

RESCINDING THE MORATORIUM ON SOUTH AFRICAN SPORT: COULD SACOS PREVENT IT?

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1. INTRODUCTION

When the moratorium on South African sport was rescinded it was not a decision that was welcomed by all within the South African sporting fraternity. The South African Council on Sport (SACOS) was the one sporting organisation that was bitterly opposed to the decision. In fact, SACOS withdrew from the unity process and appealed to the international community to reimpose the moratorium. It felt that the prerequisites for readmission into international sport, i.e. principled unity of the various sports codes and the implementation of development programmes, had not been met. If this was the case, why was the moratorium rescinded? This article explains why and how the moratorium was revoked and also why SACOS was unable to stop it. As it was the only sports organisation in South Africa to oppose it, this discussion will be on SACOS. There were numerous factors that influenced the decision to revoke the international moratorium, which in turn tendered SACOS incapable of preventing it. However, before these factors can be discussed, the position of SACOS within South African sport requires some clarification.

2. BACKGROUND

SACOS was established in March 1973 as the successor to three earlier organisations that propagated non-racial sport in South Africa. The immediate forerunner was the South African Non-Racial Sports Organisation (SASPO), established in 1970, its predecessor the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC), established in 1965 and the earliest organisation, the South African Sports Association, established in 1958.² From the time of its inception in 1973, the primary aim of SACOS was to oppose racial segregation in South African sport: “SACOS came into being, in a social order, where the expedient assumptions of the ‘inferiority’ of people because of ‘race’ has been elevated to one of the basic principles of its

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² N Goodall, *Opposing apartheid through sport: The role of SACOS in South African Sport, 1982 – 1992*. Unpublished MA minidissertation, Rand Afrikaans University, 2004, p. 10.

ideology – Apartheid.”³ The broader aims of SACOS were to mobilise and organise non-racial sport, to seek international affiliation for their sports codes, to obtain sports sponsorships for development and to reject the state’s concept of multinational sport: “To foster a spirit of goodwill, equality and fraternity among all people, without any discrimination whatsoever on the ground of race, colour or creed and to prevent racial, colour, religious, or political discrimination amongst sportsmen.”⁴ SACOS was born out of the anti-apartheid struggle. Its establishment in March 1973 was due to “the unique system” in which it operated. According to its own description, “it was destined to emerge on the SA sports scene because of factors imposed upon it by an ideology which [determined] and [dominated] all facets of life.”⁵ In reaction to apartheid, SACOS adopted as its goal and guiding principle non-racialism and challenged apartheid sport in all spheres. SACOS set out to expose the “fraudulent” nature of reforms introduced in sport by the government of Prime Minister John Vorster and attempted to instil an awareness locally and internationally of the “evils” of apartheid. SACOS actively opposed the South African government’s prohibition of integrated sport or the representation of South African sport internationally by any representatives other than whites.⁶

The membership of SACOS consisted of “all National Associations and Provincial Councils of sport” on condition that members adhered to the policies and regulations of SACOS.⁷ The organisation represented the different sports codes (different types of sport, including swimming, netball, soccer, tennis, etc.) and not individual people. By 1982/1983 a total of 22 sporting organisations were affiliated with SACOS, all of which included “South Africa” or “South African” in their official names. SACOS continued in the footsteps of its predecessor organisations opposing sports segregation, as the government had termed it “multinational” sport. SACOS set out to normalise sport by systematically opposing all discrimination in sport. It was no coincidence that former leaders of SASA and SANROC, such as MN Pather and Reg Feldman, also joined SACOS.

SACOS wanted to promote sport. It rejected political intervention causing racially discriminatory sport. As a matter of principle SACOS refused to align itself to any particular political tendency. It maintained a position of neutrality, and owing to “the nature” of the organisation, it determined not to align itself “with any political tendency”, but it rather intended to “promote the broader struggle”.⁸ In 1984 SACOS went so far as to determine that officials of the organisation would not be permitted

³ SACOS, *Fifth Biennial General Meeting*, Cape Town, 1983, p. 143.

⁴ SACOS, *Sixth Biennial General Meeting*, Durban, 1985, p. 195.

⁵ SACOS, *Fifth Biennial General Meeting*, Cape Town, 1983, p. 143.

⁶ WD Basson, “South African sport in the nineties”, in CA Taylor (ed.), *The challenge to change in South Africa*. University of Port Elizabeth, 1991, p. 65.

⁷ SACOS, *Sixth Biennial General Meeting*, Durban, 1985, p. 196.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

to simultaneously hold office in an anti-apartheid organisation, although the right of members to affiliate to any political organisation of their choice was guaranteed.⁹ With the increased momentum of the anti-apartheid movements in the 1980s, this policy of political alignment became a highly contentious issue.

SACOS was willing to negotiate with establishment sport, but was uncompromisingly opposed to so-called multinational sport, the permit system and the unequal distribution of sports facilities and sports sponsorships. To achieve its aims SACOS accepted the Double Standards Resolution (DSR) in 1977. The DSR forbade members of SACOS to participate in or associate themselves with multinational sport, officially established state sports organisations or any official government institutions in South Africa. Contravention of this rule, would have led to the marginalisation of such member(s), who would be branded “stooges or sell-outs”.¹⁰ In 1979 the DSR was amended to provide for the expulsion of members from SACOS who entertained any form of association with any state initiative or sports institution.¹¹ This was seen as a radicalisation of SACOS’ position, as this specific amendment was in response to the involvement of Norman Middleton (a member of the SACOS executive) with the Coloured Representative Council. Middleton was expelled from SACOS.¹² In the same year SACOS also accepted a resolution calling for the placing of a moratorium on all international sports contact for South Africa (non-racial and racially segregated sport), as well as the international expulsion of South Africa from international sport in its current representative structures. In turn, SACOS called for international affiliation of non-racial sporting codes.

SACOS perceived itself as the vanguard of the sports struggle in South Africa in the period preceding the rescinding of the moratorium in 1991. Since its inception in 1973, SACOS claimed to be the only South African-based sports organisation that opposed apartheid in sport between 1973 and 1989. During the same period SANROC was the other organisation that opposed apartheid in sport, but it was based in London. However, the two organisations worked in tandem until 1989. Through its work, the position of SACOS within the broader anti-apartheid movement and in the international arena was recognised and acknowledged. In the period of the radicalisation of the liberation struggle following the 1976 Soweto uprising, SACOS fulfilled the role of the sports wing in the broader liberation movement.¹³

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰ C Roberts, *SACOS 1973–1988 Fifteen years of sports resistance* (University of Natal Press, 1988), p. 28. See also MF Collins, *Sport and social exclusion* (Routledge, London, 2003), p. 5.

¹¹ SACOS, *Fifth Biennial General Meeting*, Cape Town, 1983, p. 23.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³ D Booth, "The South African Council on Sport and the political antinomies of the sports boycott", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23(1), March 1997, p. 51; R Archer and A Bouillon, *The South African game – sport and racism* (London, 1982), pp. 15–18.

3. PRINCIPLES AND POWER: THE TRADE-OFF IN THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE

The moratorium, imposed on South African sport by the international sporting community, was revoked in 1991, much against the wishes of SACOS. Yet the organisation had failed to prevent the rescinding of the moratorium. How was this possible, given the stature of the organisation as described above? In contrast to the 1970s and 1980s, SACOS found itself in a peripheral position within South African sport by 1991. By this time SACOS was no longer in a position to dictate matters, influence people and events or to prevent the rescinding of the moratorium. Its marginalisation to the periphery of sport in and outside South Africa, is crucial to understanding why SACOS failed to prevent the rescinding of the moratorium. The rescinding of the moratorium was inextricably linked to SACOS's peripheral position. In order to understand why SACOS failed to prevent the repeal of the moratorium in 1991, it is necessary to understand how SACOS was marginalised, thus rendering it ineffective in influencing the process of sports transformation.

There were a number of factors that played a role in pushing SACOS towards this peripheral position, viz., the divergent political philosophies within the organisation; the organisation's loyalty to policies such as alignment; the continuation of state reforms; the growth of the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU); the birth and growth of the National Sports Council (NSC); the re-emerging presence of the ANC; its international relationships and the changed environment in which it operated. The factors indicate that internal and external factors impacted upon the organisation's actions. Collectively these factors led to the weakening and subsequent marginalisation of the organisation. This was due to the combined effect these factors had on the important issues of SACOS's membership and its relationship with other organisations. These relationships were directly affected by SACOS's policies of alignment and the DSR. It is through these two issues that the impact of the afore-mentioned factors on SACOS became increasingly visible. The following discussion will endeavour to illustrate the interrelated, ripple effect thereof on the organisation.

4. MEMBERSHIP

The membership of SACOS was its lifeblood as strength in numbers afforded its bargaining power and subsequently determined who would lead. In confrontational situations, SACOS increasingly found that numbers were important, but as a result of the decimation of its membership, its position of influence was increasingly undermined. The above statements should be understood within the context of negotiations that had

taken place in the early nineties, before it began to lose members. The weakening of SACOS through loss of membership was worthwhile noting.

In the early eighties the membership of SACOS was influenced by its policy position on the permit system, non-collaboration, the DSR and the use of segregated facilities on the one hand. On the other hand, the policy on the moratorium, political alignment and non-racialism had little influence on membership, since those issues were not as contentious to the members. These matters did though constitute the framework for the organisation's policies on collaboration, etc. By 1990 sensitivity around these matters had been partially reversed as permits and facilities had very little impact on membership. The policy of alignment, the moratorium, non-collaboration, the DSR and the resolution on dual affiliation were the main sources of frustration. From the time of its formation, SACOS experienced a growth in membership, reaching its zenith between 1982 and 1986, followed by a gradual decline as a result of a combination of factors, in particular its hard line policies. This loss of membership was crucial in determining its position and influence within South African sport.

In the period between 1986 and 1992 SACOS encountered difficult times. There were many signs that all was not well within the organisation and there were increasing instances of opposition against it. The fact that the issue of alignment could not be laid to rest should have alerted the organisation to its inherent problems, the root of which was the divergent political philosophies within SACOS. They were too diverse to allow reconciliation. Those members who supported the non-alignment principle stood by SACOS and consequently supported the DSR, non-collaboration and the continuation of the moratorium, while those who supported alignment, abandoned the organisation and forged ahead with the unity process. The bulk of the NSC leadership was drawn from the latter group. Through its loyalty to the policy of alignment SACOS's membership dwindled and as a result the organisation was increasingly weakened and marginalised.

The political environment created by the state also had an impact on SACOS's membership. The environment of the eighties differed dramatically from that of the seventies, eliciting responses which had a profound impact on the activities of SACOS. The South African government was instrumental in bringing about these changes and this elicited responses both at home and from abroad. The responses, which culminated in the 1994 elections, played a major role in the eventual marginalisation of SACOS. The state's reformist actions emboldened the masses, leading to widespread protest actions and in turn, to repressive measures from the state, such as partial states of emergency in 1985 and 1986 and the imposition of economic sanctions against South Africa. These developments weakened the South African economy. Besides denouncing the government, business called for the abolition of apartheid. Big business leaders travelled to Lusaka for talks with the ANC - for which the state had indirectly offered the "space" or legitimacy. This

reintroduction of the ANC led to further repression when the state banned several extra-parliamentary organisations including the UDF in 1988. During this period of immobilisation, the resistance movement reassessed its strategy of non-collaboration, concluding that it unfortunately had gained nothing tangible by boycotting instead of collaborating with the state created institutions, such as the President's Council, community councils and black local authorities. At the time Alec Erwin placed the significance of non-collaboration in perspective by saying: "Use or non-use of apartheid facilities is no longer a crucial political question – it does not take us forward strategy-wise."¹⁴

The broader liberation movement had collectively adopted a different strategy by becoming profoundly radicalised after 1976 as demonstrated by the adoption of non-collaboration and boycotting as its primary strategies. By 1988 the broader liberation movement had begun to move away from this strategy as the state had indirectly provided the impetus for change. However, SACOS was one of the anti-apartheid organisations that still believed in non-collaboration and boycott as appropriate strategies. These fundamental policy differences ensured that SACOS would not be a part of the mass based trade union movement COSATU, as well as the UDF. The negative consequences of this loyalty by SACOS to earlier protest principles, meant that SACOS could not depend on support from the mass-based COSATU/UDF alliance, or entice members from this mass-based movement to join it.

Some of the SACOS members were confused by the state's reforms. When FW de Klerk announced reforms in 1990, the reaction of some people created the impression that freedom had been obtained.¹⁵ The removal of the proclamation which dealt with the use of public facilities and the then impending removal of the Group Areas Act in 1990, further strengthened such perceptions. Within South Africa many sportsmen and women began to think about international competition. In response to this SACOS commented that, "(a)mongst our players are those who have been blinded by their own potential and are now seeking greener pastures for themselves".¹⁶ This was an acknowledgement by SACOS that it was losing members in favour of the new emerging strategy to international competition. White establishment sport had always aimed at international re-entry, but now they were joined by some of their former adversaries.

5. MASS-BASED MOVEMENT

The decimation of SACOS's membership was compounded by its failure to build a mass-based organisation.

¹⁴ SACOS, *Eighth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 161.

¹⁵ SACOS, *Ninth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 35.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

In the eighties SACOS held two national sports festivals in Cape Town. In 1982 the games were held in areas populated by Coloureds and Indians, but in contrast, a number of events during the 1988 games were held in black townships in line with the aim of broadening the base of the organisation. Another example of SACOS's attempts to broaden its mass base was the nomination of Rev. Arnold Stofile as President in 1986. Stofile was black, came from the townships, and was a respected figure in the liberation struggle. In 1986 the resolution stating that sportsmen and women who utilised segregated sporting facilities at university campuses would be banned from SACOS, was rescinded in an attempt to limit the exclusion of students from the organisation. Clearly, these efforts were far too limited to have any impact on the broadening of its base, but its failure to make meaningful inroads into the townships was not entirely its own doing. Other factors, in particular prohibiting government policies, also played an important role in preventing SACOS from developing into a mass-based organisation.

Due to the growth of the trade unions, the UDF and other anti-apartheid movements, the issue of sport was largely ignored and as a sports organisation, SACOS' activities were relegated to the lower ranks in terms of priority. The importance of and commitment to sport was abandoned by the leaders of domestic opposition organisations as their energies were increasingly directed towards issues such as housing and employment, purely because those actions were "allowed"/"permitted", as opposed to the 1980s, when such organisations were brutally repressed. The oppressed became bolder, utilising the newly recognised liberty of the trade unions. The trade unions were permitted freedom of operation following the Wiehahn Commission recommendations. They were "allowed" to expand their membership, thereby indirectly emboldening the masses. Most of the township residents wanted low-cost housing and state-subsidised rents, and as such sports facilities were insignificant. Attracting members to build a mass-based movement in such an environment was difficult. In addition, the emergence of a number of new entities or organisations, each with its own agenda and each regarding its personal concerns and grievances as more important, exacerbated the difficulties SACOS encountered in building a mass-based organisation. The environment in which SACOS operated during the seventies thus differed markedly from the operational environment of the eighties.

To achieve this mass base, SACOS was encouraged to align itself with the broader liberation struggle. In the eighties there was an opportunity to rectify its lack of action in the seventies by joining the UDF. However, this opportunity was spurned as SACOS stuck to its policy of non-political alignment, since it was argued that adherence to that principle "would not cause unnecessary division".¹⁷

The political consciousness of the man in the street as opposed to those within the leadership of SACOS, was minimal. Most members of SACOS simply wanted

¹⁷ Booth, p. 61.

to participate in sport. While aware of the injustices of apartheid, they were not willing to engage in a sustained campaign to oppose it. The general rank and file membership of SACOS did not make concerted efforts to organise or to engage in sport with black township dwellers. This position was even more pronounced in the rural areas and homelands. The Victoria East branch of SACOS for example reported that SACOS had support in the homelands, but, due to non-reciprocal visits by the urban codes, this support had dwindled,¹⁸ as the urban members were not aligned with the homelands' way of thinking. The mass of black sport people did not join SACOS either, because it was not their habit to do so, or in many cases because of circumstances, even though they were fully aware of the influence of apartheid in sport.¹⁹ The low level of political consciousness of students was an important factor that resulted in dwindling membership in the homelands.

A proposal to correct this situation suggested that grassroots support had to be enhanced by taking SACOS's policy to the people and raising the political awareness amongst sportsmen and sportswomen, especially students. The implementation of this proposal is best exemplified by the school situation in South Africa. The success and failure of SACOS is evident in this situation. SAPSSA (South African Primary School Sport Association) and SASSA (South African Senior School Sport Association) were the controlling bodies for primary and high school sport respectively and both were affiliates of SACOS. Both organisations organised sport for Coloured and Indian schools only (by law, Coloured people had to attend Coloured schools and Indian people Indian schools) since the student body of those schools was determined by apartheid legislation. In these schools SACOS was successful, but it did not organise sport for black schools, thus providing the state with the opportunity to establish the South African Schools Sports Council (SASSC), which operated mainly in the rural areas. SAPSSA and SASSA (SACOS affiliates) operated primarily in the urban areas.²⁰ Because SACOS had limited access to the townships, an opportunity was afforded to the state to operate there. It was acknowledged that in the peri-urban areas such as Langa and Guguletu, SACOS's influence was virtually non-existent. It could not organise in the black schools as it was constrained by the strict control the state had over these schools through the Bantu Education Department. This constraint prevented it from building a mass-based organisation through the black schools.

At the 8th Biennial General Meeting (BGM) in 1989, the President of SACOS painted a picture of the changed environment which had made it necessary for SACOS to review its strategies and tactics. It appeared that SACOS was fundamen-

¹⁸ SACOS, *Fifth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 31.

¹⁹ Basson, p. 73; A Smith and D Porter, *Sport and national identity in the post-war world* (London, 2004), p. 58.

²⁰ SACOS, *Seventh Biennial General Meeting*, p. 17.

tally affected by these constraints. The challenges were not only coming from the state and its allies, but also from within the broader liberation movements and SACOS itself. At the 8th BGM three points on the agenda provided an indication of the challenges from within. The points were:

- a) The meeting between SACOS and the NSC (National Sports Council);
- b) the position of SACOS on non-alignment and its relationship with progressive political tendencies; and
- c) proposals for the restructuring of SACOS.

In his opening remarks to the 8th BGM of SACOS, the Acting President, Mr Y Ebrahim, referred to the internal disputes, particularly the recognition of the validity of the various tactics and strategies within the broader liberation movement and alignment. He stressed the need for unity in the understanding of different viewpoints and requested that discussions be conducted in a comradely fashion. The President's eagerness for a unified SACOS was evident, but tension amongst delegates was equally evident. Ebrahim admitted that SACOS's problems were of its own making, yet he believed that careful analysis and subjection to the principles of democracy, could lead to renewed success for the organisation. He criticised the unfair criticisms levelled at SACOS for having adopted, amongst others, non-collaboration with segregated sports organisations and requested those who differed to at least respect SACOS's position on these matters. He chided affiliates and codes for acting independently and called for the observation of discipline, since "we cannot allow an affiliate or any person to insist on their right to publically differ from a decision which has been approved of by the majority of our affiliates".²¹ The reconstruction of SACOS, he felt, should be conducted in accordance with the organisation's constitution, acknowledging SACOS's loyalty to the same principles over the years. Ebrahim found insufficient justification to establish an alternative organisation. Similarly he defended the principle of non-alignment on the basis that deviation from it would have exacerbated the existing divisions within the liberation movement.²²

By 1992 issues such as non-collaboration and the permit system were no longer regarded as critical and SACOS itself was involved in unity talks initiated by the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA). Non-alignment was still most contentious, the National Olympic Committee of South Africa (NSC/NOCSA) having openly aligned to the UDF and the ANC. SACOS based its stance on the fact that the Olympic Charter prohibited sports bodies from having any political affiliations. Secondly, it felt that political alignment would increase tensions amongst the liberation organisations and that no one should be marginalised in sport because of their political affiliations. This principled stance did not prevent affiliates, including major organisations/groups such as cricket (The SA

²¹ SACOS, *Eighth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 59.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 63; Also see Basson, p. 67.

Cricket Board) and rugby (The SA Rugby Union) from aligning themselves to the UDF/ANC. Once more the principled stance of SACOS resulted in the adoption of a resolution, the Dual Membership Resolution (DMR) that terminated large sections of its membership, further reducing the size. This in turn served to hamper its attempts to build a mass-based movement.

6. THE NSC AND SACOS

The emergence of the NSC in 1989 created many problems for SACOS in terms of retaining and attracting membership. By 1990 SACOS was no longer perceived to be the leader in the anti-apartheid sports movement. They now had to share the stage with the emergent NSC. Prior to the appearance of the NSC, those advocating non-racial sport had no other choice but SACOS. After 1989 they could choose between SACOS and the NSC, which resulted in competition for influence between the two organisations. The NSC declared that it was not in opposition to SACOS, but rather sought to organise and operate in areas where SACOS had failed to penetrate. Sportsmen and women who were opposed to apartheid, yet could not meet SACOS's stringent criteria, found a home within the anti-apartheid movement, the NSC. This was particularly so with the black township dwellers and the rural population. The formation of the NSC thus resulted in a further dwindling away of membership from SACOS.

Central to the issue of SACOS's declining membership were the fundamental policy differences between it and the NSC. The NSC was not originally formed in opposition to SACOS, but in September 1989, ties between them were severed. The NSC declared that it no longer viewed SACOS as the sports wing of the liberation struggle,²³ the bone of contention being the DSR, which the NSC regarded as an obstacle to forging unity among the progressive sectors within apartheid sport. In response, SACOS passed the Dual Affiliation Resolution (1989) and declared the NSC a rival body. Simultaneously the NSC openly declared its alignment to the MDM / UDF, and, by implication, also to the ANC, thus contradicting the SACOS policy of non-alignment. Nevertheless, six affiliates of SACOS, the largest and strongest, most important and popular codes, viz. SARU, SATISA (South African Tertiary Institutions Sport Association), SATTB (South African Table Tennis Board), SASRAF (South African Senior Road Athletics Federation), SASF (South African Soccer Federation) and the SACB (South African Cricket Board) joined the NSC in 1990. The defection of SARU left SACOS rugby in tatters and its sell out to the NOCS in 1990-1991 totally destroyed rugby in SACOS.²⁴ Similarly, the merger of SACU with the SACB left SACOS cricket immobilised. The SASF terminated its membership of SACOS in 1990 and merged with the Premier Soccer League (PSL)

²³ SACOS, *Ninth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 41.

²⁴ SACOS, *Tenth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 51.

to take firm control of soccer in South Africa. By 1991 SACOS had virtually no influence in three of the nation's most popular sporting codes, namely soccer, rugby and cricket.

The NSC's association with the MDM/UDF/ANC alliance also paid dividends in another way. The English Rebel Cricket Tour of 1989/1990 was a case in point. The South African Cricket Union (SACU) was forced to shorten the tour partly as a result of the mass demonstrations organised by the NSC throughout the duration of the tour. It was through its association with its allies,²⁵ the UDF/ANC alliance, that the NSC was able to muster the support that ensured the success of the protest actions. The high profile of these actions elevated the ANC to an influential position in the South African sporting fraternity.²⁶ SACOS had lost ground creating the space for the NSC to assume the leading role in directing South African sport.

The response of SACOS to the crisis it faced was to declare the NSC a rival body, while non-alignment and its relationship with other anti-apartheid organisations were maintained.

SACOS's own policies rendered it incapacitated: the policy on political alignment prohibited alignment with domestic political organisations at a time when the momentum was gaining ground and the masses were eager to become involved. The DSR had a similar impact.

7. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The formation of the NSC and the defection of SACOS affiliates impacted negatively on its international influence, while the state would not deviate from its direction until there was a reaction from abroad.

The isolation of South African sport can be attributed to the efforts of SACOS. As an organisation it cannot claim that it alone was responsible for effecting this isolation, as it should rather be seen in the context of its evolution. Together with SANROC, SACOS played a major role in highlighting the inequality of South African society and sport, contributing to isolation. By 1989 the position of SACOS on the international front had changed, influenced by the formation of the NSC, which SACOS no longer recognised as an ally in opposition sport. Mr Sam Ramsamy began to ignore SACOS whilst accommodating the NSC; it is not certain why tensions arose between him and SACOS. SACOS lost its position as the sports wing of the liberation front and responded by appointing Dr Dennis Brutus as their international representative whilst severing ties with the Sam Ramsamy-led

²⁵ L. Barnard and C. Rademeyer, "The role of the English Rebel Cricket Tour to South Africa, 1989/1990, as a factor in the dismantling of Apartheid in South African Sport", *Journal for Contemporary History* 27(3), p. 158.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

SANROC.²⁷ The subsequent marginalisation of SACOS was a very sensitive issue. It is important to consider the establishment by Ramsamy, the NSC and SANROC of the five man coordinating committee for South African (SA) Sport, as a response to SACOS's severed relationship with Ramsamy. By 1992, SACOS was no longer instrumental in influencing sports unity. Ironically, establishment sport were allowed more representatives on the Committee of Ten (established by ANOCA - see below) than SACOS itself.

In 1990, the South African state, under the leadership of President FW de Klerk, introduced reforms that hastened the marginalisation of SACOS. The state created the space for more role players. The period between 1990 and 1993 witnessed some of the most extraordinary events ever in South Africa, such as the unbanning of the liberation movements, the release of Nelson Mandela and other anti-apartheid stalwarts from prison, the return of political exiles, the repeal of the legislative pillars of apartheid (Group Areas Act, Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, the Native Land Act and the Population Registration Act), the suspension by the ANC of its armed struggle and the signing of the National Peace Accord in 1991. These were only some of the extraordinary developments leading to extraordinary responses. Establishment sport believed that De Klerk's actions had opened the door for re-admittance to international competition, with the press splashing banner headlines to declare the imminent return of South Africa to international sport.²⁸

However, the most unexpected reaction, which set the tone for going forward, was that of the IOC and the United Nations Committee against Apartheid Sport (UNCAAS). Both organisations immediately lifted the sports boycott and terminated the blacklist of sport violators without consulting any of the SA sporting organisations. The establishment sports organisations, for whom international competition was all that mattered, were the only ones that were content with this decision. SACOS lost most ground as the vanguard of opposition sport. De Klerk's reforms had set off a chain of events that promoted unity in South African sport and re-acceptance by the international sporting community, events over which SACOS had no control.

The international sporting community set the agenda for future sports relations in South Africa. After the initial reaction of the IOC and UNCAAS, ANOCA stepped in. The ANOCA President, JC Ganga, declared that "the boycott would only be lifted after all sport had united according to non-racial principles and after apartheid had been abolished in all forms".²⁹ This was in line with the principles of SACOS. This stance would change when ANOCA foisted the Committee of Ten, comprising of

²⁷ *Sunday Times*, 3 December 1989, p. 2: "Anti-apartheid sport bodies split"; See S Ramsamy: *Apartheid the real hurdle – Sport in South Africa and the international boycott*, p. 58.

²⁸ *The Citizen*, 23 November 1991, p. 8: "IOC welcomes NOCSA nod for Barcelona".

²⁹ SACOS, *Ninth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 44.

two representatives each from SANROC, NSC, SACOS, SANOC and COSAS, on South African Sport without consultation. Previously this was the Committee of Five from which SACOS had been excluded. The Committee of Ten had to report back to ANOCA in Botswana in 1991, where they were reconstituted as the Interim National Olympic Committee of South Africa. Again without consultation, Ganga also announced that the moratorium would be lifted to coincide with the repeal of the Population Registration Act in June 1991. In July 1991, the IOC restored South Africa's Olympic membership and the lifting of the moratorium paved the way for unity talks amongst South Africa's sporting organisations. SACOS believed that the order in which these events happened should have been reversed, i.e. they wanted unity in sport before the lifting of the moratorium.

Events followed their course. SACOS, through its affiliates, was part of this unity process, although, as reported by a number of its affiliates, its principled position did not dictate the course of events. SACOS did not have the necessary support for its principled unity stance. The man in the street could not see the reason for the existence of organisations such as SACOS which, according to his perceptions were then opposing the unity process in South African Sport. To the ordinary sports enthusiast the new political dispensation and the repealing of the discriminatory laws were the democracy that he had fought for.

There were also other role players with their own agendas who, for various reasons, greeted De Klerk's reforms with joy and in response deserted SACOS. An example is sub-Saharan Africa, which had strongly supported South Africa's isolation, but because of financial difficulties, De Klerk's speech in February 1990, "created hope amongst the bankrupt African countries, that the south might offer solutions to some of their manifold problems".³⁰ SACOS could not influence such perceptions or the subsequent developments.

SACOS also felt very strongly that the ANC had played a major role in facilitating the apparent unity in South African sport and the readmission of South Africa to international sporting events, interpreting that action as a vote-winning strategy. The NSC opposed SACOS and therefore opposed SACOS's principles even though there were times when they agreed: "The NSC wanted to deracialise and democratise sport; its objective was to create united non-racial structures that would empower sport people in disadvantaged communities."³¹

The actions and reactions of the state played a major role in creating an environment for growth and space: the resistance movement grew because of state policies on racially segregated sport and occupied the oppositional space accordingly. Similarly the ANC was given credence through the growing economic crisis precipitated by the state's actions, enabling it, together with the UDF, to emerge into

³⁰ SACOS, *Tenth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 38.

³¹ Booth, p. 181.

and subsequently occupy a major portion of the oppositional space, marginalising SACOS from its initial central position. Before 1990, many in international and local communities sought the total eradication of apartheid. After De Klerk's announcements in 1990, which did not constitute the total eradication of apartheid, this goal was forgotten and unity amongst sporting organisations was forged. SACOS was outnumbered and outmanoeuvred.

The principles, policies and strategies of SACOS could not be implemented in such an environment of pragmatic politics. By insisting on its principled stance, SACOS failed to recognise the transformed environment in which it operated.

8. THE MORATORIUM

Confusion followed De Klerk's political reforms. White established sports organisations exploited the situation to push for international readmission. This, in turn, led to measures to promote unity of sports codes in all spheres. De Klerk's political reforms had an impact on the international community as well and they, too, pushed for South Africa's readmission. The establishment of the Committee of Ten, later known as the Interim National Olympic Committee of South Africa, was indicative of this newly found euphoria. Comprised of members of all the sporting associations, and backed by the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA), it facilitated South Africa's re-entry into international sport. The changes in the domestic politics of South Africa, as well as its own hardline policies, resulted in a further decline in SACOS membership by 1989/ 1990.

In the period between 1982 and 1987, the moratorium issue was not a priority in the international sports arena and sporting codes in South Africa were encouraged to seek international affiliation. This was, as Y Ebrahim stated, a major advantage for SACOS, as it placed tremendous pressure on the racist sports bodies.³² SACOS used this strategy to expose the racism inherent in South African sport to the world. While maintaining the moratorium, SACOS affiliates requested that the moratorium be rescinded with regard to coaching, but it remained adamant that all South African sportsmen and women, non-racial and establishment, were subject to the moratorium. SACOS did not want to be accused of practising double standards, hence the inclusion of non-racial sports organisations in the moratorium. During discussions of the criticism levelled by the South African government regarding its stance, SACOS emphasised that it was not interested in competing internationally until a new social order had been established.³³ Two decades after its inception, SACOS still unwaveringly adhered to its principles and policies as set out in its constitution. In 1993, at its Tenth Biennial General Meeting, it still supported the

³² SACOS, *Fifth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 29.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

moratorium as it believed that international contacts were an important buffer against what it perceived to be “sham unity”. The only element of departure from the existing moratorium that would have been tolerated, was competition against other non-racial teams and the double standards resolution (DSR) would only be reviewed in the light of competition against such non-racial teams. The rescinding of the moratorium was therefore regarded as a mistake, which was blamed on the international community and the ANC. The strategy to counter this “mistake”, was to call upon the international community to review its decision. The other method proposed was the printed publication of information to expose the “fraud of unity”,³⁴ thereby also exposing the issue of alignment to a particular political tendency. Non-alignment was a prerequisite for membership of the Olympic movement. In this way SACOS hoped to convince the international community to review its decision to lift the sport moratorium.

9. UNITY

Contrary to popular perception, SACOS was in favour of unity. Their published goal was the establishment of a single, united South African sports body. According to SACOS, the South African government had prevented this from taking place through its policies of segregated sport. The SACOS president referred to the organisation as the pioneer in the process of uniting the sports bodies.³⁵ The formation of the Tennis Association of South Africa (TASA) and the Amateur Swimming Association of South Africa (ASASA) were presented as two examples of its commitment to principled unity. The key concept was “principled unity”. SACOS was of the opinion that unity could not occur until such time as apartheid had been eradicated totally and demanded the elimination of discrimination, exploitation and oppression in every sphere of life, socially, politically and economically.³⁶ The parties involved in sport also had to commit themselves to embracing these clearly defined principles.

However, SACOS was not in control of the broader political situation. After the meeting of the Association of National Olympic Committees of Africa (ANOCA), there was an air of expectancy within the general sporting fraternity of South Africa. Unity between non-racial and racial sports bodies was imminent, the news media being largely responsible for creating that perception. Following on from this meeting was the establishment of the Committee of Ten, and a mandate from ANOCA that a single sports body would be created. At a subsequent meeting,

³⁴ SACOS, *Tenth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 17

³⁵ SACOS, *Ninth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 34.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

the ANOCA President, Mr Ganga, declared that the moratorium would be rescinded and that those who opposed unity would be left out of the process.³⁷

Under these circumstances SACOS had limited options. It had to deal with the dilemma arising from the fact that the autonomy of all affiliates was guaranteed and that it consequently was a facilitating body only. It could not dictate to its members, only provide guidelines for action. An example of this was the position of SATISA, who had affiliated with the NSC while still retaining its SACOS membership. They would decide whether or not to abide by decisions taken by SACOS and they also felt that their own members had the right to disregard decisions of SATISA.³⁸ The personal preferences of individuals, and the preferences of individual affiliates, had become factors that SACOS was forced to deal with. A further complicating matter was that certain individuals were very senior and influential members of SACOS before their defection from the organisation. This was interpreted as indicative of the individualism prevalent in the organisation, rather than loyalty to the initial idealistic founding principles of the SACOS constitution. The issue of non-alignment was apparently the cause of their defection, which not only decimated the membership of SACOS, but also provided the impetus for the unifying process.

In this environment of expectancy, aided by the aspirations of certain individuals, SACOS could not stem the tide of unity, however flawed that process appeared to be in terms of its guiding principles. By 1991, 20 codes, including the three most popular sports, soccer, rugby and cricket, were engaged in unity talks, being led into unity by their respective presidents who were former senior executive members of SACOS. The mere fact that these three codes were involved in the unity process made it extremely difficult for SACOS to argue against it.

By 1991 the question of unity dominated the agendas of the affiliates, in most cases with major concerns about racial equality. On the issue of unity, SACOS demanded that the imbalances of the past had to be redressed through development programmes in order to bring about equality. Numerous affiliates had questioned the lack of development programmes. To underline its position, SACOS referred to a statement made by the Rev. Arnold Stofile, a member of the NSC and the ANC: "Sport, and in particularly rugby, has died in the black township areas throughout South Africa since the inception of so-called sport unity."³⁹ Secondly "bad faith" had developed when many of the affiliates reported that certain agreements, deals and promises had been disregarded. Cricket, for example, pleaded readmission to the ICC before the conditions of the Declaration of Intent had been fulfilled.⁴⁰ International readmission was cricket's only priority.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁹ SACOS, *Tenth Biennial General Meeting*, p. 74.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

A number of new organisations suddenly appeared on the South African sports scene. The formation of the SA Amateur Athletic Congress (SAAACON) in 1990 and the SA Hockey Congress (SAHCON) in 1991, are two examples of such organisations. These newly formed organisations were all affiliated to NOSC. They were formed as a foil to the SACOS affiliated organisations.⁴¹ In this way, NOSC ensured that “unity” would continue with or without SACOS. All the international community wanted to see, was a merger between a non-racial sports body and an establishment one. By being part of the anti-apartheid movement, the NOSC and its affiliates were put forward to represent the non-racial component of South African sport.

As far as SACOS was concerned, the developments on the political and sporting fronts were inadequate. Before and during the unity process, it had consistently been loyal to its principles and the demands for an apartheid free South Africa, but these demands had not been met. To compound matters, the unity process was not conducted in a principled manner, which revealed to SACOS that those pushing for unity were only interested in international competition and to advance their personal positions as illustrated by the following: “It is clear from what we have stated that the entire unity process has been bedevilled by bad faith, behind the scenes machination, jockeying for positions and corruption. There is not a single example of unity being established in good faith and on a principled basis, nor have the previous gains made by non-racial sport been entrenched. Imbalances are not being redressed and development programmes are non-existent. The little money available is being mis-spent on outrageous salaries and numerous perks for administrators and officials.”⁴² The response of SACOS to this state of affairs was to apportion the blame on the international community and the ANC, to withdraw from the unity process,⁴³ and to call upon the international community to review its decision to rescind the moratorium.⁴⁴

10. CONCLUSION

The decimation of its membership left SACOS weakened. The emergence of the NSC diminished its status as *the* sports wing of the liberation struggle. The changing political environment of the late 1980s relegated sport and consequentially organisations such as SACOS on the struggle agenda. The state’s role in creating an air of expectancy encouraged the man in the street to question the motives of SACOS resulting in a decline in support for the organisation. The rift between SACOS and Sam Ramsamy resulted in a loss of international support for SACOS, while allowing

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴³ Booth, p. 63.

⁴⁴ J Bale and M Cronin, *Sport and post-colonialism* (Oxford, 2003). Also see P Hain, *Sing the beloved country – The struggle for the new South Africa* (London, 1996).

the NSC to flourish.⁴⁵ Loyalty to its policies and its principled stance prevented SACOS from becoming a mass-based organisation, which in turn resulted in its alienation from the role players wielding influence. The emergence of the ANC, with the NSC as its sports wing, further diminished the influence of SACOS. The mantle of vanguard of the sports struggle was lost as the NSC took the lead after 1989. In this environment SACOS became almost insignificant in SA sport.

The above-mentioned role players and the cumulative effects of their actions therefore resulted in SACOS occupying a peripheral position by 1991, and subsequently rendering it incapable to prevent the rescinding of the moratorium.

⁴⁵ Ramsamy, p. 54; IDAF, 2002, pp. 20-28.