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Lesczynski, Caitlin Rose

2020
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Bend it Like Banyana Banyana: Gender, Empowerment and Equality in South Africa Through the Lens of Soccer

Caitlin Rose Lesczynski

A thesis submitted to the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2020

ABSTRACT

Women and girls participating in sports surged around the world in the 1970s and 1980s in response to shifting attitudes on gender norms and equality. While recreational and professional sports participation is seen as a positive opportunity for female empowerment, the sports realm can also be a site for reproducing discriminatory gender norms, structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics from wider society. The primary purpose of this thesis is to use the case-study of women's soccer in South Africa to identify and understand the societal phenomena that negatively affect women and girls' sports participation and experience. Encouragingly, a handful of dedicated social scientists produced pioneering scholarly analysis of women's soccer in South Africa; however, there is a dearth of contemporary journalism and longform, creative non-fiction writing on the topic. Rather than take the form of a traditional academic research report, this thesis combines factual exposition and journalistic storytelling to shed light on the subject matter in an accessible and engaging style. The final thesis comprises two parts: (Part One) a Method Document that reviews the existing literature and presents a history of the global-local development of women's soccer; and (Part Two) a Longform Narrative that imitates the style of a publishable piece of magazine journalism. The Longform Narrative takes the form of a series of interlinking chapters told in first-person point of view and each focusing on a key theme, individual or event. The narrative opens by examining the landscape of inadequate media coverage of women's sports and explaining how that hinders commercial potential and reinforces discriminatory gender stereotypes. Next, the narrative explores how the historical construction of sport as a masculine domain informs important structural-environmental barriers and intrapersonal/ interpersonal influences that negatively affect women and girls' sports participation. Finally, the thesis delves into the legacy of insufficient institutional investment in women's sports, from the glaring gender pay gap to the lack of professional playing structures to the indifference from corporate sponsors. This pattern of insufficient investment handicaps women's earning potential and results in a vastly unequal quality of experience that follows female athletes for the rest of their lives. The thesis relies on interviews, observations, archival documentation and secondary research as its primary source material. The hope is that through this undertaking the thesis amplifies the voices of female athletes; provides novel insight — albeit modest and limited — on broader issues of gender inequality and discrimination; and inspires positive societal change.

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by Coursework and Research Report in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies, in the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.



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Caitlin Rose Lesczynski

19th of April, 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my great appreciation to the following individuals whose guidance and support were instrumental in completing this thesis.

Firstly, I owe a debt of gratitude to my thesis advisor Professor Anton Harber. His incisive feedback shaped this thesis for the better and pushed me to be a stronger reporter and writer. Anton — thank you for giving your time so generously and showing immense care for my efforts. It has been a pleasure and privilege working with you.

I would also like to thank Professors Lesley Cowling and Kevin Davie from the Department of Journalism and Media Studies and my peers in the Longform Writing Group. Thank you for encouraging the idea for this thesis from its infancy and providing insightful critiques on its earliest drafts. In particular, I would like to thank Lesley for introducing me to the genre of 'New Journalism' in her Creative Writing seminar, which sparked my passion for literary non-fiction storytelling and inspired the narrative approach for this thesis.

On a personal note, I would also like to thank my partner Jonathan Giliam for his indefatigable championing of this thesis. Jonathan — thank you for your patience and support over the course of the last year and for your unwavering encouragement of all my writing goals.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the many individuals I spoke with from the soccer community in South Africa, most of whom will remain anonymous, including former and current players, administrators, coaches and fans. Thank you for your time and willingness to share your personal stories with me. It is your tireless commitment to women's sports in the face of numerous obstacles that inspired this undertaking and my work is dedicated to you.

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PART ONE: THE METHOD DOCUMENT

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Sport has long been used as a tool for diplomacy, as a conduit for cross-cultural communication and as a catalyst for positive social change and justice. The power of sport is attributed to its unique place as an institution of universal cultural significance that transcends race, class and gender differences. In post-apartheid South Arica, sport is particularly seen as an important avenue for nation-building and social cohesion. In the words of former South African president Nelson Mandela:

> Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair (Mandela 2000).

Opportunities for women and girls to participate in organised sports, both professionally and recreationally, increased around the globe in the latter half of the 20th-century, riding the wave of the women's liberation movement. As restrictive gender norms, structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics were challenged across wider society, women and girls gained access to the historically male-dominated sports arena, from the Olympic Games to the soccer pitch.

Consistent participation in physical activity and organized sports, specifically team sports such as soccer, is a dynamic mechanism for empowering women and girls. For female adolescents, sports participation is positively related to many important psychological, physiological and sociological benefits, including enhanced self-esteem and confidence, increased levels of educational attainment and academic performance, and reduced incidence of chronic disease (Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport 2018; President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sport 1997; Women's Sports Foundation 2015a). The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and the International Olympic Committee agree that sport also serves as a vehicle for challenging discriminatory gender norms, structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics (UN Women 2007; International Olympic Committee 2019).

Yet, gender-based discrimination and structural inequalities from wider society reproduce within the sports realm and act as barriers to women and girls' participation. This serves to deprive

women and girls of the myriad of benefits of recreational and professional sports participation. Given the power of sport to advance social cohesion and the vast benefits of participation for individuals and communities, it is important to understand the multidimensional factors that uniquely impede and burden the livelihood of female athletes. Only by better understanding this landscape, can society begin to confront these barriers and restructure itself.

While limited, a few dedicated social scientists produced ground-breaking scholarly analysis of women's soccer in South Africa; however, there is a dearth of media attention and longform literature on the topic. The purpose of this thesis is to help fill in that gap. (Part 1) The Method Document comprises a review of the existing literature and a detailed history of the global-local development of women's soccer. (Part 2) The Longform Narrative eschews the traditional structure of an academic thesis and takes the form of literary non-fiction, in order to shine a light on the untold stories of women's soccer in an informative and engaging manner. Using a combination of factual exposition and journalistic storytelling, The Longform Narrative profiles individual female athletes, recreates scenes from important sites of soccer participation, and critically examines the most salient barriers to women and girls' equal participation within the unique South African context.

2.0 RATIONALE

2.1 JOURNALISTIC & NARRATIVE AIM

I began this thesis with two goals in mind: to use women's soccer as a lens through which to understand gender inequality in wider society and to shine a light on the untold stories of female athletes through longform, creative storytelling.

The primary journalistic intent of this thesis was to identify and understand the societal phenomenon that play a negative role in women and girls' sports (soccer) participation, therefore depriving them of its dynamic benefits. It is my hope that by doing so, this thesis provides insight — albeit modest and partial — on wider issues of gender inequality and discrimination. From a journalistic view, it is essential to expose the impact of insufficient societal transformation on the livelihood of half the population in order to spark change.

The primary narrative aim of this thesis was to fill a gap in awareness through longform, literary non-fiction. While ground-breaking and important, scholarly analysis and media coverage on the nexus between gender and sport are largely Western-centric. There is very limited attention devoted to women's soccer in South Africa, despite the sport's national popularity and socio-cultural relevance. A debt is owed to the few dedicated social scientists who produced pioneering research on the topic of women's soccer in South Africa, among them Cynthia Fabrizio Pelak, Martha Saavedra, Jennifer Hargreaves and Mari Haugaa Engh; however, their work largely centred around the 2010 FIFA men's World Cup hosted by South Africa. Similarly, mainstream media coverage of women's soccer in South Africa is scarce, propelled by individual journalists. Additionally, to my knowledge there are no longform literary accounts of women's soccer development or individual athlete's experiences in South Africa, nor a comprehensive publication on the history of women's soccer. However, there is no lack in stories or information. For example, while the history of the senior women's national team, Banyana Banyana, has been recorded in journal articles, it has not been given sufficient mainstream attention. While isolated news events concerning women's soccer are occasionally covered in the media, longform profiles of elite soccer players and in-depth investigations into the contours of their experiences are extremely limited.

The selection of soccer was for both personal interest (see the following section, "2.2 Personal Motivation") and because it provided a uniquely dynamic focal point within the South African context, and the wider environment of women's sports, to situate this thesis. Soccer is not only the most popular sport in Africa, with a particularly diverse appeal in South Africa, but globally women's soccer is of topical interest following the success of the widely watched 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in France — which was also the debut of Banyana Banyana. Soccer is seen as a "masculine flagship sport" (Pelak 2005, p 57) in South Africa, making it an especially useful context for "grappling with patriarchal imperatives… and the limits of women's political equality" (Pelak 2009, p 97). Even the use of the gender marker 'women's' in regards to experiences, sports, studies and more, "reinforces men's as the standard, and women's as the other" (Pelak 2006). While this report uses 'women's soccer' to refer to the sport played by women and girls, concerns over the androcentric nomenclature are herein noted.

2.2 PERSONAL MOTIVATION



The author (front row, centre) age 5/6 on her first soccer team, The Cheetahs. Washington, DC. (1996)

My soccer career began in 1996 at age five on the patchy fields of upper Northwest Washington, D.C. Alongside a dozen other gangly girls from my kindergarten class, I donned a baggy, neon orange kit and learned the basics of dribbling, passing and shooting from a volunteer coach. We called ourselves The Cheetahs, inspired by the feline's notorious speed and agility, and its orange-tan hue.

We didn't pick the colour of our kit, so we just ran with it.

I played with The Cheetahs for 13 years; nearly half my life. Through childhood, adolescence and young adulthood, I joined my teammates from The Cheetahs for bi-weekly practices after school and for Saturday matches every Autumn and Spring. We played in a girls-only recreational league that was the largest youth sports program for girls in Washington, D.C.

The league was never short on interested girls and supportive parents. Every girl I knew played a competitive sport, if not soccer.[1]

Some girls moved away or dropped out earlier than others, but for the most part over that dozen odd years, The Cheetahs remained intact. My best friends, many of whom I am close with to this day, were on the team. The team, the game and the electric enthusiasm for girls' soccer at that unique moment in history across the USA shaped my identity. I was a soccer player; it meant I was a self-confident, physically strong and unapologetic girl.

Women's soccer exploded in the US in the 1990s, at the same time as the sport gained structural legitimacy on the global stage. In 1972 the US Government passed a landmark gender equality law known as Title IX that prohibited gender discrimination in educational settings, including athletics (Harvard University n.d.; Women's Sports Foundation n.d.). Title IX led to more organised youth development, school and collegiate soccer programs for women and girls, which became critical pipelines for the future women's national squad.

The US Women's National Team (USWNT) won the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup hosted by China in 1991 and claimed the first Olympic title in women's soccer at the 1996 Centennial Games in Atlanta, Georgia. But the heart-stopping, record-breaking final of the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup solidified women's soccer in the USA as a competitive sport and mainstream spectacle.

[1] Academic Rachel Allison points out in Kicking Center: Gender and the Selling of Women's Professional Soccer that American girls (white, class-privileged) who grew up playing sports in the 1990s were the first generation "for whom opportunities to play sports had been present since birth" (Allison 2018, p 2) and were indebted to a long "history of cultural and legal struggle" (Allison 2018, p 2) for gender equality.

I was eight years old when I watched my heroes from the USWNT line-up next to their Chinese counterparts to decide the 1999 championship on penalty kicks — a cruel invention employed only when a soccer game is still level after 90-minutes of regulation play and two 15-minute overtime periods. The opening match of the tournament earlier set a world record for attendance at a women's sporting event, but the final's sold-out audience of 90,195 at California's iconic Rose Bowl, with another 40 million Americans tuning in on TV, obliterated it (Longman 2019).

Excitingly, the 1999 FIFA Women's World Cup wasn't the USWNT's moment alone. The women's national teams from Brazil, Norway, Germany and China were all considered serious contenders for the title and had loyal fans watching back home. Brazil's Sissi and China's Sun Wen shared The Golden Boot, awarded to the top goal scorer of the tournament. Sun Wen also went home with The Golden Ball award as the tournament's overall best player (FIFA World Football Museum 2019).



The image of the USWNT's Brandi Chastain (above) falling to her knees, pumping her muscular arms in the air and pulling off her jersey in exultant celebration after scoring the US's decisive penalty kick became the face of women's soccer in the US for the next generation. "Some academics criticized the news media for focusing on Chastain's bra and her rippling physique, of reducing a triumphal athletic achievement to a kind of striptease" (Longman 2019), which is valid, but to my adolescent mind the image celebrated a woman's body "as an instrument of

athletic excellence, strength and power" (Longman 2019). It defied and redefined traditional feminine gender expression.[2] I saw in Chastain and her teammates the validation to be myself.

For the next decade, I *was* soccer. By 13 I played on three all-girl teams simultaneously: The Cheetahs, my high school team and an elite travel team called The Blast. The first women's professional soccer league in the USA, the Women's United Soccer Association, started at the same time, a by-product of the tidal wave of enthusiasm for women's soccer that followed the 1999 World Cup. In the early 2000s I spent many Saturday nights with my teammates watching our local club, the Washington Freedom, battle other teams from the women's league, scrambling for our favourite players' signatures as they lined up along the pitch at the end of the match (Solomon 2002). My travel team competed at tournaments out of state that were scouting grounds for the best university soccer programs. I never questioned I would play at that level. I discovered my greatest strengths were speed, endurance and a powerful boot, three skills required for the centre-back position known as sweeper. I became a regular starter in that position on all my teams. Before high school even began, I had tried out for US Soccer's youth Olympic Development Program.

In late August 2008, during a pre-season practice scrimmage with my high school Varsity team, I stretched out my left leg to block an opposing player on a breakaway down the field. I was always a physical player. I'd happily put my body in front of an attack to stop its momentum. The other girl collided with my left leg and my kneecap slid out of its socket with a stomach-churning 'pop'. I fell to the ground. This happened once before, years earlier, but I was able to heal that first injury with months of intense physical therapy. I knew this time was different.

A trip to the hospital and an X-Ray confirmed I tore the fleshy cartilage in my knee called the meniscus. I needed surgery to play again.

[2] Noting that Chastain was still a slim, white female who met other societal standards of beauty and feminine gender expression, which gave her privilege and agency that isn't afforded to other female athletes. Agency in representation remains a contentious issue for all female athletes, particularly women and girls of color, such as Serena Williams and Caster Semenya, who fight for control of their bodies to this day.

In February 2009 I underwent arthroscopic meniscus repair surgery. The surgeon marked my left leg with a black permanent marker before I went under anaesthesia. I woke up under heavy pain medication and ran my hand down my swollen leg and over my knee. It was numb. For the next two months, I was bound to crutches and a restrictive knee brace. I wore a floor-length dress to my senior Prom to hide the brace. I went to weekly physical therapy sessions where I retrained my knee to bend, snapping the scar tissue that encased my kneecap with every millimetre I gained in range of motion.

I never played soccer again.

Being a soccer player was the single most important defining characteristic of my identity until I was 18. When I stopped playing, the resolute hold I had on my self-confidence slipped and I entered an unfamiliar season of self-doubt and impressionability.

Gratefully, I never stopped being a fan. I've attended matches of all three iterations of the USA women's professional league, watching as it collapsed, rebranded and regenerated with the fickle tides of interest and investment over the last two decades. This past June I travelled to France to attend the eighth edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup. I watched alongside an army of American girls kitted out in red, white and blue jerseys, leggings, leis and flags as the USWNT played Chile to an audience of 45,594 (L. Clarke 2019). I watched as Banyana Banyana, in their historic World Cup debut, held their own against one of the sport's pioneering national squads, China. I met South African fans who put their lives on hold back home to witness this moment. As a journalist, I've specialized in sports reporting, covering the growing trend of soccer in Cuba and on the development of women's sports like basketball in South Africa.

This personal motivation inspired my interest in examining the experience and value of soccer for women and girls in in South Africa for my Master's thesis.



Parc de Princes stadium in Paris, France, one of the host venues for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, at the US vs Chile match. Paris (2019)

3.0 NARRATIVE APPROACH

The structure of the Longform Narrative is a series of three interlinking, story-driven chapters held together by a central narrative spine. Each chapter explores one or two of the core themes through a combination of factual exposition and creative storytelling influenced by various styles of journalistic writing, such as New Journalism. The factual exposition relays the quantitative information, expert insight and scholarly analysis garnered from the various research methods. The storytelling weaves creative writing techniques into each chapter to imbue it with immediacy and human interest. The narrative devices of New Journalism for example, identified by American author Tom Wolfe in his treatise on the subject, include scene reconstruction, realistic dialogue, multiple points of view (POV) and detailed description of symbolic "status life details" (Wolfe 1973; Wolfe and Johnson 1973). The purpose of using a more nuanced narrative approach in this way, as opposed to traditional scholarly analysis in the style of an academic journal article, was to create accessible, yet evocative prose.

In regards to point of view, I predominantly used first-person. While the Longform Narrative serves as a platform to amplify others' voices and canvassed a variety of viewpoints, it is narrated as it was experienced: from my perspective. Using first-person POV I describe to the reader my observations, emotional reactions and inferences as an outsider. This style ideally transports the reader alongside me on a journey of learning and challenging assumptions in an authentic and understandable way. I used third-person POV to tell the stories I did not witness first hand or to relay factual information and analysis.

I chose to include a comprehensive background section in the Method Document, instead of within the Longform Narrative, so that readers could familiarize themselves with important context before diving into an investigation of contemporary issues. The story of international women's soccer is not universally known, and in order to understand the current situation, it helps to be familiar with the past. However, the Longform Narrative is able to stand on its own without the background component. Including dense background information in early drafts of the Longform Narrative proved unnecessary and disruptive to the flow of the storytelling. The Longform Narrative picks up where the background section ends, in present-day.

4.0 SUBJECT MATTER HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 WHAT'S IN A NAME: HOW THE 'FOOTBALL VS SOCCER' DEBATE EXPLAINS THE ORIGINS OF THE GAME IN SOUTH AFRICA

While most of the English-speaking world refers to the sport played by the likes of Megan Rapinoe, Marta and Thembi Kgatlana as *football* some, including many South Africans and Americans, refer to the same game as *soccer*. This poses a semantics challenge and suggests a compelling starting point.

The contemporary game of soccer/ football traces its roots across continents and millennia. Societies around the world have been playing "folk football" since the Age of Antiquity with versions of the game both emerging independently and later spreading as a by-product of global imperialism (FIFA n.d.-c).

Mesoamerican civilization from present-day Mexico and Central America played a competitive game some 5000 years ago, involving two teams, opposing goals and a 7-kilogram ball being volleyed back-and-forth with the hips and backside only (Blakemore 2018). This ancient sport was associated with religious rituals, warfare and settling regional rivalries — associations that many die-hard football fans would argue have stood the test of time.

2nd and 3rd-century BC China had Cuju (Tsu-chu), a military-training exercise involving kicking a leather ball through a narrow opening in a net. Cuju spread across China's imperial domain and by the 7th-century AD the Japanese developed a recreational version known as Kemari (FIFA n.d.-c).

The ancient Greeks and Romans had their own competitive team games, known as Episkyros and Harpastum, whose European progeny include Calcio fiorentino in 16th-century Italy and the rudimentary, violent ball games played in Medieval Great Britain and France (FIFA n.d.-b).

By the 19th-century at least half a dozen branches of the game had emerged around the world.

By mid-century several variations of the game were popular at the elite English private schools and universities. Some versions allowed for the use of both hands and feet, while others restricted play to feet only. Always a stickler for the rules, the English found this disorder unpalatable. To distinguish between each respective version of play, they established separate regulations for Association Football (1863) and Rugby Football (1871) (Friedman 2014). While variations of football independently arose all around the world — doubtlessly influencing and intertwining with each other at various points — the structure and rules of play established by 19th-century English Association Football lay the foundation for modern professional football. Before the end of the century, national governing bodies for Association Football had sprung up in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, followed by clubs across Europe and South America.

So where does *soccer* sub in?

It was allegedly a fad on the campuses of English universities in the 19th-century to add -er to the end of common words to fashion collegiate slang. However inexplicably, the game of Association Football metamorphosed from its abbreviated form assoc. to the jocular *socc-er* (Szymanski 2014).

European colonial powers introduced the game to their overseas territories in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region throughout the 19th-century. In some corners of the globe the usage of the colloquial nickname *soccer* stuck.[3]

Association Football was first officially played in South Africa in 1862 by white, male British colonial soldiers and government workers in what was then the Cape Colony (Alegi 2010a). Records indicate that the game was quickly embraced by local men, spread through military relationships and the missionary school system (Alegi 2010b). Within a few decades there were numerous recreational teams and informal leagues made up of male foreigners, local South Africans and Indians alike,[4] although they were typically racially segregated (Alegi 2010b).

[3] Interestingly, by the 1980s the term *soccer*, once a distinctly British colloquialism, was allegedly deemed too American (Perrigo 2018). The English have pointedly returned to their *football* roots and will fervently deny any association with *soccer* to this day.
[4] Including the Transvaal Indian Football Association, established in 1896 by a young Indian lawyer named Mahatma Gandhi; "most likely the first organised football group on the continent that was not run by whites" (Clarey 2010).

Interestingly, in 1899 the Orange Free State Bantu Football Club, comprised of 16 black South African men, was the first South African football team to tour overseas (Bolsmann 2011; SA History n.d.).

Over the course of the 20th-century, as the game and its formal structures developed in South Africa, it was accepted that the monikers *soccer* and *football* referred to the same thing. In both casual conversation and among the sport's official stakeholders, the terminology was, and continues to be, used inconsistently. Probing the various instances of when *soccer* is used versus *football* in the contemporary South African context reveals an interesting and important conclusion: *soccer* replaced *football* as the more localized and democratized name.

Let's start with the history of the national governing body for Association Football in South Africa and its controversial role in the country's geo-political-sports history. The original South African Football Association (SAFA; rebranded as the Football Association of South Africa or FASA in 1957) was established for white male participants in 1892. In 1910 it became the first African football association affiliated with the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA). SAFA/ FASA remained a member of FIFA on and off for the next 50 years, maintaining the practice — in line with South Africa's apartheid system — of excluding non-white players. In 1951, three semi-professional leagues comprised of black, Indian and coloured players joined forces to form the multiracial South African Soccer Federation (SASF) as an alternative to SAFA/ FASA (Alegi 2010a). (Note the use of *soccer* in the name here, rather than *football*.) While SASF never became an official member of FIFA, it played an important role alongside other African, Soviet and Asian national associations in petitioning FIFA to confront SAFA/ FASA's racism.

The Confederation of African Football (CAF) became the world's first sporting organisation to antagonise the apartheid regime by ejecting South Africa from its continental association in 1960 and boycotting the 1966 FIFA men's World Cup over South Africa's initial invitation to participate (BBC 2016). The International Olympic Committee withdrew South Africa's invitation to the 1964 Olympic Games and formally expelled the country from its membership in 1970. After a decade of shameful equivocating, FIFA officially expelled South Africa by a

majority vote in 1976 (Alegi 2010a). These bans comprised an influential international sports boycott against apartheid South Africa that lasted for the next three decades. The campaign culminated with the International Olympic Committee and United Nations declaring a total isolation of South African sports in the late 1980s. (Mail & Guardian 2007)

As the apartheid government finally collapsed, the remnants of SAFA/ FASA and SASF unified to form *the South African Football Association 2.0.* (SAFA). South Africa was re-admitted to CAF in 1991 and FIFA a year later (Alegi 2010a). Today SAFA governs South Africa's racially integrated national soccer teams (Banyana Banyana for women, Bafana Bafana for men) and oversees the two domestic semi-professional women's leagues, the Sasol Women's League and the newly launched SAFA National Women's League.

SAFA is directly linked to the European style of the game and governance structure of FIFA, so the usage of *football* in its name makes sense. Interestingly however, the association that semi-autonomously manages South Africa's top two domestic men's professional divisions and corresponding cup competitions is called the Premier *Soccer* League (PSL). Considering this, it makes sense that South Africans who are more familiar with their local men's club or the domestic league would be inclined to call the game *soccer*, while those more exposed to the European or international sport's influence would use *football*.

South Africa's sports media use soccer and football interchangeably in their coverage. Websites for the national media outlets The Sowetan, The Citizen, IOL, TimesLive and News24 each have dedicated sections titled for *soccer* news, but *football* still pops up within copy. The Mail & Guardian, eNCA and EWN seem to use *soccer* when covering the game within South Africa and *football* when writing about the game in Europe, but that's not a binding rule. SuperSport and SABC Sports refer to the game as *football* in their online coverage, but commentators say both *soccer* and *football* in broadcast. Anecdotally, in media sports coverage it seems that again *football* is more associated with the international/ European game and *soccer* domestic.

Among South African universities, primary and high schools, and youth training programs, *soccer* and *football* are both used. The Wits University Football Club, which administers the

men's and women's varsity squads, participates in several leagues that all defer to football: Varsity Sports Football, the Soweto Football Association, the Rand Central Local Football Association, the University Sport South Africa Football League, the Wits Internal Football League and the SAFA-administered Sasol Women's League. Interestingly, soccer is more commonly used at the high school level, according to a survey of Gauteng regional high school sports programs.[5] Among youth training programs there is variability. There are junior clubs, camps and youth training programs across the Gauteng province associated with the Janine van Wyk Girls Football Development Program, Discovery Soccer Park, Emmarentia Sporting Football Club and SuperSport United Soccer Schools, as well as the Amanda Dlamini Girls Foundation and the future Portia Modise's Academy.

Finally, anecdotal feedback from fans of the sport supports the football/ international: soccer/ domestic theory. On game day, Chaf Pozi bar in Soweto is the best spot — second only to being at Soccer City stadium[6] itself — to watch the Soweto Derby, a semi-annual, fiercely contested match-up between PSL rivals the Kaizer Chiefs and the Orlando Pirates (FIFA 2007). Chaf Pozi manager Zama Zwane says that "99% of people in the country" call the sport soccer, especially within Soweto (Zwane 2019). She says soccer is part of the local vernacular and how the community knows the game.

However, ask any South African fan who follows imported European professional league matches more closely than the domestic league and they'll insist that the game is *football*. Ironically, in this regard, it would seem that *football* is the imported term in South Africa, and *soccer*, the more localized.

Considering this, I will predominantly use *soccer* throughout my longform project. I believe it is the more democratized term in South Africa, considering the historical legacy of Association Football and the contemporary reclaiming of *soccer* within the local context. That being said, in noting that *soccer* and *football* are widely recognized to be synonymous, I anticipate inevitably

[5] Informal survey of sports programs associated with the Janine van Wyk Girls School League — including, Edenvale, Hoerskool Vorentoe, and Jeppe High School for Girls, among others.
[6] FIFA prohibits official host stadiums from using a sponsor's brand in their names. FNB Stadium was therefore referred to as Soccer City during the 2010 FIFA men's World Cup in South Africa (FIFA 2010).

using the two interchangeably. I intend to use *football* more when discussing the origins and historical development of the game (which is why its usage comes up more in this Background section), and *soccer* when discussing the contemporary game within South Africa. Additionally, I will not alter quotes or source material that use one or the other.

4.2 'AN EXHIBITION WHICH CAN HARDLY BE CALLED DECENT': GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

Let's take a few steps, say 10 yards, back.

Women have participated in recreational games and physical activities in ancient societies around the world since the beginning of time, in spite of structural barriers and restrictive social norms.

There were the Heraean Games in ancient Greece — a separate women's athletic tournament that took place alongside the men-only Olympic Games (Mansky and Wei-Haas 2016). Women played on some of the first Cuju teams in ancient China and there are depictions of ball games being played by women in Egyptian hieroglyphs (FIFA World Football Museum 2019). Dibeke, an indigenous dodgeball-style game played in pre-colonial South Africa, required opposing sides to have an equal number of girls and boys (JSL-TV 2018). Along with doing pretty much anything else she wanted, Mary Queen of Scots played golf in the 16th-century and was allegedly a fan of men's football games herself (Hessayon 2019).

In Great Britain, the birthplace of Association Football, there is a relatively good record of the development of women's sports, particularly football. Following years of women and girls being spectators and leisurely playing throughout the 19th-century, the first official women's football matches under the new laws of the Football Association took place only 11 years after the men's (FIFA World Football Museum 2019). A series of games between women from Scotland and England took place in the Scottish Highlands in 1881, scandalizing the British press at the time, which stated, "We must, in the interest of public morals, protest against the institution of an exhibition which can hardly be called decent" (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 9).

Amateur and semi-professional women's football flourished across Great Britain through the first two decades of the 20th-century. British women working in munitions factories in place of men during World War I formed intramural teams and hosted friendly or charity competitions to sizable crowds. Gradually their games became more serious and an organised women's semi-professional league was established, which produced the ground-breaking Dick Kerr's Ladies Football Club (Shackle 2014; Doble 2015).

Elsewhere in the world, from the turn of the century to the early 1900s, women were playing football in various organised capacities, including semi-professionally. The increase in women and girls globally participating in athletics and pushing to professionalize their own sports structures often paralleled early women's liberation movements, particularly suffrage, when gendered social norms were being challenged across wider society (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 20). From the United States (1893) to Chile (1900), from France (1910) to Russia (1911), and from Scandinavia (1920s/30s) to Australia (1930s), records show women participating in formal organised football (FIFA World Football Museum 2019).

All good things come to offend the patriarchy eventually. In nearly every corner of the globe — at various moments in history for one reason or another — women were excluded from formally participating in not just soccer, but athletics and competitive sports in general, among other things such as voting and political participation, property and capital ownership, and bodily autonomy and reproductive rights.

In Victorian England the commonly accepted dogma was that women couldn't possibly think, compete and menstruate at the same time (Bell 2008). Athletics remained a part of the educational curriculum at English all-girls schools, but more for the purposes of vitality and good posture than sport. In 1921 the amateur English Ladies Football Association was established with 57 all-women teams (FIFA World Football Museum 2019). By the end of the year, intimidated by the popularity of the women's league, the Football Association altogether banned it, calling football "unsuitable" for ladies (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 17). Women's football in the UK faded from public view, and by association, it wasn't promoted or developed equally to the men's game across the British Commonwealth (Doble 2015).

This pattern was unfortunately similar across the rest of the world. Brazilian women's football flourished in the early 20th-century, with at least 10 active all-women teams playing in Rio de Janeiro. In 1941 a concerned male citizen petitioned the President to exclude women and girls from the sport, out of fear that football "would cost them their fertility" (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 20), and the National Sports Council swiftly complied. West Germany instituted a similar ban in 1955, with the German Football Association saying, "In the fight for the ball, the feminine grace vanishes, body and soul will inevitably suffer harm" (Dator 2019).

For the next several decades women played football mostly in the shadows — refusing to be inhibited in spite of widespread formal bans. Amateur and semi-professional leagues only began to resurface in the second half of the 20th-century (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 20).

The re-emergence of women's soccer on the world stage began in 1969. Pioneering women footballers from Western Europe hosted two unsanctioned international women's tournaments in 1969 and 1970, followed by a third friendly in Mexico in 1971. FIFA, the official gatekeepers of the sport, took reluctant notice, motivated by a fear that private interests could beat them to a potentially viable money-making opportunity (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 36). In 1970 FIFA polled its member associations on their attitudes toward professionalizing women's football. The South African Football Association, technically still a member of FIFA at the time, voted that it officially recognized football for women — SAFA would be formally suspended eight years later (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 36). Over the next two decades FIFA tested the waters by hosting a series of official international friendlies among women's national teams from Western Europe, Scandinavia and Asia (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 36). National teams that weren't yet recognized by their national football associations and semi-professional clubs from women's leagues around the world simultaneously participated in numerous unofficial tournaments (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 36).

In 1986, at the 45th FIFA Congress in Mexico City, Norwegian delegate Ellen Wille stood before a room full of men and demanded women's football be taken seriously on the world stage (FIFA 2011). It was the spark — or at least the public shaming — that was needed to finally

reignite the fire of international women's professional soccer. Two years later in 1988, FIFA allowed China (the epicentre of the women's game in Asia) to host a trial international women's tournament; three years after that in 1991, the first official Women's World Cup was born (FIFA World Football Museum 2019, p 40 & 52).

4.3 RISE OF 'THE GIRLS': A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL SOCCER IN SOUTH AFRICA

Archival documentation of women playing organised football in South Africa prior to the 1990s is extremely limited. Original newspaper articles and contemporary scholarly articles reference organised women's teams only starting from the 1960s, whereas the first mention of men playing football in South Africa begins a century prior. In spite of sparse records, women and girls in South Africa undoubtedly created their own opportunities to participate in athletics like soccer long before they got the official whistle to play.

The first mention of organised women's football suggests that the phenomenon emerged in South Africa's urban centres, with amateur teams and leagues materializing in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg in the early 1960s and late 1970s. In line with apartheid policy and societal norms, the earliest organised women's soccer structures were, for the most part, racially segregated. With their race and class privilege, white, English-speaking, middle-class women were able to challenge gendered ideological and structural barriers and cross over into the male-typed sport earlier than their black peers. However, Natal (present day KwaZulu-Natal) and the Cape (present day Eastern, Western and Northern Cape) were the epicentres of the first wave of development in women's soccer, and there the game was particularly popular among coloured women and girls in the 1970s. In spite of the material inequalities, spatial exclusion, structural neglect, economic disenfranchisement and institutionalized violence black women experienced under apartheid rule, they created their own opportunities to play soccer outside formal structures beginning around the same time, but particularly from the late 1970s onwards within townships.

Interestingly, the most well-known accounts of early organized women's football in South Africa describe black and coloured teams. A 1962 Drum magazine article titled "Soccer Goes Sexy" profiles the Mother City Girls, a mixed-race team from Cape Town that would play 'curtain

raiser' (novelty) scrimmages prior to local men's professional matches from the multiracial, anti-apartheid South African Soccer League. That same year, a group of high school girls organized the short-lived "Orlando Pirates Women's Football Club" that played in the township of Soweto in Johannesburg. Local media had colourful reactions to the female athletes. The Drum article focused on the novelty of women playing soccer and their physical attractiveness, more than the substance of their skill, writing:

> For the team that's pulling the crowds in has something no other eleven in the country can boast — curvaceous sex appeal! And what they lack in the way of science they more than make up with by determination and bounce — especially bounce! (Drum 1962)

In the early 1970s, shifting notions of gender roles and expectations led white and coloured women — with their relative class and race privileges — to challenge male hegemony in soccer. An increase in the number of teams in the various provincial leagues motivated the creation of the first national governing body for women's football, the South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA), and the first annual Women's Interprovincial Soccer Tournament in 1974. SAWFA was notably the first dedicated women's football association in Africa. While it initially excluded black women, SAWFA was ground-breaking for centralizing the fledgling multi-racial provincial leagues and accepting white *and* coloured women. Membership started at six hundred women, with white women in the majority and dominating organizational control, and grew within 15 years to include nine all-women's leagues (including representatives from the Eastern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal, Western Transvaal, Border, Western Province, Cape Western, Eastern Province, Natal and Northern Free State). SAWFA accepted black women participants from the late 1970s, long ahead of its counterparts on the men's side, whose refusal to integrate resulted in South Africa's suspension from the international governing body of Association Football, Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), from 1964 to 1992. The apartheid government passively permitted the integration of organized women's football because it was such an insignificant cohort in their eyes (Hilton-Smith 2019).

At the same time that women's soccer was gaining momentum in South Africa, the sport was re-emerging on the world stage. While in the minority, the African continent was represented at the first international women's soccer tournaments: A national team from the Ivory Coast participated in the 1988 trial tournament and Nigeria at the first FIFA Women's World Cup in

1991. In the same year, the Confederation of African Football (CAF) reluctantly established a World Cup qualifying tournament among senior African women's national teams, naming it the African Women's Championship (today, the Africa Women Cup of Nations). South Africa was banned from the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup and African Women's Championship due to the international sports boycott still in place; however, that didn't stop a pioneering group of South African women footballers from plying their trade overseas. In 1989, SAWFA covertly assembled an unofficial national women's squad, calling on players from Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town — including a young Desiree Ellis — to sneak out of the country and participate in a 'rebel' tour across Italy (Pelak 2010, p 66).

When the apartheid government finally collapsed in 1994, relics of South Africa's men's soccer apparatuses unified to form the multi-racial South African Football Association (SAFA). South Africa was readmitted to CAF (1991) and FIFA (1992). Women's football reorganized as a semi-autonomous governing body affiliated with SAFA and officially joined the ranks of international football at the first 'Women's World Conference on Football' (1992). South Africa's newly established official women's team called itself Banyana Banyana, stylized after the men's national team, Bafana Bafana, and translated as 'the girls' in Zulu. The team made its international debut in a 14-0 routing of Swaziland in May 1993 and participated in the second unofficial CAF African Women's Championships in Nigeria in 1995, placing as runner-up (Pelak 2010).

The dismantling of the apartheid state, coupled with the structural, political and ideological gains hard-won by "the mass women's movement in South Africa," (Pelak 2010) heralded a new dawn for women's soccer in the 1990s. Over the next decade, participation significantly increased and the demographics notably shifted: more coloured, Indian and black South African women joined existing teams and many new all-black teams were established, particularly in townships. As women's soccer grew rapidly and women took up more space within the traditionally male-dominated sport, conflict quickly emerged. Allegations against male coachers, managers and owners ranged from claims of mismanagement and the marginalization of women leaders, to the trivialization of claims of sexual harassment and threats of violence against women players (Pelak 2010, p 70; Naidoo and Muholi 2010). Eventually the Minister of Sport and Recreation

convened the Pickard Commission in July 1996 to investigate gendered conflicts within SAFA, among broader issues of maladministration. The judicial commission concluded that, "the male-dominated SAFA was extremely dilatory and negligent in paying attention to problems that women's teams were experiencing" (Pelak 2010, p 71). In response SAFA controversially decided to incorporate the women's game completely under its administrative and financial control (1999/2000), with the hope that would engender tighter oversight and greater professionalization. Some women leaders at the time were hopeful, while others predicted women's voices would be further marginalized in decision-making (Naidoo and Muholi 2010, p 117-118).

The first decade of the millennium was a pivotal period of growth and institutionalization of women's football in South Africa, led by a handful of dedicated and tireless female players and administrators, including Fran Hilton-Smith (a long-time director for women's football at SAFA and one of Banyana Banyana's first coaches) and Anastasia Tsichlas (who SAFA appointed as the first dedicated chairperson of women's football in 2006 and the first female member of its national executive committee). In 1999, SAFA organised a Women's Football Indaba (*gathering*) to develop a national commercial growth strategy and in 2000, South Africa hosted the CAF African Women's Championship (Naidoo and Muholi 2010, p 118).

While amateur women's teams had been competing locally and provincially for many years, SAFA established the first national semi-professional women's league in 2001. Called the 'SAFA Sanlam National Women's League,' the league encompassed 300 teams from all 25 of SAFA's national regions and had as its sole corporate sponsor, the domestic financial services giant Sanlam (Hong and Mangan 2004, p 245). Hilton-Smith said it was the positive response Sanlam received after sponsoring the 2000 African Women's Championship that spurred the brand's interest in sponsoring a domestic women's league. Sanlam contributed R15 million over three years to bolster the new league (Naidoo and Muholi 2010). When Sanlam's three-year commitment expired in 2003, South African mobile communications company Vodacom stepped up as the new primary sponsor from 2003-2007. "Vodacom began sponsoring a Women's Inter-Regional Tournament," according to researcher Martha Saavedra, "a week-long event contested by representative sides of the 25 SAFA Regions and the national side of the South African

Students Sports Union" (Saavedra 2006). Vodacom withdrew its support in 2007/8 and for a year there was no financial support for the amateur league, until South African bank ABSA and energy giant Sasol Limited offered to step up in 2009 (Alegi 2010a, p 123). A decade later, after many false starts, SAFA would finally launch the long-promised semi-professional women's professional league, the SAFA Women's National League in 2019 (SAFA 2019).

Over the first decade of the 21st century, the national government also allocated funds towards the development of professional women's football and the senior national women's team; however, SAFA was responsible for managing the allowance and was criticized for a litany of financial and strategic failures, among them — failing to procure additional corporate sponsorship; continuing to offer unequal pay to the women's national team until 2019; failing to invest in development structures, such as a professional league, school soccer programs and a high-calibre training facility; and marginalizing the voices of female coaches and leaders, then replacing them with men who treated women's football as an afterthought (Pelak 2010; Naidoo and Muholi 2010). All of this resulted in an environment that not only stunted the nation's competitiveness on the world stage and discouraged women from seeing soccer as a viable career path, but that fortified the cycle of structural gender discrimination and male hegemony in soccer.

While South Africa's women have never won the African Women Cup of Nations, they have made it to the finals five times (including in 2018, which was heartbreakingly decided in Nigeria's favour on penalty kicks, and produced 2018's Golden Ball winner, the South African Thembi Kgatlana). Banyana Banyana only qualified for its first Olympics in 2012 (again in 2016) and did not make its official FIFA Women's World Cup debut until the eighth iteration of the tournament in 2019. Disappointingly, Banyana Banyana was knocked out of qualifying for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games after losing on home turf to Botswana on penalty kicks in September 2019 (Baleka 2019). FIFA currently ranks Banyana Banyana as the 53rd best international women's confederation and the third best African national team (FIFA n.d.-a)

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This thesis relied on a combination of sources and research methods to explore the topic of women's football in South Africa, including primary archival documentation, secondary research and qualitative data collection procedures. Given the limited body of literature and scholarship on women's soccer in South Africa, significant original research was required. Below, I expand on the primary qualitative data collection procedures I employed, including individual interviews and observations.

I cover the archival documentation, secondary research and scholarship in the following section, "6.0 Literature Review."

5.1 INTERVIEWS

In total, I conducted 22 semi-structured and informal interviews over the course of my researching and reporting between June 2019 and March 2020.

While the thesis has a national scope, the majority of the interviews and observations took place in Gauteng, South Africa's most populous province. Gauteng, which encompasses Johannesburg and Tshwane (Pretoria), was selected for its proximity to key figures and events, given my limited timeframe. Interviews also took place over one week in Paris, France during the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. With more time and resources I would have liked to expand the geographic range of data collection and conduct more interviews.

I started by compiling an extensive list of potential interview subjects from a wide range of relevant groups, including the national South African Football Association (SAFA) and SAFA-affiliated local football associations; elite women's soccer structures such as the Sasol Women's League and SAFA National Women's League; the senior women's national team Banyana Banyana and junior women's national teams; youth soccer development structures such as local community organizations and private soccer academies; relevant South African national departments; stakeholders affiliated with the media; and corporate sponsors.

I identified key figures from each group (including professional and recreational female athletes, coaches and administrators, parents of youth athletes, individuals in positions of leadership or decision-making and soccer fans) and adapted my list based on feedback, participant interest and availability. I began conducting interviews as positive responses came in and continued as time allowed. In the end, the sample size for each group ranged from one to four persons.

I used a standard set of questions for each interview to extract insight, data and stories related to the core themes. As I also wanted the interviews to be dynamic and personalized, I encouraged a natural flow of conversation that at times deviated from the pre-set list of questions.

The majority of interviews were in-person, with one conducted over the phone. The in-person interviews were carried out at:

- Recreational, university and school soccer fields in Tshwane, Johannesburg, Alexandra, Ekurhuleni and Mohlakeng in Gauteng Province;
- Professional sports stadiums in Soweto, Johannesburg and Paris, France;
- Informal locations such as a participant's home or a neutral coffeeshop.

Of the 22 interviews, 15 were women and seven were men. The participants comprised a diverse spectrum of race and class backgrounds, with all being South African citizens. All interview participants were above 18 years old, with a median age range of 25 to 45 years old. I had no previous relationship with any of the participants and reached out to all of them for the first time for the purposes of this project. No incentives were offered to participants.

I audiotaped each interview. Information and insight garnered from the interviews was translated in the form of a story from my perspective or for background information in the Longform Narrative, rather than as a facsimile or transcription. Archival information and secondary research were used to verify information obtained through the interviews.

5.2 OBSERVATIONS

The second key component of my qualitative data collection was observation. Participant and in-field observation is a research method common in the social sciences and located within the field

of study known as ethnography. Observation is employed for the purpose of gaining dynamic insight into a community's culture, norms and motivations. It involves entering the natural social setting of a community ('field site'), building a relationship with the central actors and engaging in passive observation. The empirical evidence gathered from observation supplements the more subjective information garnered from formal interviews. (More insight on my understanding of the ethical considerations and limitations of ethnographic study, particularly within the context of the limited timeframe for my data collection, is expanded upon in the chapters "7.0 Challenges" and "8.0 Ethical Considerations".)

Overall I conducted seven observations over the course of my researching and reporting. Extensive notes were taken during and after my observations, which were later translated in the form of a story from my perspective or for background information in the Longform Narrative.

In noting that 'women's football' is not one homogenous community, I set out to conduct multi-sited observations in order to gather a diverse range of perspectives and experiences. Six of the seven observations took place in Gauteng province during the primary research period of November and December 2019. One observation took place in Paris, France during the FIFA Women's World Cup in June 2019.

I conducted two observations of matches of the Sasol Women's League, the oldest of South Africa's two semi-professional national women's soccer leagues. One match was at the Rosina Sedibane Modiba Sports School in the residential suburb of Laudium, Tshwane. This match was a regular-season contest between two teams in the Gauteng division of the Sasol League. The second observation was a day spent at Tsakane Stadium in the Brakpan neighbourhood of Ekurhuleni. On this day I attended multiple matches of the 2019 Sasol League National Championships, an annual week-long tournament among the top teams from each of the league's nine provincial divisions. I also conducted a direct observation of the University Sports South Africa Football National Club Championships women's final, taking place at Bidvest Wits Stadium, University of the Witwatersrand in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. This match featured the senior women's teams from the University of the Western Cape and the University of Johannesburg competing for the title of national varsity champion. The primary purpose of

attending these three events was to observe the real-life environment of elite women's soccer in South Africa. I was able to observe patterns of behaviour and interactions among athletes, coaches, officials, fans and community members. I was also able to observe characteristics of the setting related to my key research themes (i.e. noting the presence or absence of media, structural-environmental barriers, etc.) that served as important empirical evidence in my Longform Narrative. The second purpose was to identify and build relationships with potential interview participants.

To further my understanding of how soccer is perceived as a "flagship masculine sport" (Pelak 2005, p 57), I attended the Soweto Derby at FNB Stadium[7] in the eponymous Johannesburg township. The Soweto Derby is a storied contest between rivals Kaizer Chiefs FC and Orlando Pirates FC of the men's top-tier professional league (the Premier Soccer League). Attending the game allowed me the opportunity to conduct numerous informal interviews with fans of men's soccer and to question their perceptions of women and girls' soccer. I was also able to observe characteristics of the setting to contrast with information gathered at sites of women's elite soccer.

As my thesis focused on the barriers to women *and* girls' soccer participation, it was important to also visit sites of girls' soccer activity. I was not able to directly interview minors or observe school soccer programmes, due to the University's ethics requirements and personal time constraints; however, I was still able to observe instances of girls' soccer in private tournaments and community events. I conducted two such observations. I spent a day in Braamfontein, Johannesburg attending matches of the prestigious Volkswagen Junior Masters Tournament, which, for the first time, included all-girls teams (participants up to age 15). I also spent a day in the Johannesburg township Alexandra attending the launch of the Alex Girls Football Development programme — a new all-girls recreational soccer league comprising 350 local school children (ages 8-11). The purpose of attending these two events was to observe the dynamics of two vastly different sites of girls' soccer participation. Additionally, attending both events gave me the opportunity to conduct informal interviews with key adult figures. The

[7] FNB Stadium is the largest Association Football stadium on the African continent and holds unique significance in South Africa's sports and political history. The stadium hosted both the 2010 FIFA men's World Cup opening ceremony and final game, and former South African president Nelson Mandela's first speech as a free man in 1990 and his memorial service in 2013.

Volkswagen Tournament was well-attended by parents of the young female athletes and the Alex Girls Football Development launch event by relevant private and public stakeholders, including coaches, individuals from local non-profits and representatives from the SAFA-affiliated local football association.

The only observation that took place outside South Africa was at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup in Paris, France. I attended one group stage match of South Africa's senior national women's team Banyana Banyana at Parc des Princes stadium on the outskirts of the French capital. The impetus for attending this event was Banyana Banyana's qualification for its first World Cup competition, a significant milestone in the team's history. The primary purpose of my attendance was to observe Banyana Banyana situated within the context of the highest level of international women's soccer. I was also able to conduct numerous informal interviews.

6.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Given the limited body of literature and scholarship specifically on women's soccer in South Africa, I cast a wide net across a variety of relevant themes to collect sufficient qualitative and quantitative data, secondary research and scholarly analysis. The sources I consulted for each theme spanned several mediums, including primary archival documents, journal articles, dissertations, books, videos, research reports and news articles.

A bulk of my research was conducted in South Africa using the University of the Witwatersrand library's online network of electronic databases (such as Taylor and Francis online and SAGE journals) and e-journals (such as *Soccer & Society*). I also utilised the website of the Johannesburg-based NGO Gender Links for Equality and Justice, which maintains a database of publications and research on gender studies in South Africa.

I divided the Literature Review into the following five thematic categories:

1. historical development of women's soccer in South Africa (primary source material and journal articles);
2. historical development of international women's soccer (books);
3. historical development of soccer in South Africa regardless of gender, where key themes are discussed (books and journal articles);
4. contemporary documentation of women's soccer in South Africa (a survey of South African news coverage and scholarship);
5. global multidisciplinary documentation of key themes (a survey of international news coverage, journal articles and research reports).

6.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S SOCCER IN SOUTH AFRICA

Information on, and scholarly analysis of, the historical development of women's soccer in South Africa is sparse, hindered by the fact that there is a lack of archival documentation, such as original newspaper articles or tournament records, for the female game. What does exist is scattered and hard to access (Alegi 2010a, p 119; Saavedra 2006). Given more time and resources, I would have liked to seek out more original source material. For the purposes of this thesis, I was able to access primary documentation from the University of the Witwatersrand

William Cullen Library (ex: an October 1962 Drum magazine article "Soccer goes Sexy" on microfilm); from the online archives of the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (ex: SAFA briefings to the Sport, Art and Culture Commission of the National Assembly); and from SAFA's website, SAFA.net.

A large debt is owed to the handful of dedicated social scientists who produced pioneering research on the topic of women's soccer in South Africa and first identified the core primary documents. Much of the historical background for this thesis is based on their work. The studies are fully enumerated in the Bibliography section at the end of this document; however, the key works worth highlighting here are *(*a*)* "Women and gender in South African soccer: a brief history" by Dr Cynthia F Pelak, *(*b*)* "Ch. 5: Women's Bodies and the world of football in South Africa" by Prishani Naidoo and Zanele Muholi, *(*c*)* "Football feminine – development of the African game: Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa" by Martha Saavedra, and *(*d*)* "Social cohesion, sexuality, homophobia and women's sport in South Africa" by Mari Haugaa Engh and Cheryl Potgieter.

6.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S SOCCER

Encouragingly, there is a significant body of literature pertaining to the historical development of international women's soccer, in the form of books written by sports journalists and social scientists. However, they predominantly cover the U.S. Women's National Team or the history of women's football in the United Kingdom. These texts were still useful to inform the style of the Longform Narrative, background information in the Method Document and the core themes in the Longform Narrative. For this I referenced texts such as (*a)* the FIFA World Football Museum's *The Official History of the FIFA Women's World Cup,* (*b*) Fan Hong and JA Mangan's *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation: Kicking off a New Era* and (*c*) Jean Williams' *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives On Women's Football.*

6.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SOCCER IN SOUTH AFRICA REGARDLESS OF GENDER, WHERE KEY THEMES ARE DISCUSSED

There is an extensive body of literature and scholarly analysis on the evolution of international men's soccer or soccer irrespective of gender. Books and journal articles that touched on the key

themes in the Longform Narrative or on the historical development of the game in South Africa, I found worthwhile to consult. For researching the history of soccer in South Africa I turned to the ground-breaking work of Peter Alegi, including his two books *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game* and *Laduma! Soccer, Politics and Society in South* Africa, and Tim Couzen's 1983 article, "An Introduction to the History of Football in South Africa," in *Town and Countryside in the Transvaal: Capitalist Penetration and Popular Response*. Ahead of the 2010 FIFA men's World Cup hosted by South Africa, the journal *Soccer & Society* produced a volume dedicated to exploring the history and current events of soccer in this country. The volume's scholarship was particularly helpful in elucidating my key themes.

6.4 CONTEMPORARY DOCUMENTATION OF WOMEN'S SOCCER IN SOUTH AFRICA

In the Longform Narrative I relied heavily on the South African news media for contemporary information and insight. I found that news coverage and analysis of the women's game is modest compared to the men's; however, there are a number of journalists, such as Busisiwe Mokwena, who are working tirelessly to keep South African elite women's soccer in the headlines (predominantly on digital platforms). I surveyed several major South African news media over the course of researching and writing this thesis from October 2019 to March 2020, including the Mail & Guardian, the Daily Maverick, Laduma!, Business Day, News24 and Sport24, TimesLive, New Frame, the Daily Vox, the Sowetan, SAFA.net, the SABC, the Conversation and SuperSport.

Primary research from Africa-focused academic sources proved to be another fruitful well of contemporary information and insight. I was encouraged to find that there is a growing body of scholarly analysis coming out of the continent that focuses inward on gender and sports. Guided by the key themes, I reviewed African journals such as the South African Review of Sociology; the South African Journal for Research in Sport, Physical Education and Recreation; the African Journal for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance; and the Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity. I also found individual dissertations from South African universities to be incredibly helpful, as they were some of the only sources of specialized local data and analysis.

Undoubtedly I missed much important scholarship, which is an opportunity for future analysis.

6.5 GLOBAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY DOCUMENTATION OF KEY THEMES

The final category of literature and scholarship I consulted was the broadest and provided the bulk of my thematic secondary research. I reviewed international research reports, news coverage and journal articles pertaining to the key themes analysed in the Longform Narrative, including: media coverage of women's sports and portrayal of female athletes; discriminatory gender norms and hegemonic masculinity in sport; soccer/ sport for gender empowerment; and institutional investment (financial and structural) in women's sports. This provided substantial qualitative and quantitative data, current information, expert insight and scholarly analysis.

First, I identified and reviewed relevant research reports from notable international and South African non-governmental organizations, non-profits and academic institutions. This served the purpose of collecting expert analysis and quantitative data on the key themes. Reports by United Nations specialized agencies, the World Health Organization, the International Olympic Committee and UK Action Aid provided insight on issues related to global gender inequality. For international research specifically on gender mainstreaming in sports policy and programming, I cited work by FIFA, the U.S. Women's Sports Foundation, UK Women in Sport, the Brighton Plus Helsinki Declaration on Women and Sport, and the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls & Women in Sport at the University of Minnesota. Within South Africa, I turned to local foundations, government commissions and NGOs — including Media Monitoring Africa, GSport for Girls, the Commission on Gender Equality and Gender Links — for narrowly focused data on qualitative and quantitative representation of gender in the South African media, barriers to girls sports participation in South Africa and institutional investment.

I next conducted a broad survey of international journal articles and news coverage relating to women's sports issues and soccer, which I was encouraged to find relatively abundant. This can be attributed to the fact that the eighth edition of the FIFA Women's World Cup took place at the beginning of my research phase, spurring news articles and think-pieces, which aren't as prolific in non-tournament years. This literature informed the key themes I analysed in the Longform

Narrative. For the news coverage survey, I referenced numerous global media brands (accessed online), including Forbes, The Guardian, BBC, Brand Finance, the Drum, The New York Times, ESPN and ESPN Women, FIFA, Slate, the Washington Post, Quartz Africa, the Atlantic, NBC Sports, Business Insider, the Economist, PBS, Fan Three Sixty, the Equalizer and Time.

7.0 CHALLENGES

The two main challenges I anticipated were access and time constraints. Regarding the former, I expected issues as an outsider to the subject matter; however, that did not prove to be a problem. By creating an extensive list of potential interview and observation participants, then casting a wide net, I received more than enough interest in the end. So much so that when I had to edit down the final Longform Narrative, I was unable to include much of the information, insight and observations I had gathered. This underscores that there are more than enough stories waiting to be told and the subject matter deserves much more attention.

The short timeframe I had to complete this thesis did prove to be a challenge and a limitation. Given my time and financial resource constraints I was only able to conduct a small number of qualitative data collection procedures, relative to the wealth of information that exists. In particular, my observations were too limited in length and depth. As previous researchers have pointed out, this undoubtedly resulted in insufficient diversity of perspectives, narrow insight, omission of key factors and only "the most schematic understanding" (Saavedra 2006, p 228) of the subject matter (Pelak 2005, p 57 & 67). Therefore this thesis should be taken as a modest and limited contribution to the field, not a definitive account. It is my hope that my writing encourages further analysis and more in-depth fieldwork.

Another challenge I discovered during the course of researching was the lack of primary documentary materials and scholarly analysis of specific themes. There are very few original records of women's soccer participation, such as newspaper articles or tournament records, prior to the 1990s. What does exist is scattered and hard to access. Likewise, studies on specific themes within the South African context, such as on media coverage of women's sports, are limited. Given additional time and resources, I would have liked to seek out more original source material, such as by reviewing the archives of more South African media, doing field research at the SAFA and CAF headquarters, and gathering more oral histories.

8.0 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research project was deemed as having 'low risk,' as it did not involve vulnerable groups and potential harm to study participants was sufficiently mitigated. Ethical consideration was given to the terms of engagement with human participants to ensure informed consent and to minimize risk, in the following ways:

- I initially considered engaging with minors; however, that was quickly deemed an unnecessary risk. I did not interview any individuals under 18 years of age.
- For every structured interview, I provided the individual with a Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to sign. The Participant Information Sheet clearly and comprehensively explained the purpose of the research, the study procedures, the possible risks and how the individual's participation would make a contribution to my project's goals. Most importantly, the letter stipulated the individual's right to confidentiality and to withdraw consent at any time.
- I offered individuals the option to be quoted by a pseudonym or referenced anonymously. In the Longform Narrative I used the real names of only a select number of 'public figures,' who not only consented to their identities being disclosed, but whose identities strongly advanced the narrative. I provided pseudonyms for the vast majority of my study participants or referenced them on background anonymously.
- A bulk of my research involved observation for the purposes of background information gathering and anecdotal storytelling. Opportunities for observation were identified from extensive desk research and in consultation with central actors from the South African women's soccer community. In my Longform Narrative I did not identity individuals whom I observed in this manner by name or personal identifying details, unless they were deemed a 'public figure' and gave express consent.

Ethical consideration was also given to how my identity as an outsider and as a white American shaped not only my perspectives, assumptions and biases, but also how participants may have 'read' me and engaged with me during interviews and observations. I was aware of how this dynamic influenced the lens through which I interpreted my research, observations, interviews, and the literature and scholarship. While the Longform Narrative is a piece of journalistic storytelling, and therefore not a traditional academic analysis, I turned to the ethical

considerations of related scholarship for direction. In particular, I was guided by the approach of Dr Cynthia F. Pelak in her previous research on women and gender dynamics in South African soccer, where she stated:

> While I appreciate the aim of an interpretive [-feminist epistemological] approach is to understand the subjective meanings and intentions behind human action within a particular historical context, I question the notion of the value-free objective researcher who stands outside the research process. I recognize the interplay between researcher and participants in producing knowledge… Rather than supplying definitive answers to my questions regarding the experience of South African women footballers, this study is just one attempt, however limited and partial, to struggle with understanding those experiences. (Pelak 2005, p 57).

I therefore reiterate my intention that this thesis should be taken only as a modest and limited contribution to the field, not a definitive account. It is my hope that the thesis serves as a springboard for future fieldwork and scholarly analysis, and as a call for more media attention.

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PART TWO: THE LONGFORM NARRATIVE

CHAPTER 1: SIDE-LINED

On a cool June evening on the outskirts of Paris, Lesedi[8] posed for another selfie with a stranger. Standing outside the gates of the Parc des Princes Stadium — located five kilometres southwest of the capital city's iconic Arc de Triomphe — Lesedi straightened her felt top hat and readjusted her cape. The red, blue, green and yellow colours of the South African national flag covered her outfit from top to bottom. In one hand Lesedi held a vuvuzela, the ubiquitous plastic horn heard round the world during the 2010 FIFA men's World Cup in South Africa. She waved it in the air above her head as she leaned in and smiled for the camera.

It wasn't for Lesedi's conspicuous ensemble that strangers asked to pose alongside her, rather because the bright primary colours that adorned her hat and cape matched their own.

On the other side of the towering stadium walls, members of South Africa's senior women's national soccer team stretched, sprinted up and down the field, and took practice shots on goal. The rows of seats encircling the pitch started filling in and pop music blared on the stadium speakers.

In a little under an hour the team, known back home as Banyana Banyana, would face its counterparts from China in South Africa's second group stage match of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup. Banyana Banyana's biggest fans lingered outside the stadium, taking pictures and singing, before heading inside to find their seats.

Lesedi, I was pleasantly surprised to discover, was one of many who travelled to France to support the team during its World Cup journey and proudly wore South Africa's colours.

Lesedi and her husband took off two weeks from their jobs at a university in Durban to follow Banyana Banyana across France that summer. They purchased tickets to attend the team's three guaranteed group stage games and crisscrossed the country from Normandy to Paris to the

[8] Name changed.

southern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Lesedi vowed to stick around longer if South Africa made it through to the knockout round.

What Lesedi travelled over 13,000 kilometres for was historic — this tournament marked Banyana Banyana's debut at the FIFA Women's World Cup in the team's 26-year history.

***

Women played 'Association Football' alongside men since the sport's very beginning in the late 19th-century, according to the FIFA World Football Museum. Amateur and semi-professional women's football leagues flourished across Great Britain (the birthplace of the sport), Scandinavia and the Americas from the turn of the century to the period following the First World War. All good things come to offend the patriarchy eventually and in the 1920s, national football federations started forbidding women from playing, calling it "unsuitable for females."

For the next several decades women played football mostly in the shadows, refusing to be inhibited in spite of widespread formal bans.

Professional women's soccer re-emerged on the world stage near the end of the 20th-century. In the 1970s and '80s, the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) reluctantly acknowledged the growing popularity of the sport. Motivated by a fear that private interests could beat them to a potentially viable money-making opportunity, FIFA trialled a series of international competitions among women's national teams.

Every continent except Antarctica sent women eager to compete.

In 1991 — 60 years after the first men's tournament — FIFA allowed China to host the inaugural Women's World Cup. 63,000 fans packed Tianhe Stadium in Guangzhou to watch the United States beat Norway and become the first world champions.

At the same time, an international sports boycott of the apartheid government sealed off South African athletes from the rest of the world. The Confederation of African Football (CAF) became the first sporting organisation to eject South Africa from its membership in 1960. After a decade of shameful equivocating at the behest of its pro-apartheid president, FIFA expelled South Africa in 1976.

The campaign successfully isolated apartheid South Africa from international sports competitions for nearly three decades.

While the sports boycott prevented South Africa from sending an official national team to the inaugural Women's World Cup, a rebellious group of South African footballers staged their own protest. In 1989 the multiracial South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA) covertly recruited players from its network of amateur provincial leagues to sneak out of the country and participate in an informal tour across Italy.

It marked one of the first times an integrated sports team from South Africa played outside the country.

When the apartheid government collapsed in the early 1990s, the sports world reopened its doors to the newly democratic 'Rainbow Nation.' FIFA readmitted South Africa in 1992 and soccer officials convened try-outs for the country's first official national women's team, with an eye on the next World Cup.

It would be nearly 15 years before South Africa's women would get their shot.

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Banyana Banyana earned its place at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup by beating Mali in the semi-finals of their CAF qualifying tournament.[9] Advancing to the final match against

[9] Each of the six continental soccer associations around the world hosts a qualifying tournament to determine which national teams can proceed to the quadrennial FIFA Women's World Cup. The Africa Women Cup of Nations determines Africa's representatives.

powerhouse rivals Nigeria, South Africa secured one of the three World Cup berths allocated to teams from Africa.

How the Banyana Banyana players and staff reacted after that semi-final win — knowing they still had a final to play, but were on their way to their first World Cup — encapsulated the significance of the moment. When the final whistle blew captain Janine van Wyk lay on her back in the middle of the pitch overcome with emotion; future Player of the Tournament Thembi Kgatlana beamed and wiped away tears at the same time; and Head Coach Desiree Ellis wrapped each player in a triumphant hug.

Qualifying for a World Cup constituted a milestone that eluded the national team since its inception, but the players knew the achievement represented more than just history-in-the-making. Competing at the highest level on the world stage would increase the visibility of Banyana Banyana and South African women's soccer in the media.

Something that had the potential to really change the game.

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Given its central place in society, mass media plays an outsize role in shaping public opinion, socio-cultural norms and dominant ideologies. Visibility of women's sports in the media not only challenges negative gender stereotypes about 'female athleticism,' but has the potential to bolster perceptions of its value among audiences and corporate partners. Media coverage of an individual female athlete raises her profile and commercial worth, while increased coverage of all women's sports inspires the next generation of young athletes.

Research specifically on women's soccer in South Africa by Dr Cynthia F. Pelak found that television coverage of Banyana Banyana's matches in the 1990s directly correlated to an increase in women and girls expressing interest in the game.

Yet, data on the visibility of women's sports in the media paints a bleak picture. According to a 2018 study by UNESCO, women receive just 4% of global sports-related media coverage. In relation, South Africa skews slightly above average, yet is still way off the mark in terms of equal representation. The 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project analysed 17 mainstream media houses in South Africa across print, television and radio. Results indicated that women were the focus of only 11% of all sports stories.

One source of the problem in South Africa is that television broadcasters marginalise coverage of women's sports and female athletes, in favour of men's sports. South Africa's free-to-air public broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), is the primary source of news and information for over half the population. A 2012 Media Monitoring Africa content analysis of the SABC's radio and television programming found that the public broadcaster's stories side-lined women's voices and lacked in-depth gender perspectives.

One example of this is how the SABC treats women's football.

On the eve of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, the SABC announced it was not in a financial position to bid for the television rights to the tournament. In the same month, the SABC doled out to cover the 2019 men's Africa Cup of Nations, where the men's senior national team, Bafana Bafana, competed.

According to local media sources New Frame, TimesLive and the Daily Maverick, the SABC also only sporadically broadcasts matches of South Africa's two amateur women's soccer leagues, the Sasol Women's League and the SAFA National Women's League (SNWL).

To be fair, the public criticises the SABC for inconsistently carrying matches of Bafana Bafana and the independent men's professional league, the Premier Soccer League, as well. However, when that happens, public outcry and occasionally even ministerial intervention force the public broadcaster to swiftly reverse course, according to TimesLive.

South Africa's premium pay-TV operator DStv runs the sports entertainment channel SuperSport, which plugs the gap in women's coverage to a certain degree. After receiving criticism on social media for not covering the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2015, the private broadcaster carried Banyana Banyana's three group stage matches at the 2019 tournament. Yet, the vast majority of SuperSport's regular programming comprises domestic men's sports.

The FIFA Women's World Cup happens only every four years. By not regularly covering the lower levels of competition, SuperSport does nothing to commercially develop the game at home. Coverage of only the highest level of competition or of individual superstars will not engender societal change.

And that is just a snapshot of one medium. Coverage of male sports also dominates national print media in South Africa.

Even when mainstream media focuses on women's sports, the coverage often suffers from lower quality technical production (i.e. fewer camera angles and replays on television, less prominent placement in newspapers, etc.) and lower entertainment value (i.e. fewer statistics, fewer expert commentators, etc.). In their article, *"From Fizzle to Sizzle!"*, academics Michela Musto, Cheryl Cooky and Michael Messner coined this phenomenon "gender bland sexism" and warned it compounded the narrative that women's sports are secondary or 'boring.'

American sports journalist and professor Shira Springer studied ways to improve coverage of women's sports for the Nieman Foundation at Harvard University. She illustrated the important connection between high-quality media production and building audience engagement.

> Take statistics. They put players in historical context. They encourage the kind of debate that fuels sports passion. They also reveal the trends and anomalies that inspire a diverse array of stories. The more statistics available, the more knowledgeable reporters and fans become. The more knowledgeable, the more engaged. It's been that way for decades in men's sports. But in women's sports, statistics that go beyond the basics can be hard to find.

It is a pernicious cycle. Without engaging and accessible marketing and media coverage, of course women's sports will not be able to attract TV viewers, live-event attendees, devoted fans

or merchandise consumers in comparable numbers to men's sports. Visibility confers commercial value. As a direct result, corporate brand managers and institutional partners prematurely conclude that sufficient interest doesn't exist for women's sports and that they won't yield a high enough return on investment. This near-sighted conclusion perpetuates a vastly unequal financial reality for female athletes.

Sparse media coverage of women's sports also serves to reaffirm the societal belief that sport is a masculine domain. Unfortunately, the historical portrayal of female athletes in the media compounds this attitude.

When women's professional sports emerged in the late 20th-century, mainstream media and sports marketing campaigns presented female athletes in ways that infantilised them (referring to them as 'girls' or 'ladies'), emphasised non-sports related aspects (such as their status as a mother or wife) or blatantly focused attention on physical appearance and sex appeal, rather than athletic accomplishments. Such representation of female athleticism reinforced harmful attitudes and stereotypes, sustained notions of male dominance, and manipulated girls and young women's construction of identity.

You must still be feminine, but only in this way, and not too much.

More qualitative content analysis specifically of the South African context is needed; however, I found two noteworthy and revealing local reports. A 2007 study titled *The Construction and Deconstruction of Gender through Sport Reporting in Selected South African Newspapers* analysed the representation of gender in the most influential South African print newspapers during coverage of the 2004 Olympic Games. Authors Pam Serra and Cora Burnett found that photos consistently represented female athletes as submissive, while text concerning female athletes' physical appearance either celebrated their reflection of masculinity or derided them with sexual innuendos.

A 2018 article titled *Hetero-sexing the Athlete: Public and Popular Discourses on Sexuality and Women's Sport in South Africa* by Mari Haugaa Engh and Cheryl Potgieter suggested that

representation of female athletes in South Africa, particularly black and queer women, relied on three narrow tropes — sensationalising violence against female athletes, without acknowledging the underlying gender discrimination and sexist attitudes that drive it; celebrating only "heterosexy-feminine" presentations; or silencing gender performance and sexual orientation altogether.

As one example, Engh and Potgieter pointed to the obsession with elite South African runner Caster Semenya. While domestic brands increasingly include Semenya in marketing campaigns — representative of a progressive shift in the mainstream embrace of gender non-conformity — the continued fixation on her womanhood by international media and sporting officials is reductive and paternalistic. Engh and Potgieter also questioned if South African society grants its approval and liberal views of Semenya to all women.

The good news is that the increased critical mass of sportswomen, combined with a more diverse media landscape, provide female athletes around the world with an opportunity to control their representation and capitalise on their image on their own terms, while mainstream media plays catch-up.

In South Africa, media platforms and journalists that spotlight women's sports are few. Individuals such Busisiwe Mokwena, who extensively covered Banyana Banyana at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup and consistently breaks news on the Sasol and SAFA leagues, and organisations like GSport for Girls, South Africa's only media platform exclusively covering women's sports, lead the way.

Qualifying for the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup presented the perfect opportunity for South African media to interrupt the cycle of inadequate women's sports coverage and propel women's football forward. A step that could spur viewer and fan interest in the national women's leagues, school and youth soccer programs; compel new corporate sponsors; and pressure institutional partners to increase investment.

And it seems they missed a trick.

Following the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, FIFA announced that a combined 1.12 billion viewers tuned into official television and digital broadcast coverage, setting a new record for the tournament. Viewership in the combined Africa and Middle East region doubled from 2015. According to the Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, Banyana Banyana's opening match against Spain at the FIFA Women's World Cup in June 2019 ranked among DStv's top prime-time programming that month.

While Banyana Banyana failed to make it out of the group stage at the World Cup, the team's history-making accomplishment in qualifying reminded South Africa that women's stories exist and fans like Lesedi want to know about them. The media just needs to tune in.

CHAPTER 2: BREAKAWAY

In Banyana Banyana's first ever FIFA Women's World Cup match on 8 June 2019, the team suited up against Spain at the picturesque Stade Océane in the northern coastal city of Le Havre. Analysts predicted the game would fall in Spain's direction, but all eyes were on the boots of Thembi Kgatlana.

At only 23 years old, Kgatlana already had top honours to her name that elite athletes wait their entire careers for: CAF Women Player of the Year 2018 and Goal of the Year, awarded to one African footballer regardless of gender. With her explosive speed on the attack, fancy footwork and clinical finishes, striker Kgatlana threatened to lead an upset against Spain in Banyana Banyana's World Cup debut.

Her diminutive figure and cherubic smile belied a fierceness that opponents underestimated at their own peril.

I met Thembi Chrestinah Kgatlana for the first time on the grounds of her former secondary school in Mohlakeng, a township located 45-minutes southwest of Johannesburg, South Africa. We sat on a set of metal bleachers looking onto the dusty field where she played her first game of soccer.

The narrow streets where she learned to kick a soccer ball with boys from the neighbourhood stretched out around us.

Dressed in a matching tracksuit and Air Jordan sneakers, Kgatlana looked every part the celebrity-athlete. In Mohlakeng, locals treated her like one too. A few men and school-age boys meandered around the field, stopping to say hello when they saw who sat on the side-lines.

Kgatlana chatted with them like a regular neighbour, all the while down the road — past the brick building tagged with her graffiti portrait in full Banyana Banyana kit — two bookshelves

full of soccer trophies, gleaming medals and international accolades resided in the foyer of her childhood home.

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When Kgatlana started primary school, she noticed that soccer was the only thing her male friends cared about. Wanting to be included, she joined their pick-up games after school at the gravel field down the road.

Her mother was apprehensive; soccer was *a boy's game.*

Historical and popular discourse construct sport as a man's world. In Dr Pelak's essay *Women and Gender in South African Soccer: A Brief History*, she argued that South Africans consider soccer in particular a "flagship masculine sport."

Questions of sexuality and gender identity can meet female athletes when they choose to participate, particularly women who don't meet traditional heteronormative notions of 'femininity.' Challenging masculine hegemony in sport and differing from gender-role expectations can also result in social ostracization and shame or, at worst, violence. Underlying patriarchal attitudes, stereotypes around masculinity and unequal gender power dynamics are the primary drivers of gender-based violence (GBV), according to UN Women, the WHO and the South African Medical Research Council.

These dynamics inform two important influences on girls' sports participation — intrapersonal perceptions and interpersonal opinions.

Intrapersonal demotivating factors for girls include perceptions of not belonging in sports because of their gender and heightened self-consciousness about their body image in public spaces. A 2013 study titled *Perceived Physical Characteristics, Personal and Social Reasons for Adolescent Sports Participation Among 15- and 17-Year-Old Boys and Girls in the Western Cape Province, South Africa* suggested that society values physicality and competitiveness less

among females, so they are more likely to drop out of sports as they enter adolescence. According to the Women's Sports Foundation's 2020 report Keeping Girls in the Game: Factors that Influence Sport Participation, gendered cultural norms – such as the emphasis that society puts on submissiveness and physical appearance for girls – engender the sports realm less appealing. In their 2010 study *Non-Participation in Sport by Black Learners with Special Reference to Gender, Grades, Family Income and Home Environment* Sanelisiwe Mchunu and Kobus Le Roux found that intrapersonal factors negatively affect girls more than their male peers in South Africa.

Interpersonal factors, such as parents' gender-role beliefs or how peers view female athleticism, also inform girls' sports participation. A 2015 study titled *Female Sport Participation In South African Rural Schools: Analysis of Socio-Cultural Constraints* and a 2014 study titled *Barriers to Sport Participation Among Learners at Public Township Schools in Tshwane, South Africa* agreed that lack of parental approval (in the shape of emotional or financial support) posed a significant barrier to girls sports participation.

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But Kgatlana inherited tenacity and natural talent from her father — an amateur footballer himself — and blocked out the noise of any societal or familial disapproval. She met the boys every day to play soccer, ignoring her mother's hesitation.

She laughed and told me the boys stopped teasing her about being a girl when they saw how well she handled the ball. Soon everyone wanted Kgatlana on his side.

Without an alternative, Kgatlana joined a local all-boys soccer team. She just wanted to play.

It is a common refrain among many of today's top female footballers in South Africa. Opportunities to play organised soccer are sparse, so you either play with the boys or not at all. This predicament illustrates the third negative influence on girls' sports participation — the gendered nature of the structural-environmental ecosystem.

The lack of adequate facilities and organised programs is the primary barrier to secondary school learners of any gender participating in sports in South Africa, particularly black adolescents in historically disenfranchised townships and urban areas.

Considering this through a gender lens, it is easy to see how the absence of sports structures designed specifically for needs of women and girls could impede their participation.

The Brighton Declaration on Women and Sport, of which South Africa was an early signatory, is the international standard on mainstreaming gender equality in sports programming, from schools to professional structures. The declaration's authors, the International Working Group on Women and Sport, affirm that entrenched gender discrimination and inequality from wider society contribute to excluding women and girls from sports programs and recreational activities.

South Africa suffers from a scourge of harassment and violence against women. GBV is a top concern among women, according to Statistics South Africa, affecting nearly a quarter of the female population. The 2018 Crime Against Women in South Africa report asserted that the fear of GBV limits women's freedom, behaviours and engagement in various activities, such as organised sports. Uncertainty around personal safety on public transportation or in parks, especially alone or after dark, restricts the livelihoods of women more than men. If facilities and fields are inaccessible for girls, parents may discourage their daughters from engaging in sports programs.

In the absence of total societal overhaul, tailored sports structures and programs for female athletes would increase their participation. One opportunity for this is within the school system.

In spite of the game's colossal popularity across the continent, soccer is not a well-structured sporting code in South African schools, according to SAFA briefings to Parliament. Only a relatively small number of primary and secondary schools in South Africa have soccer programs or consistent team-playing opportunities for girls, with the numbers even lower at government schools in townships, urban and rural areas.

In this environment, individual efforts to propel adolescent girls soccer forward stand out.

In 2012, Banyana Banyana captain Janine van Wyk established the JVW Girls School Football League to formalise girls soccer among secondary schools in Gauteng Province. Like for Kgatlana, there was no girls team when van Wyk grew up in Germiston, Ekurhuleni. She wanted to change the game for the next generation.

In 2019, Malvin Khumalo of the Blue Birds Ladies Football Club in Alexandra, Johannesburg, launched the Alex Girls Football Development programme. It features an all-girls league among underserved primary schools in the township, with a focus on keeping at-risk youth off the street.

And then there is the elite SAFA-sponsored Girls Soccer Academy based at the University of Pretoria's High-Performance Centre. The only dedicated girls soccer institution in South Africa, the exclusive SAFA Girls Soccer Academy scouts the top young talent from across the country, plucks them out of whatever circumstance they were born into, trains them at the highest level and provides a first-rate education through TuksSport High School. Established in the early 2000s by doyenne of women's football Fran Hilton-Smith, the SAFA Girls Soccer Academy emerged as a prolific training ground for Banyana Banyana, with the likes of Simphiwe Dludlu, van Wyk and Kgatlana as alums.

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At 11, Kgatlana finally found a local girls team, the Parma Ladies Football Club, and started playing more regularly. She no longer stood out for being the only girl on the field, but for being the best.

The SAFA Girls Soccer Academy saw Kgatlana play and immediately recruited her for the elite program. At 14 she packed up all of her things and moved to Pretoria, away from everyone and everything she knew in pursuit of the game she loved. There she trained alongside some of the country's best footballers, who became friends, teammates and mentors. Kgatlana credits her

new roommate and then-captain of Banyana Banyana Simphiwe Dludlu with making sure she arrived to practice on time *and* finished all her homework.

Playing soccer changed the course of Kgatlana's entire life, setting her on a path to a university degree, professional success and the financial means to change her family's circumstances.

Consistent participation in physical activity and organised sports, specifically team sports such as soccer, is a dynamic mechanism for gender empowerment. According to the 2018 Developing Physically Active Girls research report by the Tucker Centre for Research on Girls & Women in Sport, being a female athlete positively influences perceptions of self-esteem, confidence, self-efficacy, belonging and body image, which research shows are generally lower among females. Sports participation among young women and girls boosts educational attainment and academic performance, and leads to favourable physical health outcomes, fewer sexual partners and less substance abuse.

UN Women and the International Olympic Committee agree that sport serves as a vehicle for challenging discriminatory gender norms, structural inequalities and unequal power dynamics from wider society — positively influencing men and women's lives. Sport can also be a vehicle for economic empowerment by conferring financial independence, societal agency and professional opportunities later in life.

The South African government's strategy for sports policy, laid out in the 2012 third White Paper on Sport and Recreation for the Republic of South Africa, acknowledges the social, physical and economic value of sport and recreation for the country. The document highlights the potential of sports programs to "empower and promote the inclusion of marginalised groups, especially women" and prioritises ensuring women and girls equal opportunities to participate.

For all these reasons, it is critical that more opportunities for women and girls to participate in sports exist and are accessible. Individual efforts, while herculean, are not enough.

Kgatlana persisted through the gendered barriers that stood in her way to experience all these benefits, in the extreme.

Before Kgatlana even turned 20, Banyana Banyana called her up from the ranks of the junior national team system to try out. Coaches whispered about her as the *future* of soccer in South Africa. She made the senior national team as a reserve for the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games and put her studies at the University of the Western Cape on hold to travel to Brazil.

Kgatlana lived a dream she did not know existed when she first fell in love with soccer.

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In the 25th minute of Banyana Banyana's Women's World Cup debut against Spain in France, Kgatlana delivered on all the hype. She maneuvered past three Spanish defenders and took a brilliant shot that curled perfectly into the top right pocket of the net just beyond the goalkeeper's outstretched gloves. It marked not only the first goal of the match, but South Africa's first ever goal at a Women's World Cup.

Despite starting off strong and scoring first, Banyana Banyana fell to Spain 3-1 in its World Cup debut. In her post-match press conference in front of a pool of international reporters, Head Coach Ellis still beamed. If anyone was going to write her name in the history books for South Africa, she said, it was Kgatlana. *You can't stop her.*

But Kgatlana's ultimate goal was to play overseas. Without a competitive ecosystem of soccer development and professional opportunities in South Africa — and with only irregular pay for the select few signed to the senior national team — the most stable job prospects for serious South African female soccer players lie in America, Europe and Asia.

In 2018, in her final year at university, Kgatlana got her wish. She signed a year-long contract with the Houston Dash, a professional team in the National Women's Soccer League in America, joining teammate van Wyk. Since then Kgatlana accumulated a stint with Beijing BG Phoenix

FC in the Chinese Women's Super League and in early 2020, a new contract with Portuguese Liga BPI giants SL Benfica.

Kgatlana's parents are her biggest supporters. Her dad proudly collects jerseys from each new club she joins and travels with her to international awards ceremonies.

Her mom doesn't remember a time when she thought girls shouldn't play football.

But Kgatlana is one of the lucky few to access so many opportunities. Without change across all ecological systems, the positive outcomes for women and girls that result from sports participation will be cut short.

CHAPTER 3: FOUL PLAY

I was in the passenger seat of a white Toyota Corolla cruising down an empty stretch of freeway on the outskirts of Tshwane (Pretoria), watching power lines and dusty fields fly past my window. Sipho,[10] a jovial and portly middle-aged Uber driver, sat to my right. He just picked me up at a high school soccer pitch in the residential suburb of Laudium and we started the 50-kilometre drive back to Johannesburg.

When I climbed in the car, coverage of a contentious Kaizer Chiefs vs Orlando Pirates soccer match blared on the radio speakers. I heard static, but Sipho was transfixed.

The rivalry between the two Soweto-based men's professional clubs goes back half a century. Neighbours picked sides, allegiances passed down through generations and, like any good football rivalry, pride is always on the line. The two teams play in the top division of men's soccer in South Africa. They face each other two to three times a year in division play and lucrative tournaments. Their clashes are the most anticipated and well-attended fixtures of the season, with tickets selling out long before game day.

I asked Sipho if he watched South African women's soccer. I did this any time I took an Uber, ordered a coffee or chatted with a stranger. An informal straw-poll of the everyman. The responses varied — one driver listed off the names of his favourite former and current Banyana Banyana stars, such as Portia Modise and Refiloe Jane; another said he took his adolescent niece to watch the local amateur women's team play as often as he could.

Sipho said he occasionally watched Banyana Banyana games when they were on TV.

I'm not really invested, he added sheepishly.

[10] Name changed.

I travelled to Laudium to watch the Janine van Wyk Football Club (JVW FC) take on the University of the Witwatersrand Ladies Football Club (Wits Ladies). The two teams play in the Gauteng division of the semi-professional Sasol Women's League. It was their final match of the 2018/2019 season.

Banyana Banyana captain, and most-capped South African national team player of any gender, Janine van Wyk established her own amateur football club in 2013. She realised that many of the young women in her secondary school league wanted to keep playing after they graduated, but didn't know where to turn. Van Wyk channelled her resources and years of competing at the highest level of women's football into empowering the next generation. Balancing her national team and international club duties at the same time, van Wyk took on the roles of player and coach on JVW FC to get it off the ground.

When I first pulled up to the school there were no other cars on the road. I walked towards the open field, a swath of marbled green and brown grass, and looked around.

A group of Varsity-age women cheered from behind the nearest net. They were members of another Sasol League team scheduled to play earlier in the day. Their opponents never showed. On one of the long sides of the field stood two metal bleachers, filled in with a dozen more spectators. Parents most likely.

When the final whistle blew at the end of 90 minutes, the JVW FC had 4-0 on the scoreboard and was the decisive victor. Players sprinted to the centre of the pitch in celebration, pulling on fresh white T-Shirts, *Champions* emblazoned across the front. With the win, JVW FC cemented its place at the top of the Gauteng division and secured a ticket to the 2019 Sasol Women's League National Championships the following month.

The title of National Champion eluded the club in its six-year history, but now the players had a shot on goal.

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While South Africa runs the only formal women's soccer playing structures on the continent, between two leagues and a competitive university system, the leagues are 'professional' in name alone. For the thousands of young women who dream about making a career out of soccer, their options are limited.

A persistent chicken-or-the-egg cycle hinders professional women's sports development the world over. Institutional partners such as national federations, corporate sponsors and media evaluate audience numbers and viewer figures for women's sports in relation to men's, and conclude they don't suggest worthwhile revenue potential.

Yet without equal investment in the first place — including marketing and promotion of leagues and athletes, and financial and resource investment from governing bodies and corporate sponsors — of course women's sports will not be able to build up viewership, attendance and a fan base comparable to the men's game.

This pattern of insufficient investment and discrimination causes a domino effect of inequality that follows female athletes for the rest of their lives, manifested as gaps in formal playing opportunities, sponsorship and pay.

The discrimination starts from the top, where a network of governing bodies that don't exactly have the best track record with ethics, let alone women, controls international soccer.

Over the course of former FIFA president Sepp Blatter nearly two-decade reign, he faced allegations of sexual harassment and assault, once suggested female players wear skimpier shorts to attract more fans and, on more than one occasion, failed to recognise FIFA Women's Player of the Year nominees when they were on stage. He also presided over a tenure that condoned the continuation of pay inequality between the men and women's sides at the World Cup and trialled new facilities and technology at the women's tournament that players argued were substandard.

At the regional level, South Africa is a member of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), one of FIFA's six continental governing bodies. Like its embattled parent FIFA, controversy recently embroiled CAF. In June 2019 FIFA took over control of CAF and suspended all payments to the federation, following allegations of institutional incompetence and financial malfeasance. An independent audit revealed widespread irregularities and potential abuse of power. CAF's president, Ahmed Ahmed, was at the centre of that investigation, and concurrently, an individual ethics and sexual harassment inquiry.

The primary accusation regarding financial and resource investment that critics lobby against the South African Football Association (SAFA) revolves around the federation's inertia in establishing and professionalising a women's soccer league. In Dr Pelak's 2000 study titled *Final Report of Women's Soccer Participant Survey*, elite female footballers cited the lack of a professional league as the primary barrier to their desire to continue playing.

Archival documents suggest that informal women's soccer teams competed locally and provincially in South Africa starting in the 1960s. Shifting notions of gender roles and expectations empowered white and coloured women — with their relative class and race privileges in apartheid society — to challenge male hegemony in soccer. An increase in the number of teams in the various amateur provincial leagues motivated the creation of the first national governing body for women's football, the South African Women's Football Association (SAWFA), in 1974. SAWFA accepted black participants from the late 1970s, long ahead of its counterparts on the men's side, whose refusal to integrate resulted in South Africa's suspension from FIFA.

South Africa missed out on the inaugural FIFA Women's World Cup and CAF-sponsored African Women Cup of Nations due to the international sports boycott still in place in 1991. The dismantling of the apartheid state, coupled with the structural, political and ideological gains hard-won by the mass women's movement in South Africa, heralded a new dawn for women's soccer in the 1990s. However, SAFA established and sponsored a formal national women's league only in 2001. Called the 'SAFA Sanlam National Women's League,' the organisation encompassed 300 all-female provincial teams and had a sole corporate sponsor.

Over the next decade, primary sponsorship changed hands several times, as organised women's soccer grew in popularity across the country. South African chemicals giant Sasol Limited came on board in 2009 and remained the single consistent commercial partner of women's soccer in South Africa for the last decade.

As of 2020, the Sasol Women's League comprises nearly 150 teams from all nine provinces and over 2,800 participants. SAFA and Sasol provide nominal funding per team, but it hardly covers overhead costs. Each club is at the mercy of individual benefactors.

Although the Sasol League provides women the opportunity to play regularly and offers team prize money at the annual Sasol League National Championships, there is little or no individual financial incentive. The majority of the players who compete are still in university or have a separate full-time job.

Playing for the love of the game doesn't pay the bills.

After many false-starts and years of empty promises, SAFA launched a second league, the SAFA Women's National League (SWNL), in August 2019. SAFA touted the SWNL as the panacea to all of professional women's soccer woes. However, when the SWNL launched there was no clarity on player salary nor prize money, an incomplete match schedule, only inconsistent media coverage and no title sponsor. Institutional partners financed the initiative with funds from the 2010 World Cup Legacy Trust and a grant from the Department of Sport and Recreation. Necessary, but not sustainable without a commercial partner.

Meanwhile, the independently run Premier Soccer League, the top-tier division of men's professional soccer, is a R1 billion industry.

International professional footballers rely on their independent club affiliations not only for consistent playing opportunities, but stable wages and access to commercial partnerships. Banyana Banyana, which does pay, albeit irregularly, can only employ a fraction of the hundreds

of women who want to make a career out of soccer. Only a professional club system with consistent salaries can support the rest.

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SAFA officials claimed they explored additional sponsorship opportunities for both women's leagues. Nothing materialised as of yet.

Corporate sponsorship is a deep well to draw from, both for individual athletes to supplement their income and for professional structures to grow. Among the world's highest paid athletes, the top three are male soccer players whose annual multi-million dollar pay derives 30-40% from corporate sponsorships. According to Forbes' annual The World's Highest Paid Athletes list, many famous athletes earn more from endorsements than their professional salary, including tennis' Roger Federer and golf's Tiger Woods.

According to a 2018 Statista report, women receive less that 1% of total global sports sponsorship, representing another consequence of insufficient institutional investment.

The argument defending the inequality in sponsorship usually centres on the potential for return on investment, which is easy to quantify for well-established, well-funded men's sports. Without equal marketing and media coverage in a mainstream setting, of course women's sports will not be able offer the same. *Yet*. As a direct result, corporate brands and institutional partners prematurely conclude that sufficient interest doesn't exist for women's sports. They don't invest.

The chicken-or-the-egg cycle at play.

However, Brand Finance's Football Annual 2019 report calculated that corporate sponsors underestimate the total potential of global women's football by over $1 billion.

Tangible commercial motivations for investing in women's football include consistent growth of media attention, live crowds and television viewership at the international level and increased

interest in merchandise for teams that are well-marketed. During the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, ESPN reported that Nike's sales of its U.S. women's national team (USWNT) jersey outpaced all other U.S. soccer fan merchandise, male or female. Nike also credited the global attention surrounding the World Cup, where the brand sponsored the uniforms for nearly two-thirds of teams, with pushing the company to the top of the market in bra sales for the first time in its history.

The women's game, and its narrative of empowerment and equality, also offers a unique marketing angle congruent with a contemporary trend — a brand's 'value-based proposition' highly motivates consumer awareness and loyalty.

Not to mention women's soccer is the fastest growing sport around the world.

It seems that a handful of global brands are finally catching on.

Ahead of the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup, the history-making USWNT filed a federal gender discrimination lawsuit against its employer, the national U.S. Soccer Federation. A number of commercial partners publicly sided with the USWNT, not only supporting the athletes financially, but adding the weight of their platforms to the fight. The financial services giant Visa required the U.S. Soccer Federation to equally divide its sponsorship package between women and men's programs. Two brands with predominantly female consumer bases, the energy-food company Luna Bar and deodorant brand Secret, donated tens of thousands of dollars directly to the USWNT players' association to cover the institutional gender pay gap.

Global corporations are rarely guided by the best of intentions alone, indicating there is calculated commercial value to these moves that should inspire more. Continuing to underestimate the value of women's soccer is bad business.

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In the absence of commercial sponsors lining their pockets, female athletes remain dependent on their salaries from club and national team employment. While former South African Minister of Sports and Recreation Tokozile Xasa claimed her ultimate goal would be to see a professional women's soccer league that paid the same as the men's in South Africa, that isn't the reality yet.

The gender pay gap between male and female athletes is unfortunately just one example of persistent wage inequality that exists across nearly all facets of global society. The International Labour Organisation found in its Global Wage Report 2018/2019 that South African women earn between 20-30% less than men in wages, depending on the profession and intersection of race and class dynamics. Using the soccer industry as a microcosm of wider society, the inequality is again stark from the top down.

The total tournament prize money at the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup was $30 million, with the minimum award for qualifying and participating in the group stage $750,000. On top of prize money, FIFA paid $800,000 to each team for preparation costs. None of that money went directly to players, rather FIFA handed it over to the national federations who decided who got what and how much.

At the next FIFA men's World Cup in 2022, the total prize money for the tournament will surpass $400 million, with the winning team receiving $40 million alone, and preparation costs at $1.5 million per team.

With prize money so low and inconsistent for the majority of women's teams at the international level, professional women footballers really rely on their national federations and professional leagues for financial stability.

As discussed, elite women's players in South Africa aren't exactly thriving off their pay checks from the club league system. The good news is, the national teams are beginning to see equality.

Male and female senior national team players do not receive a consistent monthly salary from their employer, SAFA, rather a match participation fee, performance-based match bonuses and a daily stipend when training for official duties. This makes their 'wages' inconsistent at best.

According to local media reports, including New Frame and Sport24, prior to the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup SAFA consistently paid its female athletes smaller daily allowances than their male counterparts and one tenth in match bonuses. Before June 2019, SAFA paid Banyana Banyana players a bonus of R5,000-5,700 for a win in an official match and R4,000 for a win in a friendly. Bafana Bafana players, in contrast, received R60,000 for a win, R30,000 for a draw. For their daily stipend when training for national team duties, the women received R400 (in country) and R600 (away), while the men R500 and R1000+ respectively.

Ahead of the 2019 tournament, the South African Commission for Gender Equality helped lobby SAFA and the Department of Sport and Recreation, for equal pay. Eventually, SAFA acquiesced. The month before kick-off, SAFA announced it would compensate Banyana Banyana players equally to their male counterparts at a World Cup for the first time.

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In a 2019 article for The Guardian, titled *I thought the main issue in women's sports was equal pay. I was wrong.*, sports journalist Anya Alvarez blamed the systemic lack of corporate marketing, media attention and institutional promotion in women's sports as foundational in enabling "a system that hurts women's advancement in sports and their opportunity to generate equal revenue, and in return warrant equal pay."

Without institutional investment, corporate sponsorship and equal federation resources directed to a truly professional women's league, elite female players cannot hone their skills, capitalise on their talent and increase medal winning potential. Women's sports will not be able to increase viewership, attendance, a fan base and revenue comparable to the men's — the basis for equal pay. It all weaves together.

At the societal level, if girls do not have role models to look up to or a league to dream about joining, they may drop out of sports at a young age. They would lose access to all the benefits of sports participation throughout the course of their lifetime.

The next generation of girls who aspire to be Thembi Kgatlana or play for the Janine van Wyk Football Club may second-guess if a future in soccer exits before they even get the chance to play at the FIFA Women's World Cup, win CAF Women's Player of the Year or be crowned the Sasol Women's League Champion.

END.

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