tennis ball was the boss for the day. We all had to nurse him. Those in his side had to play to him all the time. His opposition had to be careful in tackles. This because the owner of the ball could send one off at will without any 'good' reason. Sometimes a hot game would be ended by a mere laugh. If the owner of the ball is in possession, tries to kick the ball, misses it nobody should laugh. Otherwise he would just pocket his ball and walk off.²

Even the street matches had a prize: the teams played for money - from a penny through to thrupence. The money was lodged with a trusted spectator and the match began. The winner was the first team to score two goals before the other team scored, or the first team to go two goals ahead. Thus, according to Thabe, "if the teams were well-matched, the game could go on for a couple of weeks."¹⁰

Further there was no official referee for the matches:

Everyone was the referee. Everyone would be shouting at the same time. Handball! Handball!"

After playing a couple of times, the best players would form a strong team to represent the area, and then start challenging other areas. According to Thabe, this was a natural process, the best players in a couple of streets would naturally come together in order to challenge the other areas. Street rivalry was such as to create problems for youngsters in the townships, even as far as walking to the shops was concerned:

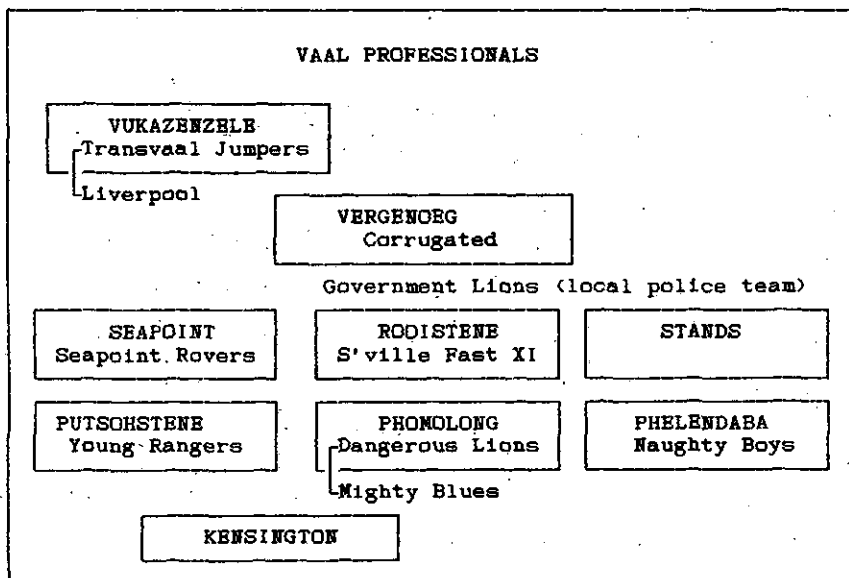
My mother never could understand why sometimes if she sent for me, I stayed away so long. I had to reconnoitre. Keep my eyes open, for if one of the enemy spied me entering their street, he would give the signal. At this, boys would appear from all over and fill the street in no time. I could always cope with one, but as soon as the number finishes the hand, there would be only one course of action - to turn the heels inside out - run like mad.¹²

Suttles (1969) has noted that teenagers in Chicago slums joined gangs - what Suttles refers to as 'street corner groups' - whose identity was established by the territory they patrolled.¹³ Whyte (1943), also considering Chicago, demonstrates how teenagers and young adults are drawn to an area - a street corner - by the leader of their gang and "... by the location of their crap game, right next to 'the corner'."¹⁴ The corner became the gang's point of reference, which they tenaciously defended.¹⁵ For both Whyte and Suttles, territory is determined by the area a gang claims and then defends. In Sharpeville, as with other townships in South Africa, territory is pre-determined and therefore fixed by the authorities through forced removals.

Football Clubs in Sharpeville were formed out of street and area teams, and thus have their roots deeply entrenched in the original street teams. According to Thabe it is very unusual for a player to come from a different area, and when this does occur the player risks becoming unpopular with supporters. This was confirmed by Molotsi Molefe, one of the founders of Sharpeville's most successful professional team, the Vaal Professionals, and who also played for the Dangerous Lions of Sharpeville:

[Ex national lightweight boxing champion, John] Mtinkulu ... where he was doing his training sessions, that's what you would normally term an area for Dangerous Lions (see diagram below) and if you live in that area, it's assumed that you will play for Dangerous Lions, although you do get exceptions, but in the normal run of things (that was the pattern). So I happened to be born and bred there. Boxing wise, it was the same. So it was just a normal thing.¹²

The main teams in Sharpeville according to the different areas are illustrated below:



AREAS OR SUBURBS OF SHARPEVILLE WITH CORRESPONDING FOOTBALL TEAMS.
(representing actual geography of Sharpeville)

Many of the older, more established sides, such as the Transvaal Jumpers, the Transvaal X-20s, Happy Hearts and Dangerous Lions were formed in Top Location before or during the removal to Sharpeville. Of these the most famous is probably the Transvaal Jumpers regarded in the black football world as one of the most formidable teams in the early days of football in South Africa.

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The Transvaal Jumpers

The Transvaal Jumpers Football Club was formed in 1933 by Mr C J J "Sam" Ngwenya.¹⁸ The players came from similar backgrounds to those of the popular jazz band, the Sharpetown Swingsters. Some were schooled at the Methodist School in Top Location and others went to either the Dutch Reformed School or the Anglican School there.¹⁹ The team reached its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Its success was largely due to the Methodist School Football Club team. In 1946 all but three players in the Transvaal Jumpers side were from the Methodist School team. Elliot "Do what you like" Mpepo²⁰ was in the Methodist School team when they joined Transvaal Jumpers. He told me that they knew they were very good and had been looking for a club to join, and decided on Transvaal Jumpers.²¹

In 1943 the side entered the local 'A' division. Teams such as Happy Hearts, Lucky Letts and Dangerous Lions were the sides to beat in that division, and Transvaal Jumpers won the division that year after a draw in the final match with Dangerous Lions.²² By 1947, according to another player at the time, Philip "Concrete Mixer" Ramakhoase, "... the Transvaal Jumpers F.C. were invincible and clicked like a well-oiled machine."²³ The Transvaal Jumpers were so good that they soon ran out of opposition in Vereeniging. They resorted to playing at the Wemmer Football Ground in Johannesburg and played against teams affiliated to the Johannesburg Bantu Football Association (JBFA). Here they played against teams such as Orlando Pirates Football Club, Naughty Boys Football Club and Moroka Swallows Football Club.²⁴ As is the case today, teams like Orlando Pirates were regarded as the sides to beat. According to "Mondo" Tlhopane, the team trained extra hard for such games:

When facing teams like Orlando Pirates, we players of the Transvaal Jumpers used to take 'road work' from Topville to Redan [a distance of about 8km]²⁵

But as far as actual football training was concerned, there was no time to train. Most players were employed in the industries in Vereeniging, and the lack of electricity - Sharpeville only received electricity in the early 1980s - meant that after work football players could not train there being insufficient light, while on weekends and days off work, matches were played. So the

training programme involved by-and-large long distance running. Many football players joined boxing clubs and trained with the boxers in order to get fit:

As it is known, most Jumpers players played also boxing. The reason for this is that they wanted to keep fit, and besides, interest in sport.²⁶

Elliot Mpepo joined Central Boys Boxing Club:

I used to join a boxing club as training. The training was held at Hostel number six [in Sharpeville].²⁷

Apart from playing in Johannesburg, the Transvaal Jumpers travelled fairly extensively, as 'Do what you like' Mpepo tells:

We went to Swaziland, Bloemfontein, Randfontein, Heilbron. In Heilbron we were beaten and we gave them a return match and we won 6-1. I scored three goals from the far corner.²⁸

The team was highly successful and as a result became widely known:

From the Far Eastern Transvaal to the West Rand and from Pretoria to Bloemfontein, the name Transvaal Jumpers F.C. spelt fear to football clubs and District Associations alike.²⁹

According to George Thabe, the Transvaal Jumpers were the "terror in the whole of the Transvaal."³⁰

The removal from Top Location to Sharpeville between 1942 and 1959, disrupted the team only insofar as distance was concerned. While the president, Ngwenya, was still in Top Location, the players who had already moved to Sharpeville had to cycle back to Top Location to play, a distance of about five kilometres.³¹ When Ngwenya was moved to Sharpeville in the mid-1950s, the club itself moved to Sharpeville. This last point is important in understanding how football teams operate in Sharpeville, and probably in other townships in South Africa (see below p.13 section on 'patron-managers').

Transvaal Fast XI: Boxing takes on Football

While footballers joined boxing clubs to get fit, the reverse was also the case. Boxers joined football clubs to keep fit and also to simply enjoy sport, or as boxer Joe Mabena told me, more so for entertainment purposes, since during the 1950s and 1960s little other entertainment existed. As a result, boxers Joe Mabena, Sexton Mabena and others formed one of the first football clubs in the new township of Sharpeville, during the 1950s. This was the Transvaal Fast XI:

We formed Transvaal Fast XI, we formed it! We were boxers. We find that we didn't have many interesting things to do, entertainment, you know, then we say 'let's play football', then we formed that Fast XI.³²

Like the Transvaal Jumpers in the 1940s, the Transvaal Fast XI was successful in the 1950s, albeit not as successful:

What makes Transvaal Fast XI to be a better side during that time is because most of the clubs didn't train, they used to play football only part-time. But now we used to train because Fast XI used to have all the players as boxers and we were training, all of them. Because Sexton [Mabenal] was playing, I was playing, [Carlton] Monnakgotla was playing, Lefty Masondo was playing ... they were all boxers. All of us were boxers. We were just training for boxing, not training for football. We were not so much interested in football. What makes us good is that we were fit all the time.³³

It appears that they were one of the first teams to be formed in the newly-built Sharpeville township:

By that time when we started to play here, Top Location was still existing. All the [main] sides, they were Top Location - Dangerous Lions, Transvaal Jumpers, Lucky Letts, Happy Hearts. Then we form our team here. Then after Top Location was all demolished, then they came this side and started to play together.³⁴

Transvaal Jumpers' player, Elliot Mpapo confirms this. He was moved to Sharpeville from Top Location in the late 1950s:

When I came here [Sharpeville] the only team was Fast XI, in Rooiistene [see diagram above p.41].³⁵

Professional football: Corrugated XI

It was this group of boxers who were also involved in Sharpeville's first truly professional football side, Corrugated XI.³⁶ The late 1950's saw the introduction of professional football to black teams. In 1959, black players and spectators alike were calling for professional football to be introduced, following the decision of the white Football Association of South Africa to create its own professional league, the National Football League:

...some of Transvaal's white clubs have taken an exciting decision to play professional league which they hope will attract customers ... and bring them a big new following ... Why shouldn't WE start our own professional inter-racial Football League? ... We've asked these questions the past few weeks, and, from clubmen and sports officials, the answer every time has been "Yes, let's try."³⁷

Late in 1959, the South African Football Federation (SAFA), which represented one of the first attempts to unify a sport across the three racially divided communities, black, Indian and 'coloured', formed a professional wing, the S.A. Football Federation Professional League (SASF-PL).³⁸ Orlando Pirates and Moroka

Swallows were both members of this league when it started. Threatened by sponsorship rivalry, many whites were anxious to destroy or weaken it. They used pressure to deny the SASF-PL use of municipal fields and facilities. As the SASF-PL weakened, through the help of the municipalities, rival of SAFA, the South African Bantu Football Association - a body more inclined to bow to follow the instructions of FASA - was revived and out of it the National Professional Football League (NPSL) was formed. The two leagues operated in opposition to each other until the SASF-PL finally collapsed completely in 1969.³⁹

In 1962, a splinter of the Transvaal Fast XI Football Club of Sharpeville, Corrugated Fast XI, applied to join the second division of the SASF-PL.⁴⁰ Joe Mabena explained why they decided to turn professional:

... we were so very successful, winning, winning, winning all the time, our side here, going to [the] Free State, going to such places, everywhere in Johannesburg we were winning. Although it was a small amount we were still winning money, and then we decided we want to have a share. We want to have some money to be paid [to us]. Then the president [of the club] said, "no", Mr Nyembe say, "no you can't get paid, you are not professionals." We said, "we are doing [winning] a lot of money, we want to have something." Then we decided to break away and form Corrugated Fast XI. And then we choose Dr Mokhesi as our president.⁴¹

According to Joe Mabena, it was his idea to call the team Corrugated Fast XI:

... When I was still in Johannesburg, I used to like Moroka Swallows, and Moroka Swallows they used to have a second division side by the name of Corrugated XI ... I liked the name Corrugated, then I say we are Corrugated Fast XI.⁴²

Corrugated remained in the league until 1969 and were only moderately successful never winning promotion to the first division. But it was out of Corrugated XI that Sharpeville's most successful professional football team emerged, the Vaal Professionals. Indeed, it was the Vaal Professionals who brought Sharpeville its first taste of real success in the football world. The Vaal Professionals were formed out of a need, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, for Sharpeville football players, administrators and supporters alike, to produce a side to match the 'big five' teams from Soweto, Kaiser Chiefs, Orlando Pirates, Moroka Swallows and Moroka Big XV. As George Thabe explains:

When we [SABFA] formed the NPSL, Vereeniging had a status [in SABFA] and had to provide a team in the first division. There were strong teams, for example, Moroka Swallows. The weaker areas had district sides, for example, Benoni United and Katlehong United. Here [in Sharpeville] we were looking for a club to play first division. Corrugated were coming back to the Association [Southern Transvaal Bantu Football

Association] because they had failed to make the grade in the SASF. The first Vereeniging side in the NPFL had been a pick side - Vereeniging United or Sharpeville United - with different players every weekend. But there was friction with local clubs to provide the best players, so the Vaal Professionals was formed out of Corrugated, and would then be a completely separate professional club. Various clubs surrendered their players. Officials from various clubs were seconded to run the club.⁴³

Molotsi Molefe was one of the officials seconded to run the Vaal Professionals. The brother of Sharpetown Swingsters' trombonist, Joseph Molefe, Molefe played football for the Dangerous Lions in the 1960s. Dr Mokhesi, the patron and sponsor of Corrugated was asked to do the same for the Vaal Professionals. Molefe went about organising first the officials to run the club, and then players:

I spoke to Dr Mokhesi who allowed me to pick a few fellows. I picked about ten fellows belonging to different clubs ... Those were pseudo-directors and that's how it got started. For instance I belonged to a team called Dangerous Lions. One belonged to [Transvaal] Jumpers. One belonged to Basutholand Stars, and so on and so forth. That sort of made the 'cream' of Sharpeville clubs.⁴⁴

The best players were selected from both Sharpeville teams as well as from the surrounding townships. For example, one of the best players was Johannes Modise from the Evaton Old Dutch Boys. But clubs gave their players freely, such was the desire amongst them to put together a side strong enough to challenge the Soweto teams. The success of the side was immediate:

The Vaal Professionals was a new creation, a special creation. There was universal support from the whole township because it did not come from a certain area. It commanded support because it was considered to be strongly the Vaal team.⁴⁵

Residents were very much in favour of a strong Sharpeville side that would beat the Soweto sides. Sharpeville resident, Sam Ntje, told me that the community supported the idea of getting the best players from the Vaal to make a "great team" and to "beat the Soweto sides".⁴⁶

The Vaal Professionals were an immediate success, as this newspaper report in December, 1970 indicates:

All over the country [football] fans will be treated to good football today. Top-drawer stuff will be seen at the Orlando Stadium when [Moroka] Big XV try to break giant-killing Vaal Professionals ... Professionals have an unbelievable record. They beat Witbank Black Aces and everybody said it was a

home decision. They went on to topple PUBS (Pretoria Buccaneers) and everybody started looking. And only last Saturday they stopped Kaiser Chiefs.⁴⁷

The Vaal Professionals enabled Sharpeville residents to recapture the sense of pride they had felt when, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, Sharpeville boxers held five national black association boxing titles, over half the possible titles. Not surprisingly, when the Vaal Professionals played on their home ground, the Sharpeville Stadium, the local partisan support was often quite overwhelming:

The Orlando Pirates - Vaal Professionals match was abandoned five minutes before time when BUCS (Orlando Pirates) disputed a penalty awarded to Pro's at Sharpeville Stadium yesterday ... Pro's officials were faced with a torrid time trying to stop fans from assaulting BUCS players. The players had to run for life while being chased by the irate fans.⁴⁸

In 1973 Vaal Professionals were the topic of a NPSL inquiry, following the disruption of several games at the Sharpeville Stadium. Roger Sishi, general manager of the NPSL, was concerned that the safety of referees, linesmen and visiting teams was the sole responsibility of the local association and the club itself, and that it appeared that the latter could not guarantee this.⁴⁹

A letter to the press summed up the feelings of supporters from other townships:

Sir - In regards to the match played at the Sharpeville Stadium on Saturday, May 19, [1973], it was really a shame for the Vaal supporters to go to the extent of assaulting the players of Zulu Royals. My dear brothers, always the better team wins. You should not have acted the way you did, because according to the league, your team is going to forfeit the only points shared with Royals. So, do think first before you disrupt league matches ... I pity Vaal to have such rude supporters. Supporters are there to give courage, not to win matches for their teams.⁵⁰

In the United Kingdom, soccer "hooliganism" has been extensively examined. Harrington (1968), in a report to the then British Minister of Sport, Denis Howell, suggested that crowd violence was largely due to "... a quest for fun and excitement, and characterised by a general expressiveness."⁵¹ Davies (1972) draws a similar conclusion, arguing that the supporters more likely to engage in soccer violence "... were all in rotten jobs, from rotten homes ..." and had "no other excitement or meaning in their lives."⁵² Rude' (1964) suggests that football violence is an example of a "backward looking riot" where supporters attempt to restore a prior state of affairs.⁵³ Taylor (1971) argues that the violence is the result of football supporters becoming more and more removed from real or imagined control of the game, as

traditional relationships with players, managers and supporters is replaced with professionalism, contracts, and national as opposed to regional identities. The violent reaction then, is an attempt to reassert traditional control.⁸⁴

Football violence in Sharpeville could be attributed to the drabness of township living, as Davies suggests, as well as an attempt to control the game by attempting to alter the result of a match. Molotsi Molefe suggests simply that it was because Sharpeville supporters were bad losers:

I think they (Sharpeville supporters) have been bad losers. Well it has been like that in boxing. We didn't want to lose.⁸⁵

This preoccupation with winning is crucial in understanding what is probably the most important reason for the football violence, which is related to the perception of Sharpeville residents that they are regarded by Johannesburg people as coming from the 'farms', devoid of any talent. A Sharpeville musician complained that:

if you come from this side [the Vaal], suddenly you don't have any talent, you come from the farms, though [your] music is great.⁸⁶

One of Sharpeville's boxing national title holders, Carlton Monnakgotla expands:

People [outside of Sharpeville] only know Sharpeville after the 1960 shooting but even then they would ask, "Where is Sharpeville? Is it in Soweto?"⁸⁷

But, when the Sharpeville teams or individuals are winning, Sharpeville is on the map insofar as media attention is concerned. When they lose, the township is once again relegated to its 'farms' status. Thus, winning was of utmost importance to players and supporters alike; losing was out of the question. The preoccupation with winning affected the Vaal Professionals. Because they were not an established side like The Transvaal Jumpers or the Transvaal Fast XI, they did not automatically command the grass-roots following the latter sides had developed over the years. Furthermore the Vaal Professionals were expected to succeed, while the others were not. As a result, support for the Vaal Professionals was strongly dependent on their success, and when that began to dissipate in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so did their support-base. As shebeen owner and resident, Mohale Mokopane told me:

People no longer favour the Vaal Professionals as much because they are not playing as well and do not have such good players.⁸⁸

Mike Matloane, general manager of the NPSL (at the time of writing), suggested that the Vaal Professionals, while representing the Vaal, did not represent any specific area:

... the Vaal Professionals were never really a club, they did not end up belonging to anybody, it kind of hung in the air. An Orlando supporter will remain one, but the Vaal Professionals took only one or two players from a club. Kaiser Chiefs made it because they were consistent. Crowds only came to Vaal Professionals' games if the other team was popular. The Vaal Professionals only had about a 1000 supporters.⁵²

This emphasis on success has close similarities with studies on football in England. Chas Crichton (1979) has argued that the introduction of professional football, wide television coverage, sponsorship control and player mobility has changed the traditional relationship of the supporter to football.⁵³

Crichton argues that this has taken three main forms:

firstly, a disinclination to continue following the local team regardless of its achievement; secondly and relatedly, a preference for armchair viewing of weekly televised excerpts; thirdly, a symbolic redefinition of the role of the supporter through the activities of ritualised aggression adopted by younger fans.⁵⁴

In South Africa, the advent of television in the mid-1970s saw large companies (liquor, food and soft drinks) providing sponsorships in their efforts to expand markets and advertise their products.⁵⁵ This development has, as Couzens (1983) notes, altered the nature of the game. From the point of view of this paper, it is even more significant. Couzens explains the change:

The entry of 'big' capitalism has changed the whole nature of the game. As football becomes more and more lucrative, 'small' professionalism is displaced. Clubs have begun to lose their local affiliations (Pirates nowadays have a nation-wide following) and players are moving from club to club with increasing frequency.⁵⁶

This development is applicable to Sharpeville, but with an emphasis on success, illustrated by the example of the Vaal Professionals. As the success rate of local teams declines, younger people (aged up to about 35 years of age) are more likely to support 'national' teams such as Kaiser Chiefs, while the older generation will lament the general state of local football, that is, instead of supporting a new team, they will withhold their support for the local team until its success rate increases. The latter observation I discerned from a visit to the SANFA CLUB shebeen in Sharpeville.

Mr Mokopane runs a shebeen called the SANFA CLUB. He has called it that because ex-SANFA president, George Thabe is his neighbour.⁵⁷ So if you want to talk football in Sharpeville, you go to the SANFA CLUB. Being George Thabe's neighbour provided good advertising for his shebeen. People, mainly men, come to the shebeen to talk football. Mr Mokopane told me that

currently there is discontent among the older football enthusiasts that there is no longer any real football. He said people in Sharpeville do not support the National Soccer League (NSL) and are disturbed at the ousting of George Thabe from the top position in SANFA.⁶⁵ This general discontent also applied to the Vaal Professionals following its lack of success in recent years.

Up to this point the discussion has focused on how football teams in Sharpeville are rooted in the areas they emerged from, this being a result of the street rivalry young boys experience growing up in the township. The discussion has considered why football violence occurred when the Vaal Professionals were successful during the 1970s, and has established how traditional patterns of support are in the process of changing. The rest of the paper deals with the other crucial area of football in Sharpeville, that of patron-managers.

Patron-managers

While the area a side emerges from is important in determining the players who will play for it, the president or 'owner' is as important. This is illustrated by the example of the owner and manager of Transvaal Jumpers, Ngwenya, for it was he who formed the side, or rather it is he who provided the financial backing for a team of players enabling them to play league football. Further, it was he who effected the Jumpers' official move to Sharpeville from Top Location, that is, only when he himself was moved in the 1950s.

This trend is very much in practice in the township today. A group of players will usually request sponsorship from a person known to be financially capable. If the person is willing, he will provide the money to purchase a team outfit, as well as some equipment, and will in effect 'own' the side. His house becomes the team's club-house in which all meetings are held from then on. It is not unusual then to see teams of players dressed in their kit, gathered in a house on the weekend or early in the evening during the week, in Sharpeville.

Ngwenya provided the original Transvaal Jumpers' team with their playing strip - mustard and black blocks - and controlled its affairs for over four decades:

During all this time, in fact up-to-date, the club had only one president guiding and controlling its affairs. It is to this man that I attribute the wonderful success that the club achieved during this period in the history of Black football - Mr J Ngwenya.⁶⁶

This is an example of a tradition of patrons or "big men" in football in Sharpeville and elsewhere, as in the case of Kaiser Motaung of Kaiser Chiefs and Jomo Sono of Jomo Cosmos. Indeed,

financial backing is the obvious link between a "street team" and the league, and so sponsors play a crucial role here. Isaac Magashule, writing for Bona in 1962, expands:

[the sponsorship of clubs has been spearheaded] ... by the generous and tireless efforts of Johannesburg's wealthy businessmen well-known in the African community. These men are head-above-social-swim elites of the city, and are commonly called "patron-managers" in the field of sport. These tycoons all profess that they came into the football game as enthusiasts and above all to provide for the sadly lacking facilities, security and maturity in the set-up of the majority of our football clubs.⁶⁷

Magashule explains how these men assume positions of control:

... by virtue of their financial standing and readiness to provide generously for maintenance of their respective teams, patron-managers have naturally grown to be regarded as bosses of the clubs, wielding much authority over almost all departments of the club's make-up.⁶⁸

Financial returns (largely in the form of gate-takings at matches) were usually not enough to cover a teams' expenditure. 'Patron-managers', therefore, did not sponsor teams for financial gain. Magashule gives a clue as to the reason:

These football tycoons maintain that "sport is the doorway to international fame and prestige," and that with the abundant talent in the country which of course needs the proper care of devoted persons, our football will surely attain international recognition.⁶⁹

For Sharpeville patron-managers, while their sponsorship was an effort to have their area and township teams recognised more widely, it was also a way to enhance personal prestige, flamboyance being a major part of their conduct. Patron-managers earn the allegiance and support of the players in their team, as well as status and prestige in the township and become known by residents as men of means.⁷⁰

Patronage, as a phenomenon in anthropology, has been examined almost exclusively in Mediterranean societies. Certainly, there is little material on patronage in African societies.⁷¹ Gilmore (1977), considering Fuenmayor in southern Spain, refers to patronage as informal contact between people of unequal status and power.⁷² In general, patrons provide otherwise unobtainable goods and services to people whose social ties are limited to the local community, and receive in return less tangible benefits such as political support. Li Causi (1975), in a study of western Sicily in Italy, notes that patronage occurs in conditions of economic exploitation and political domination.⁷³ Economic exploitation and political domination, being characteristic of townships in South Africa, provide the conditions for patronage.

Apart from the area of financial contributions, patrons in football are also found in positions of control of the game through the various sporting associations. Wilson and Mafeje (1963) note how in Langa, Cape Town, the term 'patron' is actually used to describe people who serve in sporting associations:

In the [African] football clubs there are also the wealthy men, no longer players, who are elected to the unions and boards, and who are viewed with some suspicion by young players from the country. Their power derives from their position as townsmen (not country cousins), from their wealth - they subscribe to club funds - and their offers of transport when required ... The rugby clubs also invite as 'patron' [the English word is used] middle-class people such as an advocate living in Langa, or a minister of religion.
74

Archer et al (1982) point to the fact that assuming positions of control in sporting bodies has been one of the few areas open to black people in which they can achieve prestige and recognition: ... South African sport is interesting not merely because its organisation reflects the social relations and processes at work in black society - sporting activity was itself a force of considerable influence on those social relations. This was true above all for the African population, for whom associations provided almost the only opportunity for individuals to acquire positions of responsibility and therefore express their status and ambition. It is therefore not surprising to find that anthropologists were struck by the complexity of procedure, the scrupulous attention to protocol and the fierce competition for position within black associations. [My emphasis] 75

Kuper (1965) reports the following observations of a Durban and District African F.A. meeting in the 1950s:

At meetings, the committee procedures often take on an independent life and the work of the association is enmeshed in the most complex and obdurate ... With the passage of time, the minutes become businesslike, but there is still much sterile debate. This arises in part from the desire to display procedural virtuosity and from a lack of familiarity with the rules. But the emphasis on ritual also shows the importance attached to the organisational mysteries of the White man ... It seems as though the symbols of power represented by the committee procedures of the White man become a substitute for the exercise of power and that political energy, denied other expression, is projected into the football association. Certainly there is much rivalry for position. 76

Wilson and Mafeje (1963) note similar trends in Langa:

Scope for leadership among Africans is very limited and office in almost any sort of organisation is a source of social prestige. Whereas for a White man or woman, there are many alternative opportunities of exercising leadership in work, in politics, in local government, as well as in church or social clubs or sport, the opportunities for an African are few. To a White man the secretaryship of a rugby club may indeed be a burden, not willingly undertaken, but to most Africans office in almost any organisation carries prestige ... People in Langa cling to positions as tenaciously as if they were careers.⁷⁷

In order to become office bearer of a sporting body, a reasonable level of education was required in order to participate in the lengthy debates and discussions held at meetings. The ability to maintain one's position depended on the individual's success at subtle manoeuvring and the lobbying of support. In Sharpeville, this trend has been very much in operation, no more clearly illustrated than by the example of George Thabe.

George Thabe

George Thabe is the most important figure in organised football in the Vaal Triangle where residents refer to him as the "Pele of South African football".⁷⁸ Thabe's career is nothing short of remarkable. For fifteen years he was the most important and influential figure in the organisation and control of South African football, heading SANFA, and its professional wing, the NPSL.

Thabe was born in Top Location in 1932, the tenth and last child of a wood merchant from Kroonstad. He moved with his family to Sharpeville in 1946, to the area there known as Putsohstene. According to Thabe, his father, while not particularly well-off, had a clear vision of his son's future:

He (Thabe's father) was a very strange man, highly Christian. He had not only a vision but gifts. When I was still very young, he had decided what I should be. He passed away when I was sixteen, and I have followed that course.⁷⁹

Thabe trained as a teacher and taught between 1954 and 1962. In 1950 he was one of a group of football players who formed the Young Rangers:

We liked Rangers of Johannesburg and more than that, Glasgow Rangers.⁸⁰

Apart from playing football, Thabe was also involved in its administration from 1950. He represented the club at meetings of the local football association, the Southern Transvaal Bantu Football Association (STBFA), and was club secretary for the Young Rangers. Thabe became the assistant secretary of the STBFA in 1955, and became secretary in 1962 when he had finished

college. He became president of the Transvaal Football Association in 1965, and treasurer of the South African National Football Association (SANFA) in 1968. He assumed the highest organisational position in black football in 1970 when he became president of SANFA, after ousting the previous president of ten years, Joe Sibiya.

According to Thabe,
the organisation of black football was very difficult as there were very few people who had a good understanding of organisational principles and others had to learn from them.
e1

Further, it was difficult to "teach people with township backgrounds the principles of running a club."^{e2} This sentiment disguised what was in fact calculated lobbying and careful manipulating for positions in associations, clearer in this statement from Thabe:

There was always a lot of jockeying for positions. It was so difficult to get an association to understand how an association should be run. But when the president said "go", you went.^{e3}

Thus, when Thabe became the president of SANFA it was he who held sway, and so skilful was he at maintaining support for himself that he remained the kingpin of South African football administration for fifteen years, the longest reign by any incumbent in black football. Two years before his downfall, Sekola Sello writing for Drum magazine, said this of Thabe:

They don't come as calculating and skilful as George Thabe - the Boris Spassky of football. With the patience and skill of a Grand Master, Thabe has eliminated all effective opposition he had ever had. Be it real, imagined or incipient, Thabe has crushed it.^{e4}

Such was the politicking in the sporting world, that it is not surprising that community politics in Sharpeville has been dominated by people who have first made a name for themselves in the arena of sport. The tradition of the most popular 'big names' in the township standing for election to local government positions was apparent in the early 1960s. Then, local government in Sharpeville was dominated by well-known figures in the boxing world, such as, boxing manager, David "Hunter" Motsumi, who managed Sexton Mabena during the latter's reign as national black association bantamweight and featherweight champion, and one of only three black managers in the country at the time to hold a British Boxing Board of Control licence, as well as Tom Mabena, Sexton Mabena's father.^{e5}

George Thabe was the first chairman of the Vaal Triangle Community Council, elected in 1977. His rival in the football world, Knox Matjila, from Evaton, opposed him on the community

council from 1977 until Thabe resigned in 1981. Thabe resigned from the Community Council ostensibly as a result of the lack of co-operation from the government, although it appears that Matjila had built strong opposition to Thabe on the council. Chairman of the Katsheh Community Council at the time, Mpiyale Khumalo, commented as follows:

... I must say that Mr Thabe is dishonest because he set the pace by being the first chairman in the country. While it suited him, he took the chance but now he feels bitter because he was defeated twice in the election for chairmanship.²⁶

Thabe and Matjila were bitter rivals following their involvement in the administration of soccer where Thabe held sway. During the early 1970s, Matjila was Thabe's right-hand man, acting to protect and strengthen their positions in the South African National Football Association (SANFA):

He [Matjila] was first Thabe's protege and after being well groomed he became his boss's hatchet man ... Matjila suspended anyone deemed by the hierarchy to be a threat to them.²⁷

In the late 1970s, Matjila attempted to wrest the leadership of SANFA from Thabe:

Word went out that Matjila was planning to topple Thabe. He acted swift and mercilessly. Matjila was sent to "Siberia" where he made some threats of a comeback which never materialised.²⁸

Thabe expelled Matjila from SANFA, commenting as follows:

I brought him into soccer. Then he grew too big and later plotted against me. I had no choice but to get rid of him.²⁹

Matjila felt he had been double-crossed:

Thabe's allegations are not true. I don't think he can boast a more loyal official than me. He was influenced by people who did not like me and fed him these false stories about being toppled.³⁰

The animosity between Thabe and Matjila spilled over into the Community Council, and this was borne out when, only a few weeks after Thabe's resignation from the Council, Matjila proposed to have the George Thabe Stadium in Sharpeville renamed simply the Sharpeville Stadium:

I am not happy about the naming of this stadium. This should be called the Sharpeville Soccer Stadium. It is the most significant name and it rings a bell to any person when he reads about it. You ask anybody from Durban where George Thabe Stadium is and he is most likely not able to give you

the answer readily. But as soon as you say Sharpeville Stadium, even someone in England is most likely to know the place.³¹

Despite having strong community overtones, Matjila's reasoning was clearly suspect. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of soccer players in Durban would certainly know where the George Thabe Stadium was, or at least would know of George Thabe, Matjila was striking at the very heart of Thabe's public status. Despite wide criticism, particularly in soccer circles³², Matjila's proposal was accepted by the Council, and the George Thabe Stadium became the Sharpeville Soccer Stadium until January 1983, when the newly elected council under the chairmanship of Bessau Mahlatsi reversed the original decision.³³

No longer involved in community politics, nor in the administration of football, Thabe is still one of the most influential people in Sharpeville, certainly in the realm of football. This was most clearly illustrated when the NPSL clashed with the NSL in 1985, forcing Thabe's resignation, having the effect of dividing loyalties among the other football patrons in the township.³⁴ With the prominence of the NSL and the demise of the NPSL, football in Sharpeville has been disrupted as some teams joined the NSL, while others remained with the NPSL. The Vaal Professionals were divided in two as Dr Mokhesi, the original president and patron took a side over to the NSL.³⁵ Molotsi Molefe's statement gives an idea of the split:

Well, the doctor [Mokhesi] felt the grass is greener on the other side of the fence. The doctor left with the majority of his squad. The remnants were taken over by Steve Lekomola and a few other Vaal players and they remained in the NPSL. There are those who keep ties with George Thabe and remain in the NPSL for whatever reason. I myself have remained on the fence.³⁶

Conclusion

The nature of football in Sharpeville - as a sub-culture - is changing. Traditional support for local teams is being replaced by support for national teams such as Moroka Swallows and Jomo Cosmos, as the access to these teams is made easier through wider television coverage. The 'raw ingredients' for the production of successful teams and players still exist, but they await the financial resources to develop them. The Vaal Professionals, now in the second division, are unlikely ever to regain first division status, as Molotsi Molefe explains:

One of the reasons [for success] is you need good finance to get good players. Now who's interested in financing a second division team?³⁷

For players in Sharpeville the alternative is to try out for teams outside of Sharpeville, as Augustine Makalakalane and Love Monnakgotla have done, and who both now play for Jomo Cosmos.

Currently, the state of football in Sharpeville is in a mess. As a result of the NPSL/NSL split, allegiances between officials, players and supporters alike have been split down the middle. Some support the NSL, others support the NPSL, others 'sit on the fence'. As a result, trying to discern information about recent trends in football were often met with non-committals as informants refused to comment on anything they considered might throw them into the spotlight, and suggest support for one patron as opposed to another. Further, the move by two of Sharpeville's most successful players, Makalakalane and Monnakgotla from Vaal Professionals to Jomo Cosmos has sparked off a rejection-fury in certain quarters. At the time of writing, Simon Lehoko, the Vaal Professionals coach, had been 'blamed' for this, and, after refusing an interview with me, explained that he was moving to the Orange Free State 'to start all over again'.

The likelihood is that football in Sharpeville will lose its community appeal as residents become less interested in local and more interested in national football sides. Teams still require financial support to function, and so patron-managers will continue to exist, albeit in less flamboyant fashion, as the attention of the residents becomes more and more focused on the flamboyant patron managers of the glamour sides such as Kaizer Chiefs and Jomo Cosmos.

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5. Interview with Mohale Mokopane, Sharpeville, 19 May, 1989.
6. M. V. Mzamane, The Children of Soweto, Ravan, Johannesburg, 1982.
7. Interview with George Thabe, Vereeniging, 8 May, 1989.
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9. Steve Montjane, "Win or Lose", Bona, August, 1972, p.41.
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13. G. D. Suttles, The Social Order of the Slum, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1969.
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15. Ibid.
16. Interview with M. Molefe, Johannesburg, 26 May, 1989.
17. See G. Thabe, It's a Goal! 50 years of sweat, tears and drama in Black soccer, Skotaville, Johannesburg, 1983, p.39.
18. Interview with Patrick 'Mcondo' Tlhokane, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
19. Ibid.
20. What's in a name?
Football and soccer players in South Africa all have nicknames, for example, Marks 'go-man-go' Maponyane of Kaiser Chiefs or ex-South African lightweight boxing champion and Sharpeville resident, John 'Shamba' Mthimkulu. During my research I observed that many famous sports people were known and referred to by their nicknames alone. Consequently I did not ask Sharpeville residents where John Mthimkulu lived, I asked where I could locate 'Shamba'. Steve Montjane, writing for Bona magazine gives an idea why nicknames are given: "A name is very important ... We say 'Bitso lebe ke seromo.' It's English equivalent to the nearest would be: 'Give a dog a bad name.' A person who makes his presence felt must be given a new name. This is

- brought out loud and clear by the names by which our sports stars are called. Our people, it seems, can't help giving descriptive names when they watch somebody doing something. They have to call him by a name which tells exactly how he does it or what he looks like. They give him a name that tells how he differs from other players, or how he sings, how he runs. From these names one who hears them has a fairly good idea of the owner's performances." (Steve Montjane, "Win or Lose", Bona, March, 1969, p.27.)
21. Interview with Elliot Mpepo, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
 22. Interview with Patrick Tlhopane, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
 23. In Thabe op cit p.39.
 24. Ibid.
 25. Interview with Patrick Tlhopane, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
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 29. Philip Ramakhoase "Transvaal Jumpers", in Thabe op cit p.39.
 30. Interview with George Thabe, Vereeniging, 8 May, 1989.
 31. Interview with Patrick Tlhopane, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
 32. Interview with Joe Mabena, Sharpeville, 13 May, 1989.
 33. Ibid.
- Sexton Mabena, Carlton Monnakgotla and Lefty Masondo are all famous boxers from Sharpeville. Between them they held four national boxing titles and seven provincial titles during the late 1950s and 1960s.
34. Ibid.
 35. Interview with Elliot Mpepo, Sharpeville, 24 May, 1989.
 36. There were other sides who managed brief appearances in the professional leagues, mainly as trialists. For example, in 1961, a team called Sharpeville Athletic joined the Transvaal Professional Soccer League as trialists and were admitted to the league in 1962. (World, 12/6/1962, p.7.
 37. "Why shouldn't we start our own Pro Soccer?", Drum, August, 1959, p.22.
 38. R. Archer & A. Bouillon, The South African Game: Sport and Racism, Zed Press, London, 1982, p.195.
 39. Ibid p.212.
- For a more detailed account of the demise of the SASF-PL, see Archer et al pp.195 - 198.
40. "Sexton Mabena's club for S.A.S.L.", World, 20/1/1962, p.12.
 41. Interview with Joe Mabena, Sharpeville, 13 May, 1989.
 42. Ibid.
 43. Interview with George Thabe, Vereeniging, 8 May, 1989.
- From the above statement it appears that the process was fairly smooth. According to newspaper reports at the time, however, it involved lengthy debates between the Southern Transvaal Bantu Football Association (STBFA - the controlling body in Sharpeville) and delegates from the various soccer clubs in Sharpeville. The STBFA wanted an Invitation XI, but insisted that clubs release some of their players on written contract, restricting players to the

- association's XI only. Delegates were not happy with this suggestion and insisted instead that the Transvaal Fast XI should play, as they had been the most successful club in the township. STBFA, however, rejected this. Finally delegates agreed on the creation of a completely separate professional club in which players would retain their amateur status with their original club, but have professional status with the new club. (World, 12/8/1970, p.10.)
44. Interview with M. Molefe, Johannesburg, 19 May, 1989.
 45. Interview with George Thabe, Vereeniging, 8 May, 1989.
 46. Interview with Sam Ntje, Sharpeville, 19 August, 1986.
 47. Post, 6/12/1970, p.27.
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 51. J.A. Harrington, Soccer Hooliganism: A Preliminary Report to Mr Denis Howell, Minister of Sport, John Wright & Sons, Bristol, 1968, in M.D. Smith, "Sport and Collective Violence", in D.W. Ball & J.W. Loy (eds.) Sport and Social Order: Contributions to the Sociology of Sport, Addison-Wesley, Massachusetts, 1975, p.310.
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 55. Interview with M. Molefe, Johannesburg, 26 May, 1989.
 56. Interview with Jonas "Brian" Chaka, Sharpeville, 29 May, 1989.
 57. Interview with Carlton Monnakgotla, Sharpeville, 26 May, 1989.
 58. Interview with Mohale Mokopane, Sharpeville, 19 May, 1986.
 59. Interview with M. P. Matloane, Johannesburg, 12 July, 1988.
 60. C. Critcher, "Football since the war" in J. Clarke, C. Critcher and R. Johnson, Working Class Culture. Studies in history and theory, Hutchinson, London, 1979, p.161.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Couzens op cit p.212.
 63. Ibid.
 64. SANFA is not the 'official' name of the shebeen, but is more a point of identification where it is located. Thabe told me that Mokopane "knew I would take offense if it was called that as I did not want to be seen as owning it." (Interview with George Thabe, Vereeniging, 8 May, 1989)
 65. The NSL was formed in January, 1985, in direct opposition to SANFA and its professional affiliate, the NPSL. In 1985, 18 First Division clubs from the NPSL left it for the NSL, citing George Thabe as the main reason for their departure. Under pressure to resign his position as head of SANFA from

- then on, Thabe eventually did in April, 1986. Since 1985 the NSL has established itself as South Africa's premier football body. (Morgan George, "New hope of soccer peace as Thabe goes", Weekly Mail, 2-8 May, 1986, p.27.)
66. Ramakhoase in Thabe op cit p.39.
 67. Isaac Magashule, "Tycoons take over Football Clubs", Zonk, March, 1962, p.33.
 68. Ibid p.34.
 69. Ibid p.35.
 70. Sponsors are not always 'big men' - many of the local firms, for example, Brick and Tile, Stewart and Lloyds and Union Steel Co., also sponsored teams and in the 1940's there was a league for such teams, the Vereeniging Industries African Football Association.
 71. The exception is Adrian Peace's study of southern Nigerian factory workers working in the established towns and villages in south-western Nigeria (A.J. Peace, Choice, Class and Conflict: A study of southern Nigerian factory workers, Humanities, New Jersey, 1979).
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 82. Ibid.
 83. Ibid.
 84. Sekola Sello, "Thabe 'the Toppler'", Drum, May, 1983, p.80.
 85. Post, 15/9/1963, p.18.
 86. Sowetan, 3/7/1981, p.3.
 87. Sello op cit p.84.
 88. Ibid.
 89. Quoted in Sello op cit p.84.
 90. Quoted in Sello op cit p.84.
 91. Sowetan, 13/7/1981, p.2.
 92. Shadrack Twala from the Transvaal Fast XI Football Club in Sharpeville, suggested that Matjila was stretching his rivalry with Thabe too far and that the two must be able to settle their differences through other means: "It is completely childish for Mr Matjila to think about renaming the stadium after Mr Thabe had resigned from the community council." (Sowetan, 14/7/1981, p.2.)

93. C. Mogale, "Thabe in name-twister", Sowetan, 28/1/1983, p.1.
94. See above page 23.
95. Interviewing Dr Mokhesi has proved to be a futile exercise. Despite setting up a number of meeting times with him, he has always ensured that I speak to his supporters. As a result I have never heard any unfavourable reports or criticisms of him.
96. Interview with M. Molefe, Johannesburg, 26 May, 1989.
97. Ibid.
98. Makalalakane is currently overseas campaigning for a place in one of the football teams in the United Kingdom. It appears that he will be signed by Glasgow Rangers. (Phil Nyamane, "Makalalakane heads north to Hearts", Star, 30/5/1989, p.12AN)