

'Transformation' from above: The upside-down state of contemporary South African soccer

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...we have what must rank as one of the most amateurish 'top flight' leagues in South Africa. For all its supposed glitz, glamour and big money sponsors, the Premier Soccer League is still a tragic lesson in buffoonery. And as long as the league (and SAFA) lurch from one administrative bungle to the next, it's hard to see any spin-offs for the national team. (*Sunday Tribune* 11 September 2005)

A brief history

FOR THE BETTER PART of the past century, the most popular sport in South Africa (in relation to both public entertainment and active participation) has been soccer. From its initial introduction into South Africa as a sport played almost solely by the propertied (white) gentry, soccer quickly became, by the turn of the twentieth century, the sport of choice amongst the black population and white lower classes. Not surprisingly, this rapid spread in popularity set off alarm bells within the corridors of (white) political and

economic power, as 'soccer became emblematic of threatening, socially integrative forces within society...' (Morell 1996: 114). For the next several decades, soccer became the *bête noir* of the racist white establishment, who successively used all means at their disposal, including the extensive powers of the apartheid state, to promote and support (white) sports such as rugby and cricket as well as to suppress and control the social, economic and political reach and impact of the (black) sport of soccer.

The results of such attempts at racialised, socio-political engineering – which included specific legislation designed to ensure racial segregation and material inequality in South African sport – were predictable: woefully inadequate soccer infrastructure and trained personnel, especially in black urban and rural areas; an almost complete lack of any meaningful/sustained development programmes for black students/youth; a racially divided institutional/administrative framework, which had, by the 1980s, produced four different soccer bodies to oversee the amateur and semi-professional side of the sport; and complete institutional and practical isolation by the governing bodies of international soccer, which ensured that South African soccer remained a wholly domestic affair.

None of this, however, could prevent the game of soccer in South Africa from becoming the *de facto* national sport (albeit mostly involving the black male population), nor could it stop the gradual breaking down of racial barriers on the field of play amongst widely supported (semi-)professional and mostly 'township'-based teams. By the late 1980s it was clear that, for the most part, the game of soccer was effectively operating outside the direct control of the apartheid state.

In 1987, all four of the different soccer bodies in the country – the South African Soccer Association, the South African National Football Association, the Football Association of South Africa and the South African Soccer Federation – met with the exiled leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) in Lusaka, Zambia. This meeting not only constituted the first tentative step towards the institutional unification of the sport inside South Africa (Dunywa interview),¹ but presaged the political shifts that were

to take place in the coming years, which would finally usher in the end of formal apartheid.

It took another four years, however, for formal unification of all soccer bodies in South Africa to happen. In December 1991, the South African Football Association (SAFA) was founded at a meeting of all soccer bodies in Johannesburg. In SAFA's own words: 'It was only natural that the game finally be united, as the sport of soccer had long led the way into breaking the tight grip of racial oppression.'² Indeed, given its history, it came as little surprise that the sport of soccer led the way – a full two years before the apartheid state was to finally disappear – to South Africa's gradual re-acceptance into the international 'community' arena, as well as to the eventual (formal) de-racialisation of all sports in South Africa. Within a year, the newly formed and unified mother body of South African soccer had gained membership of both the continental (Confederation of African Football – CAF) and global (Federation of International Football Associations – FIFA) governing bodies of soccer.

Over the next several years, South Africa's various national teams (from the senior men's side, Bafana Bafana, and senior women's side, Banyana Banyana, down to the under-17 boys' team) hosted a number of international games and participated in the various CAF and FIFA competitions. By 1996, the country's first-ever fully fledged soccer business corporation for professional clubs (led by South Africa's biggest and most popular clubs at the time, Orlando Pirates and Kaizer Chiefs), the Premier Soccer League (PSL), had been formed. A number of senior men's players began plying their trade in overseas professional soccer leagues, and club teams like Pirates and Chiefs quickly gained a continental support base and received widespread international attention.

The general performance of these teams on the international stage indicated that, in spite of its long isolation from international competition and uneven development at the domestic level, South African soccer had emerged from the shadows of apartheid in pretty decent shape: in 1995, Orlando Pirates won the premier club competition on the continent, the African Champions Cup; in 1996 the senior men's national team won the

Africa Cup of Nations; in 1997, the boys' under-20 team were runners-up in the African Championships; and, in 1998, the senior men's team qualified for the World Cup Finals in France where they performed admirably, despite exiting in the first round.³

Five years into the new, democratic South Africa, soccer seemed to be the only sport in the country to have 'delivered' for the majority of its people, notwithstanding the metastasised patriotism and temporary national euphoria surrounding the victory of the Springboks at the 1995 Rugby World Cup. After all, what better confirmation of post-apartheid national pride and self-confidence could there be than a successful showing on the continental and global field of the 'people's' game?

Unlike most of South Africa's other major sports, such as rugby, cricket, athletics, field hockey, swimming and tennis, soccer did not enter into the post-apartheid era as a sport in dire need of racial transformation on the field of play. Indeed, it was the only major sport, circa 1994, in which the vast majority of players, at all levels of the game, were black.⁴ In many ways, this reality was reflective of the apartheid system's longstanding social, economic and political peripheralisation of the game of soccer alongside an exactly opposite approach taken to the country's other major sports. For many white South Africans (alongside some sections of the Indian and coloured populations), soccer had become a 'black man's sport', a part of 'black culture'.⁵ In an ironic symbolism, then, soccer could be said to be the one sport in South Africa that had 'defeated' apartheid. And yet, the combined effects of the apartheid system's sustained efforts to ensure racial segregation, organisational division and socio-economic inequality in sport meant that such a 'victory' came with other 'costs'. The good early showings of South African soccer in the international arena masked transformational deficiencies at a more fundamental level.

Transforming what?

By the late 1990s it was clear that, despite the unification of the previously divided soccer bodies several years earlier and the admirable performances on

the continental and global fields of play, the much expected transformation of soccer as a whole had barely gotten off the ground. At a time when sustained and meaningful financial, institutional and strategic support and guidance for soccer were most needed from the newly democratic government (as a means to overcome the entrenched legacies of apartheid social engineering), that same government was busy pursuing macroeconomic policies that effectively made it a non-player in the soccer arena.

As part of the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macroeconomic framework, and following the neoliberal economic advice of the various international financial institutions and Western governments, national grants and subsidies to local municipalities and city councils were drastically decreased (McKinley 2005: 182). What this meant in practical terms was that public resources (both human and material) available at the local level for sports such as soccer were virtually wiped off the map – in other words, the 'people's' sport was effectively privatised. Decrepit soccer infrastructure at municipal level and public schools could not be adequately addressed, training programmes for community and school coaches were left in the hands of volunteers, and the provision of basic soccer equipment and grassroots development programmes for the legions of township and school-going youth players had to rely, for the most part, on individuals, sympathetic community groups and hoped-for support from the private sector.

In turn, this produced a situation in which SAFA – a fully incorporated private body – became (whether by default or conscious design) the central role player in efforts to address the massive organisational and developmental needs of the game of soccer in South Africa, in regard to both human and material resources. (The country's other main soccer body, the PSL, had been set up to look after the specific interests and needs of the main professional clubs.) And, much like the response of local government structures to being thrown in at the deep end of self-sustainable service provision, SAFA's response was to turn its 'transformation' mandate inwards, focusing the bulk of its 'transformation' efforts on what was, in relative historical and

institutional terms, the ‘easiest’ target – administration. In the words of the two-time CEO of SAFA, Raymond Hack, apartheid-induced ‘administrative abnormalities’ were systematically removed through a ‘natural progression of inclusion [and] synthesising administration’ (Hack interview).⁶ It did not take long for this kind of transformation to be implemented and, on paper, it looks impressive:

- ◆ a 23-member National Executive Committee (NEC) as the top decision-making body, designed to manage and oversee all aspects of the game;
- ◆ 18 separate committees and sub-committees of the NEC dealing with, amongst other aspects of the game, finances, legal matters, medical issues, youth affairs, international affairs, security, technical issues, referees and competitions;
- ◆ 11 full-time staff members dedicated to soccer ‘development’ and 4 full-time staff for soccer ‘education’;
- ◆ 6 different professional, semi-professional and amateur leagues (Premier League, 1st–4th divisions and a Women’s League);
- ◆ 8 national teams (Men: Senior, U-23, U-20, U-17, U-14, U-12; Women: Senior and U-19).⁷

It is axiomatic, whether in soccer or any other sport, that in order for any administrative ‘transformation’ to have positive effects beyond its immediate bureaucratic/structural intent, it has to be coterminous with, or at least followed by, practical transformation where it counts – i.e. at the grassroots level. As such, it was to be expected (even more so given the example set by the ANC government at the national level) that SAFA would follow up such structural and bureaucratic ‘transformation’ with a range of written developmental and educational frameworks and plans or programmes. One prime example was the ‘Youth Development Policy Framework’ (SAFA 1999) which invoked everything from ‘nation-building’ to ‘Ubuntu’ to the ‘African Renaissance’ as a means to ‘encourage mass participation, identify talent, educate and develop, encourage play, manage resources and ensure

participation at national and international level'. The framework made a long list of plans and promises which included:

- ◆ *Talent Detection*: SAFA will employ scientific processes, systems, measurement, principles, models and tests to detect and develop talent;
- ◆ *Funding*: SAFA will solicit funding for the Youth Development Programmes and other activities from current and potential sponsors, government and other corporate bodies, both locally and internationally;
- ◆ *Facilities and Equipment*: SAFA will establish development centres in all 25 regions that comply with international standards;
- ◆ *Schools of Excellence*: The SAFA/TRANSNET school will be retained and strategies put in place to ensure it runs at maximum capacity. As a long-term goal, SAFA will, in partnership with the government and big business, replicate the SAFA/TRANSNET school in all geo-political provinces;
- ◆ *Soccer Clubs*: They will be required to participate in and support implementation of this programme;
- ◆ *Schools*: SAFA will assist with all relevant technical development and provide guidelines for football development. (SAFA 1999: n.p.)

Like all bureaucrats who take themselves seriously, top-level SAFA officials have subsequently claimed that they have delivered on these, and other, 'transformational' programmes designed to provide practical support and redress to the soccer 'masses' (Hack interview). Unfortunately, the reality is that while there have been certain improvements in, for example, the number of coaching and player training courses as well as competitions taking place at community and school level, the kind of holistic structural transformation promised (and so desperately needed) has simply not happened. None other than long-time soccer administrator and current SAFA director of football development, Zola Dunywa, admits that seven years down the line, SAFA is 'still struggling to implement' the very same

‘Youth Development Policy Framework’ that is supposed to form the centrepiece of soccer transformation in South Africa (Dunywa interview).

As will be discussed in more extensive contemporary detail in the next sections, there are two main, and inter-connected, reasons for the abject failure to deliver real transformation in South African soccer. On the one hand, there is a lack of political will on the part of the post-apartheid government (i.e. the public sector) to make the national sport a public concern, by actively addressing – through institutional and fiscal support and policy intervention – the developmental deficit, infrastructural needs and material inequalities that afflict the soccer community at the grassroots level. On the other hand, there has been institutionalisation of a top-down, bureaucratic and self-serving approach (within the context of a commodified, market-driven sports philosophy) to the actual development and management of the game of soccer.

Whither development?

In the period leading up to South Africa’s first-ever democratic elections in 1994, the ANC and its allies in both the trade union movement and at the community level had adopted a progressively redistributionist developmental framework – the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) – which set out the basic principles and policies that the new democratic government was to pursue in addressing the multiple legacies of apartheid. In the words of former President Nelson Mandela, the RDP represented ‘a programme of government...a (developmental) framework that is coherent, viable and has widespread support...It is a product of consultation, debate and reflection on what we need and what is possible’ (ANC 1994: Preface).

As applied to ‘Sport and Recreation’, the RDP set out in clear terms both the apartheid inheritance as well as what needed to be done to ensure transformation and redress:

One of the cruellest legacies of apartheid is its distortion of sport and recreation in our society, the enforced segregation of these activities

and the gross neglect of providing facilities for the majority of South Africa's people. This has denied millions of people and particularly our youth the right to a normal and healthy life. It is important to ensure that sporting and recreational facilities are available to all South African communities...This cannot be left entirely in the hands of individual sporting codes or local communities...Sport and recreation should cut across all developmental programmes and be accessible and affordable for all South Africans...Particular attention must be paid to the provision of facilities at schools and in communities where there are large concentrations of unemployed youth. In developing such policies it should be recognised that sport is played at different levels of competence and that there are different specific needs at different levels. (ANC 1994: 72–73)

Yet, 16 years on these fine words have, for the most part, remained in the realm of stated principles and proposed policy when it comes to addressing the development needs of soccer. Across the soccer landscape – from politicians, players, trade unionists and journalists to fans and general sports enthusiasts – there is now a broad consensus that South African soccer is in a 'state of crisis'.⁸ Even the government itself has finally recognised that there has been a systematic failure to carry through its own democratic mandate to transform the sporting landscape. In a 2006 speech to the National Assembly, the Deputy Minister of Sport and Recreation, Gert Oosthuizen, admitted as much:

Sport is still being trivialised in our country. To realise the benefits that can possibly accrue from our sector, we need three things; resources, resources and more resources...What we need is: infrastructure organisation, programmes, facilities, equipment and kit; human resources sufficient thereof, of good quality and with an appropriate disposition; and, finance that underpins both infrastructure and human resources...As a Department we have the smallest budget of all national government departments. We are

committing some R10 per person per year to the participation of our people in sport and recreation activities presently. R10 can never make a substantial contribution to participation rates in sport and recreation... (Oosthuizen, cited in Mbeki 2006)

No surprise then, that the government pushed through a new piece of legislation, the National Sport and Recreation Amendment Act, 2007, which 'seeks to empower the minister (of Sport and Recreation) to issue guidelines or policies to promote the values of equity, representivity and redress in sport and recreation' (*The Star* 8 August 2006). However, such legislative action has not translated into meaningful and sustained soccer development programmes or into practical socio-economic redress for the millions of soccer-playing youth. The fact is that the post-1994 abdication of public sector support and proactive involvement in relation to soccer has ensured the absence of the kind of 'accessible and affordable development programmes' in schools and (poor) communities that the government set as its minimum transformation target so many years ago.

When ex-national coach and SAFA Technical Committee member Ted Dimitru organised a soccer development workshop for schools in Soweto in early 2006, he found that 'most schools can provide only two footballs for their teams that are used for training, as well as matches [and play] on gravel pitches without proper goalposts and equipment'. Dimitru wryly noted: 'Incredibly, the education department is providing schools with tennis balls, badminton equipment, cricket bats, rugby balls, etc., despite the fact that the large majority of schools do not have the facilities or the traditions for such sports. It is hardly surprising that, under such hostile circumstances, the teachers involved in school football have never been offered any basic instruction on coaching' (Dimitru 2006).

Given that schools in a central, urban setting like Soweto would generally be considered, amongst poor communities, the most developmentally 'privileged' and easily 'served' by government, it does not take a developmental expert to figure out the state of soccer

facilities, equipment and development programmes for those schools and communities located in far-flung small towns and rural areas. Indeed, during the course of field research in 2005 on the state of basic services in selected schools in the two poorest provinces in South Africa – the Eastern Cape and Limpopo – the author was asked by desperate school officials to donate basic soccer equipment, and found a complete lack of any soccer development programmes or decent facilities in these areas.⁹

As noted earlier in this chapter, instead of taking charge and driving through the necessary development programmes, the national government effectively handed over its mandate to under-capacitated and under-financed local governments, the private sector and a corporatised, for-profit, governing soccer body – SAFA. At the level of public soccer infrastructure available for the vast majority of players in the country (i.e. local, community stadiums, which are mostly owned by local municipalities) this has meant that ‘there has been hardly any investment in them for the last 10 years’ (Phillips interview). Even for a previous top soccer official like Trevor Phillips (a former CEO of the PSL), there is simply no escaping the (distorted) irony: ‘There are 45 million South Africans and the country has some of the best rugby and cricket stadiums in the world but shit soccer stadiums...yet 40 million South Africans really don’t care much about rugby and cricket’ (Phillips interview).¹⁰

When it comes to actual development programmes on the ground, it would appear that SAFA CEO Raymond Hack is alone in asserting institutional and practical success. While Hack claims that ‘the development programme of SAFA far exceeds anything in the past’ and that ‘this goes all the way down to grassroots level’ (Hack interview), the organisation’s director of development, Zola Dunywa, flatly contradicts his boss: ‘The public perceptions of the development programme are true...the main problem is that the programme is not coordinated [and] is not implemented due to a lack of funds [from SAFA].’ The end result, says Dunywa, has been that SAFA has had to go to the National Lotteries Board to access funds for a new ‘development of excellence’ programme,¹¹ and that all the main youth development programmes and competitions are sponsored by corporations

such as MTN, Chappies, Coca-Cola and Spar, but 'are not matched by SAFA' (Dunywa interview).

For women's soccer, the situation is even more bleak. Despite the existence of two national teams and a 'high performance centre', as well as a staff complement to its Women's Football Committee, SAFA's budget for women's soccer development in 2006 was, according to committee chairperson Natasha Tsihlas, less than R300 000. For Tsihlas though, the problem went beyond a lack of adequate financial resources. 'A lot of people still don't believe in women's football,' she said (*City Press* 4 June 2006).¹²

Others are more blunt. For the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the largest national trade union federation, South African soccer is 'in a crisis', with players having 'lost basic technical skills' (COSATU 2006). Soccer journalist Barend-Batho Kortjaas has said that 'this country has had no systematic development of players. All we have done is hold a jumble sale of wrong ideas, chance taking and cutting corners in the hope that things will fall into place. Instead of falling into place, things have fallen all over the place...SAFA must stop fooling itself and admit that it has no development plan' (Kortjaas 2006). According to former PSL CEO Trevor Phillips, 'no one is running development programmes...there is no structured development programme out there, they don't exist' (Phillips interview).

If the most basic of development programmes across the country remain in a state of 'intensive care', then what is supposed to be the flagship of soccer development in South Africa – the SAFA/Transnet Football School of Excellence (based just outside Johannesburg) – has been, by all accounts, a very sick patient. Established at the beginning of the 1990s by SAFA, with financial assistance from the transport parastatal Transnet, the 'School of Excellence' was initially seen as a success story in progress, producing a series of professional players (including 36 national youth players and 16 Bafana Bafana players). However, according to SAFA's Dunywa, when 'SAFA management stepped in things started to become problematic since they took the funds away' (and redirected them to other SAFA operations) (Dunywa interview). Not surprisingly, Dunywa's boss has a radically different

interpretation, claiming that 'the school is not controlled by SAFA and there is no provision in the SAFA budget for the school...it is a challenge and we are busy overcoming it' (Hack interview) – an interpretation which, if indeed true, only serves as a stinging indictment of SAFA's budgetary management and developmental vision.

Irrespective of SAFA's 'cloak and dagger'-like internal bickering, over the past few years the school has become indicative of all that is wrong with the state of soccer development and administration in South Africa. At the time of writing, none of the three coaches at the school, tasked with training over a hundred boys, has high-level youth coaching or goalkeeping qualifications, the infrastructure at the school was in a general state of disrepair and the national youth side (comprising school players) has consistently performed badly at the international level (*Sunday Times* 5 February 2006).¹³ Former Bafana Bafana coach Carlos Queiroz has effectively accused SAFA of incompetence and gross mismanagement when it comes to the school and its overall youth development programme: '...they will upgrade the facilities for the World Cup but there is no system for identifying decent kids, no coach education, no technical director, no development programme and one centre of excellence built 15 years ago that is crumbling' (*Sunday Times* 5 February 2006).

While there might be some debate about Queiroz's no-holds-barred denunciation of SAFA, it is difficult to imagine how a development programme could be anything other than minimalist when the 2005 annual SAFA budget for development was a miserly R3 million (Dunywa interview). Besides the obvious problems of a lack of strategic vision and committed practical management surrounding soccer development in South Africa, it is such fiscal austerity, combined with the failure of the public sector to invest adequate funds for development programmes, that has produced a situation in which soccer development is effectively a financial hostage to the needs and demands of the private corporate sector.

The absence of a strategically coherent, practically efficient and financially sustainable development programme emanating from the

main soccer body in South Africa tasked with such development, has placed a huge onus on professional soccer clubs to develop players.¹⁴ However, most professional clubs simply do not have, or cannot access, the financial resources to initiate and sustain development programmes, and their programmes are, not surprisingly, geared towards the financial and on-field interests of the clubs themselves and are directly linked to each club's relationships with its corporate sponsors. In turn, the possibilities of expanding even existing development programmes at the club level are tied to the bottom line – i.e. the amount of money that can be generated by clubs. As Trevor Phillips notes, a key problem in this regard is that 'white corporate capital controls the money and they deal with sports such as soccer through their "social responsibility funds"...but these are not really taken seriously, except for rugby and cricket...and where is black corporate South Africa?' (Phillips interview)

The end result of all this is that, while those in the South African soccer world descend into the blame game,¹⁵ the 99 per cent of soccer players in the country who are involved at the amateur, grassroots level are being cheated of their hopes and dreams.

A sea of mediocrity and 'retrogressive egos'?

Since the period immediately after 1994, the general decline in the state of South African soccer, both on and off the field, has been precipitous. From a global ranking of 16th in 1997, the national men's team fell to a ranking of 73rd in the world in August 2009.¹⁶ Continentally, Bafana Bafana can no longer even claim to be amongst the top-quality national sides, with even soccer minnows like Botswana (with a total population of less than two million) proving to be difficult to beat on the field of play. Almost all the other national teams have also performed badly in continental and global competitions, the ironic exception being a privately sponsored South African 'street kids' side, which won an international competition staged in Germany just before the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

While the majority of performances of South African soccer teams on the field have been nothing short of embarrassing for a country that counts itself as the most wealthy and 'developed' on the continent, the situation off the field has been even worse. Including the newly hired national men's team coach – Brazil's Joel Santana – there have been 15 coaches at the helm of Bafana Bafana since South Africa's re-admission into the international sporting arena just over 14 years ago. When the previous coach, Carlos Parreira, took over in 2006, COSATU had this to say: 'The coach is taking over a ship that has ground to a halt. The poor performance of the national squad reflects the deeper crisis running from the premier soccer level down to the amateur level' (COSATU 2006).

Indicative of the relative priorities that SAFA has chosen to focus on in dealing with this crisis, is the fact that even though it announced an R87 million profit for the 2005/06 financial year, its entire annual soccer development budget stood at R3 million, while ex-coach Parreira was variously reported to have received anywhere from R12 million to R20 million per annum from his SAFA employers (*City Press* 13 August 2006). For the straight-talking Phillips, it is clear where the main problem lies: 'SAFA's preoccupation has been navel-gazing...80 per cent of funds spent by SAFA go toward administrative costs...I thought 2010 would be a catalyst, but SAFA is endemically corrupt and institutionally incompetent' (Phillips interview).¹⁷

Even though Phillips' final assessment of SAFA might be a tad harsh, there is ample evidence over the past several years to strongly suggest that SAFA administrators have been more interested in political point-scoring and individual and institutional power-mongering than in getting on with the job of improving the actual state of South African soccer where it counts. Ex-Bafana Bafana coach Stuart Baxter, whose tenure was marked by repeated clashes with his SAFA employers, has stated that he got calls from SAFA telling him which players to pick: 'When they realised I wouldn't do that, they turned against me... there was too much poison...some people did not like the colour of my skin... they said I was racist and every[one] started believing it.'¹⁸ In a similar vein, another ex-Bafana Bafana coach, Carlos Queiroz, fired this sarcastic comment

at South African soccer officialdom: 'One of the problems is that they think they are much better than they really are...they think the world champions are the only ones above them. The trouble is there is nothing there...'¹⁹

From within South Africa's soccer 'world', there has also been a sustained chorus of criticism all the way from the president of the country down to the ordinary soccer lover. Business tycoon Tokyo Sexwale (previously one of the main benefactors of the second tier of South African professional soccer, the 'Mvela' Golden League) has, more than once, lashed out at 'the rot' amongst SAFA's administrators (*City Press* 28 May 2006). Fellow business tycoon and owner of PSL club Mamelodi Sundowns, Patrice Motsepe, turned down an offer to serve on SAFA's 'commercial wing' (although it still remains unclear as to its formal constitution and operations) ostensibly because he did not want to be 'involved in the politics of SAFA...[due to] the association's track record of failure'.²⁰ Even members of the national Parliament have landed some telling blows. During a mid-2006 parliamentary debate on the country's national sport, SAFA was described as 'pathetic, unprofessional and untrustworthy' (*City Press* 4 June 2006).

The persistent assaults have also been felt from within the top echelons of SAFA itself. SAFA vice-president Chief Mwel0 Nonkonyana publicly admitted that SAFA had 'failed dismally' in its administration of soccer, and directly attributed the decline in the performance of Bafana Bafana to this failure (*City Press* 4 June 2006). Likewise, SAFA's own director of football development has laid the blame directly at the doorstep of his own organisation: 'We have a top-down approach...Nobody should be blamed but us' (Dunywa interview).

Chronic infighting within SAFA,²¹ and well-documented personal and institutional rivalries between some of South Africa's most famous soccer kingpins such as Irvin Khoza (owner of PSL club Orlando Pirates) and Kaizer Motaung (owner of PSL club Kaizer Chiefs) have only added more fuel to the fire of public discontent with the way in which soccer is being run in the country.²² Matters have been made even worse by widespread public perceptions that those at the apex of soccer officialdom are little more than a

group of money-grubbing egoists whose main purpose is to ensure that they remain comfortably ensconced in their well-paid bureaucratic positions. Such perceptions are not entirely without grounds. Many of the same faces have remained at the helm, in various positions, ever since the early 1990s, and sponsorship deals between the PSL and private corporations have seen some of the same individuals receiving huge payouts. Further, it is certainly no secret that a tidy proportion of the billions in public expenditure on stadiums and associated sundries for the 2010 World Cup have, in one form or another, greatly benefited those who reside at the top of South Africa's soccer world. The result, which is now becoming ever clearer, has been the institutionalisation of a status quo approach to the administration and management of the game.

One of the most frequently repeated slogans on numerous South African television and radio soccer programmes, 'for the love of the game', paradoxically captures the parlous state within which the 'beautiful game' now finds itself. Simply put, those who have the privilege of being in charge appear to have forgotten the very reason why they are there. The much-loved (now deceased) South African soccer star Pule 'Ace' Ntsoelengoe put it best: 'Soccer in SA needs to go back to where it was...the love of the game needs to be restored, especially in the administration. Soccer fans want to see us serve much better than we do today. The challenge is not how much money I leave behind when I die but to leave a legacy for my children and the youth of this country' (*The Star* 10 May 2006).

Conclusion and recommendations

It is an unfortunate fact of our early 21st-century existence – whether in South Africa or anywhere else on the globe – that major sports such as soccer, just like almost everything else, have become dominated by the need to make, and accumulate, capital. Instead of soccer being seen and treated as a basic recreational and social need, and as an integral component of people's overall socio-economic development, we now have a situation where both participation and progress are moulded and ultimately determined by the

degree to which they serve individual and commercial interests. Historically, and particularly in relation to South Africa's past, the beauty of the game of soccer was directly linked to its being, at the most fundamental level, the 'people's game', not a game of commercial prostitution mostly dominated by self-interested bureaucrats, wanna-be soccer kingpins and prima donna players. And yet that is precisely what a large part of South African soccer has become – it has been turned upside-down.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the present state of the game in South Africa is one of deep crisis. If a government that is in the process of spending billions to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup of Soccer cannot ensure that schoolkids in the most needy of communities have decent soccer facilities and equipment, or that meaningful development programmes are in place for players in those communities where soccer is one of the most basic forms of social relations and recreational activity, then it should be clear that things have gone horribly wrong. When the main soccer body in the country can pay its own staff millions per month, criss-cross the world attending meeting-after-conference and find the resources to pay outrageous salaries to national coaches, yet simultaneously allocate insignificant financial resources to its development programme while it makes record profits and allow the country's only academy of excellence to virtually disintegrate, then there should be no question that there is a need for radical change.

While the government is making noises about 'guidelines or policies to promote the values of equity, representivity and redress in sport and recreation' (*The Star* 8 August 2006), it is not at all clear what practical measures might follow that are directly related to the game of soccer. For its part, SAFA continues to spend most of its time and energy (as well as most of its resources) on administrative functions and internal squabbling over position and power, while making endless promises about seriously implementing full-scale development programmes that have been warming its desk drawers for years.

Beyond the government and SAFA, there is no shortage of opinions about what needs to be done to address the present crisis, a crisis that, it is now generally agreed, does exist. Almost every soccer writer and pundit in

the country has his or her own ideas about how to turn the game of soccer around and make Bafana Bafana into a 'world class' outfit. Long-time soccer writer and analyst Luke Alfred has set out a six-point 'plan' that, he surmises, will reverse the experience of the last 10 years in which South African soccer was transformed 'from kings to village idiots'. For Alfred this would include: 'grassroots development; proper leagues; coaching and competition throughout the country and across age groups; concerted efforts to improve facilities both by government and the private sector; local soccer needing outside help; [and] recruitment of the best coach that money can buy' (*Sunday Times* 5 February 2006).

For others, like PSL club boss Kaizer Motaung, the emphasis should be placed on resuscitating the national men's team by hiring a South African coach who has 'a thorough understanding of the general socio-political landscape within which our football is administered' and by establishing a 'technical support structure...to provide systems and plans that ensure that our young talented players are carefully selected, groomed, nurtured and cared for until they reach levels of seniority into the National Team'.²³ Former PSL CEO Trevor Phillips, with his eye also firmly on the national men's team as South Africa heads towards the 2010 World Cup, suggests that players for 2010 should be identified now by clubs and then be 'leased' from the clubs to form a team that can play internationals as well as games against other PSL clubs – 'We need to make players 24-hour professionals.' Phillips also calls for a specific and separate operation to deal with soccer development, alongside the adoption of grading criteria for financial support to professional clubs that are linked to, and favour, development of young players (Phillips interview).

COSATU, in line with its approach to political and economic problems facing its own constituency, has publicly stated that 'the first step' in addressing the crisis 'must be to convene a soccer indaba, in line with [our] long-standing demands. The players with international experience, the club coaches, SAFA and other stakeholders such as the players' union must be roped in to explore ways to improve all aspects of soccer development' (COSATU 2006).²⁴ Alongside this, it has called for a 'new strategy' for South

African soccer, whose centrepiece ‘must be the creation of provincial and national academies to identify players with potential in the schools and amateur levels’ (COSATU 2006). Unfortunately though, COSATU has done little to give practical content to its stated intent.

Taking all of the above into account, the following recommendations could provide the basis on which to begin a much-needed (re)transformation of South African soccer:

- ◆ The national government must begin to put ‘meat’ on the ‘bone’ of the RDP’s approach to sports such as soccer. The first step in this process would be to engage in a nationwide ‘audit’ of soccer infrastructure, equipment and administrative capacity at the community and local government level, as well as at the level of primary and secondary schools, so as to compile a graded inventory of needs.
- ◆ This should then be followed up with the provision of necessary fiscal and capacity support, over time, to relevant local government structures (working in conjunction with community organisations), as well as to public schools, in order to upgrade local community and school soccer facilities, purchase adequate equipment and support a systematic programme of community and school-level soccer development for the youth (both boys and girls).
- ◆ Flowing from the above, there should be implementation of a nationwide programme for the hiring and training of community-level soccer development personnel, alongside the technical skills training of relevant school staff – in partnership with SAFA – that would be an immediate and necessary outcome as part of a longer-term programme for sustainable, publicly supported community and school-level sports (soccer) development and competition.
- ◆ The Department of Sport and Recreation should immediately direct SAFA, as part of the above, to commit to a five-year programme for the establishment of soccer academies in each of the country’s nine provinces that would accommodate the (holistic) training of both players and coaches. Such a programme should be supported, in

kind, by both the government and SAFA, and should be coordinated in conjunction with local government sports authorities and relevant community organisations (this would include establishing criteria for participation in such academies).

- ◆ All major professional clubs must, through the PSL and SAFA, commit themselves to a 'Development Charter' that would tie financial support – whether directly from the private sector or from the PSL itself – for these clubs to the implementation of meaningful and sustainable youth development programmes. Failure to consistently adhere to such a 'Charter' should result in point penalties being levied on the club in PSL competitions.
- ◆ In order to democratise power and invigorate the decision-making process within SAFA, membership of SAFA'S NEC should be subject to a formal quota (not less than 50 per cent) of community-level soccer officials, second- and third-tier club representatives, as well as professional player representatives.
- ◆ There should be a formally set division of SAFA'S annual budget such that expenditure on administrative salaries and associated costs is capped at no more than 30 per cent of the overall budget, and expenditure on practical development and educational programmes is progressively increased, such that within a five-year period this component consumes a majority of the budget. SAFA'S constitution must be amended to formally accommodate these provisions.
- ◆ All senior management positions within SAFA should be tied to performance-related conditions (linked to implementation of agreed-upon programmes), based on fixed-term contracts that are renewable every two years.

Regardless of the implementation of some (or all) of these measures, the ultimate bottom line for South African soccer, if it is to move beyond the crisis in which it now finds itself, lies in a change of attitude and consciousness of those involved in the 'beautiful game'. The dominant, and unfortunate, attitude that now

exists in South African society, and which has effectively taken over the game of soccer, is one of self-interested individualism, where personal gain and money hold centre stage, whether on or off the field. What is needed is radical change, a return to a collective discipline, motivation, pride and passion that is at the heart of a progressive society and the game of soccer itself.

Notes

- 1 Mr Dunywa was part of the delegation of soccer officials that visited Lusaka.
- 2 SAFA, Introduction, <http://www.safa.org.za>
- 3 All information on competitions is taken from SAFA's website, <http://www.safa.org.za>.
- 4 'Black' in this context refers to South Africans classified as 'African', 'coloured' and 'Indian' under apartheid laws.
- 5 For a classic example of this kind of thinking, see the opinions expressed by ex-Springbok rugby player Uli Schmidt in Grundlingh, Odendaal and Spies 1995: 24.
- 6 Mr Hack served an initial term as SAFA CEO in the 1990s and then returned for a second term several years later. At the time of writing, he remains the CEO.
- 7 See SAFA's official website, <http://www.safa.org.za>.
- 8 There are many examples of references by various individuals, writers and organisations from across the racial, class and political landscape of South Africa to such a 'crisis'. A recent and well-publicised one comes from none other than the (ex-)president of the country himself, Thabo Mbeki; see Mbeki (2006).
- 9 For the full research report, see McKinley and De Villiers 2005.
- 10 It should be noted that the several billion rands that the various levels of government have now dedicated to refurbishing existing stadiums, and building new ones, as part of South Africa's hosting of the 2010 World Cup, will not positively impact on the infrastructural state of most local community soccer fields and stadiums, which are used by the vast majority of soccer players in the country.
- 11 Although it is unclear exactly what 'excellence' programme will be forthcoming from the LOTTO funds, it is interesting to note the public announcement in mid-2006 of a R2.1 million cash injection from the National Lottery to start an 'academy of sporting excellence' at Adams College (a private school), in conjunction with an outfit named TotiSport (an organisation that helps young people develop their sporting skills and become professionals). A newspaper

article reporting on the announcement claimed that the sports academy 'will be up and running by 2007 and will focus mainly on the development of soccer in the run-up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup'. See 'Academy to shine in sport', *Daily Sun*, 25 May 2006. Since then there have been no further developments regarding an academy at Adams College.

- 12 Chapter 5 of the present volume offers an analysis of the current state of women's football in South Africa.
- 13 In the course of research for this chapter, the author was unsuccessful, over a period of two months, in securing interviews with officials at the School of Excellence. It became clear that the administration and overall management of the school left much to be desired.
- 14 Given such a situation, it is hardly surprising that SAFA officialdom would highlight the (apparent) existence of a 2010 development programme for players between the ages of 17 and 22 (Hack interview). While such a programme might well exist on paper, it has clearly yet to see the light of day on the field.
- 15 All one has to do to confirm this sad state of affairs is watch sports commentary programmes on television or read the sports pages of any daily newspaper. It would appear that those in positions of influence and power within South African soccer have little better to do than attack and blame each other for the development mess.
- 16 See FIFA world rankings at <http://www.fifa.com/worldfootball/ranking/lastranking/gender=M/fullranking.html#confederation=0&rank=185&page=2>, accessed 10 September 2009.
- 17 While there is certainly a clear degree of rivalry and enmity between the PSL and SAFA, there is no denying that Phillips was a sharp administrator and financier. Having left the PSL on a decent institutional and financial footing in 1998 (after a two-year stint setting up and stabilising the organisation), he was asked to return to take over a now ailing organisation in 2002. According to Phillips, upon his return the PSL was R60 million in debt; after he had been at the helm for four years, it had a healthy R20 million surplus, more member clubs and better competition (Phillips interview).
- 18 Broadbent R, Baxter paints gloomy Bafana picture, *Sunday Times*, 5 February 2006
- 19 Broadbent R, Baxter paints gloomy Bafana picture, *Sunday Times*, 5 February 2006
- 20 Madywabe L, Motsepe too busy to serve on soccer board, *Mail & Guardian Online*, 12 May 2006, http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=271514&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news__sport/, accessed 8 July 2006
- 21 During one episode of such infighting, there were widespread media reports of attempts by several senior SAFA staff members to get their CEO, Raymond Hack,

- fired for dereliction of duty and lack of leadership. See Sibusiso Mseleku, Safa staff all out to sack Hack, *City Press*, 21 May 2006.
- 22 The title of this section of the chapter is a paraphrase of the closing line of an article written by Kaizer Motaung, 'Beyond 2010 – Let's Get It Right This Time – Countdown to Germany', posted on the official Kaizer Chiefs website, <http://www.kaizerchiefs.com> on 8 June 2006. The full sentence reads: 'I would be pleased if we can prevail beyond the trivialities of entertaining mediocrity and massaging our often-retrogressive egos that are hindering our national team.'
 - 23 Kaizer Motaung, Beyond 2010 – Let's Get It Right This Time, 8 June 2006, <http://www.kaizerchiefs.com>, accessed 10 July 2006
 - 24 Over the last 10 years or so, South Africa has witnessed a series of 'national indabas' designed to 'address' a host of social, political and economic issues. These have most often involved a set of pre-identified and pre-set 'stakeholders' (government, big business, trade unions and 'civil society') who have come together in such 'indabas' ostensibly to forge a 'consensus' around the issue at stake. While it would appear that there is a widespread belief amongst many South Africans that such 'indabas' are both a necessary and an indispensable element of the country's new democracy, there is little to suggest that the outcomes of these 'indabas' have resulted in much practical benefit for the majority of South Africans.

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