

Regrouping in SA sport on the cards?

By Cheryl Roberts

Sport in South Africa is on the threshold of a new era. Organisations — from both the establishment and non-racial perspectives — will have to make some important political and strategic decisions about the transformation of sport in preparation for a new society.

One of the biggest challenges confronting democratic sports organisations is the development of a mass-based non-racial sports movement. This sports organisation will have the task of organising not only the urban sports people but also those in the rural areas, emphasising a people's culture of sport in doing so.

In recent years there have been calls from community and labour organisations for sports bodies to become mass-based and representative of all sports people. At this juncture no specific organisation has emerged which can claim these features but there are indications that the transformation of sport is high on the agenda of sports organisations.

It has been argued that whilst the South African Council of Sport (Sacos) has done sterling work in the promotion of non-racial sport against many adverse factors, the organisation has not met the expectations of it to become the mass-based, sports movement. The recent formation of the National Sports Congress (NSC), an organisation closely allied to the Mass Democratic Movement, might be an indication of the impatience of some sports people with the progress Sacos has made over the last few years in this regard.

Despite the recent criticism of Sacos the organisation has played a huge role in the successful international isolation of multi-national sport. Shortly after its formation in 1973 Sacos resolved to support the international moratorium on sports contact with South Africa. This was the policy being pursued by the exiled South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (Sanroc). To gain support for the international campaign Sacos highlighted the contradictions and inequalities of the apartheid social order which ensured privileges for a minority and minimal amenities for the oppressed majority.

In 1977, following representations from Sanroc and Sacos, the United Nations passed resolutions which prohibited international tours to and from South Africa. A further ban was slapped on coaches visiting the country for coaching assignments.

In February 1986, the president of the South African Cricket Union, Mr Geoff Dakin, admitted that the sports boycott had helped to promote social change in the country. He went on to say that anti-apartheid activist Peter Hain had acted as a catalyst "in getting us to look at ourselves in the mirror".

The success of the isolation campaigns



MDM-organised demonstrations plagued the international rugby team on their recent tour of South Africa.

prompted the government into action. Since the mid-1980s the government has consistently tried to depict the sports network as being deracialised and depoliticised. In response the anti-apartheid sports groupings have sought to deliberately show that the political language still existent in the sports apparatus with their slogan of "No Normal Sport in an Abnormal Society". Sacos played a major role in popularising this slogan.

A little over 18 months ago Sacos could claim to be the only legitimate sports structure amongst the oppressed. But, impatient with the pace of the mass organisation of non-racial sport, another structure, the NSC, has emerged. The NSC claims that it was not formed in opposition to Sacos but is prepared to work with Sacos to bring about a truly mass-based, democratic sports movement in the country and to assist with the development of non-racial sport, particularly in the African townships where large numbers of players have been lured into the ranks of multi-national sport.

Whilst the NSC argues it was not formed in opposition to Sacos there is no doubt that its existence has opened an area of contestation between the two sports forces as both are competing for the same constituency. Since the NSC's inception, relations between it and Sacos have not been healthy and a few meetings between the two — held under strained conditions — did little to alleviate the simmering tensions.

In September the two sports groupings met yet again to sort out their differences and the parameters of their territories. How-

ever, talks deadlocked after the NSC refused to acknowledge Sacos as the authentic sports wing of the liberation struggle. At this stage both the NSC and Sacos are consulting with their respective constituencies on how to resolve the non-racial sports impasse.

The basic divide between the NSC and Sacos and the issue on which they fail to agree is each other's affiliations in the liberation struggle.

From the outset the NSC stated that it is aligned to the Mass Democratic Movement. Sacos claims that because its membership has diverse political affiliations it has chosen to remain non-aligned. Sacos also argues that it committed itself, from the time of its formation, to the liberation struggle and does not find it in the interest of non-racial sport to align itself to a particular political force.

It is because of this steadfast stance on alignment that speculation points to what has been termed as a split in non-racial sport. Whilst the future of sport is difficult to predict there are some indications that point to a likely scenario.

Whilst one grouping are arguing for a conciliatory and working relationship between the two anti-apartheid sports forces there are some who say that the parting of the ways must come about.

Although not formally announced, the NSC is expected to launch on a national scale early next year. Already interim committees have been set up throughout the country. Sacos is unlikely to allow dual affiliations, that is, membership to both Sacos and the

NSC and will in all probability ask their membership to make a choice. The choice of course will not be an easy and simple one but will require painstaking thought before finality is reached.

Initially the NSC's constituency is likely to be centred around African sportspeople. But at the same time, although they have not formally announced their intended affiliation, it is likely that non-racial codes like soccer, cricket and rugby will gain a majority backing to move their allegiance from Sacos to the NSC.

Here the decision will be a political one — because these codes support the MDM, they will want to play their sport under the banner of the MDM. For the other codes and players under Sacos and those who are not affiliated to an umbrella sports structure, their decision to join either sports grouping is likely to be prompted by the facilities, funds, amenities that are being offered. After all, most people play sport for the enjoyment and whoever makes their life most enjoyable in this regard will win their support.

The NSC, whilst still in its formative stages, has a challenging road ahead. It has the advantage of learning from the mistakes and weaknesses of other sports groups but it has the advantage of being guided by the oppositional forces, particularly the MDM. If its "Unity in Sports" conference in July was anything to go by then the stage has definitely been set for the emergence of one of the most significant sports organisations in South Africa.

What does the emergence of the NSC mean for multinational sport? In its short existence the NSC has already attracted the attention of some multinational codes like the road runners and the South African Cricket Union who want to talk to the NSC. But besides attracting their attention the NSC is already having an effect on the internal administration of some codes — like the recent happenings in athletics. But those who think that the NSC will be a liberal sports structure compared to the "hardline" attitude of Sacos are mistaken.

The NSC's agenda for a mass based sports movement will in all probability include discussions between all sports codes. But these talks will have stringent pre-conditions like the abandonment of rebel tours and acceptance of non-racial sport. Also, there is no way the NSC will relax the sports moratorium, particularly as it affects multinational sport, and it will campaign vigorously for its continued isolation.

As far as Sacos and the NSC are concerned they will continue with their programmes. For both anti-apartheid sports forces the real test of strength will be shown by the support they command on the ground. If either fail to deliver the sports goods they will cause a knockout blow for non-racial sport. Both are aware of their challenges, weaknesses and complexities at this juncture. Hopefully, they will act as stimulants for their respective roads ahead.

There is no doubt that South African sport has reached a critical turning point. Which way to turn and how to respond to events and developments unfolding are integral issues confronting sports organisations. Once decided, these will have a crucial bearing on the sports network in a post-apartheid society.

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BOOK REVIEW

Compassionate study of ravaged Mozambique

By ANTHONI VAN NIEUWKERK

MOZAMBIQUE: CAUGHT IN THE TRAP by Derrick Knight (Christian Aid, London, 1988)

Although South Africans frequently read and hear of the tragic course of events in Mozambique, not many can comprehend the massive scale of death and destruction that continues to ravage the country. Yet it is important for all of southern Africa's inhabitants to understand the history of the conflict in Mozambique, because therein lies a number of lessons for all of us. "Mozambique: Caught in the Trap" is one of a few publications that tries to paint, in words and photographs, a vivid picture of the grim reality that faces Mozambique today.

The book is written from a Christian perspective, and therefore deals in a compassionate manner with the plight of the victims of poverty, displacement, disease and Renamo's atrocities. Its author does not pull any punches, however. A great deal of the tragedy in Mozambique is attributed to deliberate South African policies which, under the Botha government, included active support for Renamo.

It would be unrealistic, however, to blame South Africa and Renamo for all of Mozambique's ills. The book devotes a chapter to what its author calls "A mean heritage". Colonial neglect and subsequent underdevelopment, economic policies by Frelimo based on rigid Marxist lines, and large-scale nationalisation all contributed to the exacerbation of the Mozambican crisis. For instance, it is claimed that "Some early Frelimo policies unwittingly aided the MNR by reducing the level of active Frelimo support among the rural population. The lack of attention to the peasantry in economic planning was compounded in some areas, by attempts to compel unwilling peasants into communal villages".

The book furthermore presents the reader with a large number of "case studies", where the people of Mozambique, usually victims of violence or witnesses to atrocities, are allowed to speak for themselves. Reading through these documented cases makes for chilly reading. The following are only two such extracts:

"The people tell me of their suffering and of the atrocities committed by the bandits. They respect no one. They force people to work for them. They send people on forced marches. They force women to become prostitutes. They kill people they find hiding in the bush..."
— Alberto Duarte, a Baptist Union Pastor

"I am a worker on a farm near Nauela. When the enemy arrived in 1986 I ran away to Alto Molocue. When we thought the bandits had gone we went back to find them still in the district. They came and went so we took to sleeping in the bush. They began to burn our houses... I lost, I lost, I lost. All my parents. I lost some brothers and sisters."
— Alberto de Sao Remo, farm labourer



Apart from these graphic descriptions, the extent of the suffering is clinically laid out by the use of statistics. These indicate that in the last eight years in Mozambique as a whole, 500 000 people have died from the effects of the war. Some five million Mozambicans are now displaced or affected or have fled over neighbouring borders in the hope of finding peace. The effect of having to cope with up to a third of the total population either on the move or dependent on relief supplies has been shattering on the Mozambican economy.

In spite of all this doom and despair, however, hope shines through. President Chissano told Parliament in 1987: "We cannot wait for peace to start economic rehabilitation, nor wait for economic power to win the war against the armed bandits." The scale of the emergency has called into being a massive relief operation supported by national and international programmes and budgets. These efforts are described in detail, including the role of the Christian Council of Mozambique and the SADCC countries. In 1987, the Mozambican government adopted the Economic Recovery Programme, which was designed to stop the serious decline in the economy and to create a base for a new start to Mozambican development.

Recent events in Mozambique have overtaken some of the more pessimistic conclusions reached by the book. The ruling party has reconsidered its dogmatic adherence to Marxism-Leninism, and a peace process between Frelimo and Renamo is now beginning to take shape. Given the nature of Renamo's composition, however, an end to the conflict in Mozambique might still take years.

The Christian Council of Mozambique and the other churches in the region have asked "to help us cry out against this unjust war which is being moved against Mozambique, to make people understand the real nature of the war and to do all in their power to bring peace to our shattered country". This is a call which is addressed to all of us, and which should be seriously considered.

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