SPORT IN THE GLOBAL SOCIETY CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Sport: Race, Ethnicity and Identity

Building Global Understanding

Edited by Daryl Adair

ROUTLEDGE

Sport has long been a paradoxical environment with respect to issues of 'race', ethnicity and identity. For much of the 20th century, sports around the world were enclaves of difference. Whites and non-whites, for example, were separated on the sports field as they were in many ways off the field. Today sport is much more inclusive, with athletic ability of greater importance than skin colour or ancestry. Yet enmity and antagonism still appear in sport via instances of racial vilification or hostility between some groups. Other problems include the relative absence of minorities from positions of power and influence in sport, as well as folkloric assumptions about athletic ability based upon stereotypes about 'race' or ethnic background.

This book discusses issues of diversity, capacity and equity in the colourful world of global sport. A panoramic approach, covering 'race', ethnicity and identity is consistent with the contemporary global migration of professional athletes, as well as the multicultural contexts of sport in various regions. This collection of essays therefore addresses international dimensions of sport, commonality and difference, as well as the special circumstances of sport and social relations in particular places.

This book was previously published as a special issue of *Sport in Society*.

Daryl Adair earned a PhD in Australian history from the Flinders University of South Australia in 1994. Since then he has researched and taught sport history at De Montfort University Leicester and the University of Queensland, then added sport media and sport management to his repertoire at the University of Canberra. He is currently an Associate Professor of Sport Management in the UTS Business School at the University of Technology, Sydney.

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Series Editor: Boria Majumdar

SPORT: RACE, ETHNICITY AND IDENTITY

Building Global Understanding

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FOREWORD

Building global understanding: ethnocultural diversity and sport

Daryl Adair

University of Technology Sydney, Australia

This Special Issue of *Sport in Society* was conceived in the wake of the conference *Sport, Race and Ethnicity: Building a Global Understanding*, which was staged by the University of Technology Sydney from 30 November to 2 December 2008.[1] That symposium was a sequel to *Race and Sport: Building a Global Understanding*, held at the University of Iowa in 2006,[2] though with the addition of ethnicity as a key platform. A third such conference, *Beyond Boundaries: Race and Ethnicity in Modern Sport*, was held in Barbados from 15 to 18 July 2010, hosted jointly by the University of West Indies, Cave Hill and George Mason University, Washington DC.[3]

The 80 speakers at the *SRE* Sydney conference included Indigenous peoples from Australia, New Zealand and Canada, together with people of different colour, ancestry and religion from places as diverse as North America, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Brazil and South-East Asia. The programme involved academics, practitioners and policy makers in three days of debate about sport as 'racial' and ethnic terrain, including discussions about opportunities and obstacles to sport being a site of diversity and inclusion, issues of ethno-racial discrimination and prejudice, and problems of ethno-racial stereotyping in respect of athletic performance. As the articles in this issue of *Sport in Society* attest, a range of norms, values, attitudes and power relationships underpin the capacity of sport to either include and engage, or exclude and disengage.[4]

In the first article, *'The race for supremacy': the politics of 'white' sport in South Africa, 1870–1910*, Dean Allen evaluates the significance of sport for the two politically dominant white groups in colonial South Africa – the British and the Afrikaner. Whereas most research has concentrated on 'race' relations between black, coloured and white participants in the history of South African sport, this investigation reveals how British imperial games, notably cricket and rugby, often produced antagonistic rivalries between Briton and Boer. The Afrikaners resented imposition of the English language and British rule, and they eventually fought a series of wars for autonomy. In a politically reconstructed South Africa, sport became a key cultural site wherein the former military protagonists now collaborated. Visiting tours by English rugby teams, for example, had diplomatic purposes in trying to reconcile Boer and Briton, and the fact that South African teams included players from both the Afrikaner and British communities accentuated that goal. That said, during the twentieth century rugby and, to a lesser extent, cricket were seized upon by Afrikaner nationalists as a quintessential marker of white, male, Afrikaner 'supremacy' in South Africa.

Allen's article establishes the historical bases upon which interethnic cooperation and contestation among whites was played out in sport.

The second article, *History and its racial legacies: quotas in South African rugby and cricket*, propels the reader into a completely new era of post-apartheid sport and social relations. Christopher Merrett, Colin Tatz and Daryl Adair take a critical view of contemporary South African sport policy, arguing that it ought to be guided – as anti-apartheid activists had long argued – on the basis of non-racialism. Instead, the authors argue, there is an obsession with affirmative action based upon what has become, in effect, a re-racialized South Africa. The government and sport administrators have, regrettably, been more concerned with the racial 'balance' of rugby and cricket teams – formerly dominated by whites – than providing basic sport facilities and resources in impoverished townships, areas that are populated overwhelmingly by blacks. Merrett et al. take a broad historical sweep through the era of apartheid in sport up to today. They conclude that South Africa needs to adopt non-racialism in both society and sport, and that the country's political leaders – a largely self-interested black elite – must govern for all citizens; black or white, wealthy or poor. South African sport, in these respects, is both shaped and constrained by the politics of race.

In the third article, *Around the world: problematizing the Harlem Globetrotters as cold war warriors*, Damion Thomas charts the interplay of sport, international relations and diplomacy during the cold war era. Herein, the famous African-American basketball team, the Harlem Globetrotters, was utilized by the US State Department to promote positive images of American democracy and race relations to international audiences. Thomas argues that the Globetrotters were complicit cultural ambassadors, and in fact used their profile as goodwill agents to promote their entertainment brand on a global scale. In the process, the Globetrotters of the 1950s negotiated a complex pathway: while abroad they were proclaimed to be examples of equal opportunity under a capitalist economy and a liberal value system, yet in the USA they were subject to the inequities of a racialized (pre-civil rights) society in which African Americans were made second class. Furthermore, the actual performance of the Globetrotter spectacles was replete with contradictions, such as with recourse to minstrel traditions in which African Americans, historically, had been made objects of ridicule. Thomas, in his case study of basketball ambassadors in the cold war era, shows that there have been efforts within previous accounts of Globetrotter history to either overlook or sanitize issues that are racially and politically sensitive.

In the fourth article, *The televised sport 'monkey trial': 'race' and the politics of post-colonial cricket*, David Rowe evaluates claims of racial vilification in the context of the changing twenty-first century dynamics of the game's administrative power. He uses the example of Indian cricketer Harbhajan Singh, who was alleged to have called (dark-skinned) Australian player Andrew Symonds a 'monkey' during a Test match at Sydney in January 2008. In general terms, there is a tradition in cricket of players accepting the umpire's decision without dissent. In this instance, Harbhajan was given a three-match ban for his alleged misconduct, but on appeal the sentence was reduced to a modest fine and a suspended one-match ban. These decisions were, it must be said, made by people other than the two on-field umpires: first, the International Cricket Council's match referee, and second the appeals commissioner. Moreover, the evidence that these adjudicators were provided with came not from field umpires, but the players themselves – including audio from what television broadcaster Channel Nine calls 'stump cam'. In evaluating public debate on this case, Rowe uncovers the cultural and mediated complexity of claims and counterclaims about racism, and of the perceived legitimacy or otherwise of the game's officials to wield authority during such a crisis. Rowe is particularly interested in

how changing power relations in international cricket were evident in this case by the brinkmanship of Indian cricket authorities, who until the Harbhajan case was reviewed announced a suspension of the tour of Australia. The downgrading of the charge against Harbhajan and a significantly reduced penalty thereafter provided, from the Indian perspective, a vindication of their dissenting position. Rowe argues, however, that this had as much to do with the politics of post-colonialism and the rising economic power of India in world cricket.

In the fifth article, *International development or white man's burden? The IAAF's Regional Development Centres and regional sporting assistance*, James Connor and Melissa McEwen take a political economy critique of globalized sport development initiatives in athletics. The authors are concerned that the IAAF's Regional Development Centres (RDCs) function to channel athletic talent from Third World countries into developed nations, with inadequate compensation for negatively impacted communities. Connor and McEwen argue that IAAF encroachment into Third World spaces has a concomitant goal: to provide an avenue for its commercial sponsors to infiltrate previously underexplored markets. The authors warn that the operation of the IAAF (a Western-dominated, Eurocentric sport organization) and its sponsors (transnational corporations) in Third World contexts is replete with serious power imbalances. Their critique can be linked, to some extent, with the drain of Third World athletic talent taking place in other sports, such as Association football. Connor and McEwen's article is a step towards a further research goal: they observe that many of the athletes who move from the Third World into sporting success are black skinned, and that stereotypes about 'natural' physical prowess among blacks, together with Western efforts to identify and exploit this, are a key to the IAAF's strategy of deploying RDCs in Third World countries.

Turning to article six, *In-groups, out-groups and contested identities in Scottish international football*, Joseph M. Bradley explores the complex and competing sense of national and group loyalties expressed through fandom in Association football. By undertaking qualitative interviews with members of the 'Tartan Army' (which has as its purpose support for the Scottish national football team), Bradley reveals dominant discourses around what it means 'to be' a Scot, together with what is considered problematic or oppositional in respect of claims to 'authentic Scottishness'. Using both interview data and media reports, the author unravels themes of 'otherness' among the Tartan Army and similarly diehard Scottish football patriots. These included anti-Englishness (not to be confused with anti-Britishness, for the Scots were typically proud – post devolution – of having their own parliament in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). From the perspective of ardent Scottish nationalists, the most problematic 'other' was the ethnic Irish, many of whom expressed a sense of lineage and group culture by supporting the Celtic or Hibernian football teams in the Scottish Premier League, or by following the national football team of the Republic of Ireland. For the Tartan Army and other single-minded patriots, this support of a 'foreign' country's football team over and above that of Scotland was heretical.

In article seven, *Ethnicity, structure and globalization: an argument about Association football in Australia, 1958–2010*, Roy Hay takes an iconoclastic position with respect to the long term challenge and contemporary struggle to establish elite-level club football in a crowded Australian sport marketplace. Unique among countries around the world, Australia has four professional football codes, with Association football for many years being the poor relation. An explanation for this, which Hay regards as convenient but simplistic, is that the sport was championed by a great wave of migrants to Australia after World War II, many of whom came from non-English speaking backgrounds. What was,

to them, football was called soccer by locals. More than that, though, the round ball game was derided, in some quarters, as a 'foreign' game and, in an explicitly anti-ethnic tone, even labelled 'wogball'. Hay regards this anti-soccer rhetoric as noteworthy, but hardly decisive in terms of explaining the limited development of Association football in Australia. He points, instead, to serious structural and administrative issues that made the inaugural National Soccer League problematic, and he highlights the vulnerabilities of its successor, the A-League, in which city-based franchises have stolen the limelight from traditional clubs, such as Marconi, Juventus or Olympic, that have long appealed to fans with a particular ethnic heritage. Association football in Australia is now more subject than ever before to global commercial and media pressures; in this environment, Hay argues, media coverage, business acumen and managerial stability are the key indicators of the A-League's future in Australia. The ethnic heritage of football now plays second fiddle, for better or worse, Downunder.

Notes

[1] For details see http://www.business.uts.edu.au/lst/sre/ (accessed 15 May 2010).
[2] For details see http://www.uiowa.edu/ ~ global/index.htm (accessed 15 May 2010).
[3] For details see http://www.cavehill.uwi.edu/fhe/beyondboundaries/ (accessed 15 May 2010).
[4] Five of the seven articles published here were first presented at SRE Sydney. The addition of two articles outside of that context, offered by Damion Thomas and Roy Hay, are very welcome.

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