



Sports Mad!

Jews, Soccer & Sport

A supplement compiled by the SA Jewish Report

Tracing the Jewish footprint in SA football

Soccer has always been seen as the 'people's game' and this has not bypassed the Jewish community. Throughout the years Jews have made a substantial impact on the sport in South Africa, both on and off the field. With the 2010 Fifa World Cup now under way, the Jewish Report takes a look at a few of the names that have influenced football in this country.

JACK MILNER

WHEN SUPERSPORT United won the South African Premier Soccer League for the third consecutive year, it was a proud moment for Stan Matthews. The surname was obviously a given but it is no coincidence that he carries the same name as the great English soccer player, Sir Stanley Matthews.

"My father was a great fan of his and I was named after him," confirms our Stan.

The reason for his pride is that Stan is the director of football for Supersport United and also runs their youth academy. His involvement does not end there. He heads up Supersport Africa and is on both the Premier Soccer League (PSL) and South African Football Association (Safa) executive committees. In addition he also does work for world body Fifa on a consultancy basis.

But one of the most exciting aspects for Stan is the support Supersport United has been getting from the Jewish community. "Rabbi Yossy Goldman from Sydenham Highlands North Shul and his sons are among our biggest fans. In fact, we even brought Irwin Khoza to the shul. It was a huge success and he was warmly received," said Stan.

Supersport is also closely associated with Tottenham Hotspur, always known as the Jewish club, in London. Chairman of Spurs is Daniel Levy.

Stan is just one of many South African Jews who have had a major influence on soccer in this country. Ronnie Schloss and Stan remain the few "white", let alone "Jewish faces", on the mainstream

soccer committees, but preceding them was Raymond Hack, who would have led the country into the World Cup as Safa chief executive had he not become a victim of faction fighting within the organisation.

Raymond was seen as an "Irwin Khoza man" and when the Danny Jordaan bloc came out on top at the last election, Raymond's career at Safa was in the balance. In January this year he "resigned" his position at Safa.

Raymond was involved with the Wits Football Club for many years before stretching his wings into the national administration. He was also one of the people who went out of his way to encourage interracial football in South Africa.

That was also true of Martin Cohen, who played for Highlands Park in the 1970s. Martin was involved specifically in two remarkable events in South Africa. On April 20, 1974, Martin was part of the White XI who played their black counterparts in a racially charged match at Rand Stadium in Johannesburg. After initially going down 1-0 to the black side (the goal was called off-side by referee Wally Turner), Martin scored a crucial goal before Neil Roberts put the game away.

In 1978 Martin was a member of the first racially mixed South African team that played an International against Argentina in South Africa. Jomo Sono was also a member of that team and in a rather strange move, although never sanctioned by the South African government, they actually turned a blind eye to the game, allowing it to go ahead. It

proved a great breakthrough and saw Jomo in emphatic form, scoring four goals in the encounter.

Martin played for Highlands Park, along with another famous Jewish player, Julie Kaplan. The pair both played through the heyday of the club's success. However, Martin later decided to ply his trade in the US and joined the Los Angeles Aztecs where he played alongside one of the legends of the game - the great George Best.

According to the Highlands Park website, Julie was such a keen member of the club, that as a youngster he would daily hitch a lift down Louis Botha Avenue in Johannesburg to watch them train.

By the age of 16, Julie was part of that training session, having played for Balfour Park and then Highlands' reserves. In September 1966 he made his full Highlands Park debut against Arcadia and within five minutes won a penalty which Walter Da Silva duly converted.

From 1966 through to 1971, Julie regularly featured on the left side of the Highlands midfield - playing a part in some of the most memorable games of that time. He scored in each leg of the Champions of Champions clash with Durban City which Highlands won 5-3 on aggregate.

Julie represented South Africa in a memorable match against a British All Star team in 1973 which South Africa won and again against a Portuguese Invitation team which resulted in a 3-1 win for South Africa.

Julie was transferred to Jewish Guild in 1971, playing two seasons for them

Hymie Kloner, who became a prominent football player soon after the Second World War, and went on to an illustrious career, even playing for a time for Birmingham City in the UK.



before Joe Frickleton brought him back to the club in 1974.

In 1984 Julie coached the Wits soccer team and in that season they won the BP Top Eight Competition. In 2000, Julie and his family emigrated to Perth and he is now involved with Western Australia Maccabi in a managerial/coaching capacity, referees the occasional game and watches the blossoming talent of his youngest son, Terence.

Many Jewish players were involved in club soccer after the Second World War, but perhaps the most prominent three were Ben Machanik, Morrie Jacobson and Hymie Kloner. Both Ben and Hymie were members of the Marists Football

Club, which had a number of Jewish players and administrators.

Among the latter was Dave Snaier who went on to become chairman of the Southern Transvaal Football Association and vice president of the Football Association Of South Africa (Fasa).

Ben Machanik played right-back and captained the South African team. Morrie Jacobson was a fullback while Hymie Kloner played at right half.

Hymie was born on May 23, 1929 in Johannesburg, the son of Lithuanian immigrants, while Morrie was actually born in Lithuania and came to South Africa as a child.

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SPORTS MAD!

Jewish community catches 'bad dose' of soccer fever



Prematch crowds show their support in Sandton last week Thursday with flags and vuvuzelas, prior to the opening game last Friday between Bafana Bafana and Mexico at Soccer City in Johannesburg. PHOTO: ILAN OSSENDRYVER

DAVID SAKS

A WEEK or two ago, the strictly Orthodox Beth Jacob girls' high school took the unusual step of inviting a former Orlando Pirates star, Warren Lewis, to speak to the learners.

Today fully Shomer Mitzvot, Lewis used the opportunity to recount how, for all the excitement of playing top-level football, none of it compared with the fulfilment he experienced on keeping Shabbat for the first time.

Within the most sternly religious elements of the Jewish community, there is certainly a concern that their members should keep things in perspective and not get carried away by all the excitement.

That rabbonim and educators within the haredi establishment are taking so unusual an interest in a sporting tournament, is nevertheless evidence of how even within this sector, there is no getting away from the ever-escalating World Cup buzz that has gripped the country.

By contrast, other religious leaders and groupings have no problems in harnessing World Cup enthusiasm for "kosher" purposes. Chabad SA, for one, is partnering with the SA Jewish Board of Deputies in the comprehensive Jewish 2010 information and outreach project, centring on the website jewish2010.com. It is further offering a range of religious services, including minyanim and Shabbat hospitality.

World Cup themes are being creatively incorporated into Shabbat droshas on the weekly parshiot. For example Rabbi Asher Deren (Chabad of the West Coast) has used the ubiquitous vuvuzela to write about the two silver chatotzrot (trumpets) that were used to gather the community and signal the new journeys in the desert, as described in Parshat Beha'alotcha.

Another rabbi found the plethora of flags now adorning innumerable motor-vehicles in South African streets to be a useful lead-in to speaking about the degalim (banners) that each tribal encampment displayed.

Football talk is now a staple part of

ChaiFM's programming. One can tune into Jews across the board earnestly discussing and evaluating the national team's prospects in the competition.

The interest has spread into the Jewish day schools, regardless of their degrees of religiosity or even of gender. The youth are generally sceptical about Bafana Bafana's chances - but for the first time in a long time, at least they actually care.

Fears that Jewish South Africans would prove to be inward-looking and dismissive of the greater national involvement in the Fifa World Cup, have been shown to be unfounded.

Certainly Raymond Hack and Mervyn Tankelowitz, respectively the past and current chairmen of Maccabi SA, have no doubt that South African Jewry has fully bought into the 2010 phenomenon, identifying with it to no lesser extent than their fellow South Africans. SAJBD National Director Wendy Kahn agrees:

"Jewish South Africans have caught soccer fever and are fully embracing the excitement of the World Cup," she says, commenting further on how many community members were joining their fellow South Africans on "Soccer Fridays" in wearing with pride their green and yellow shirts as they went about preparing for Shabbat.

Kahn has very much been the driving force behind the jewish2010.com project, which has generated interest throughout the Jewish world as well as fulfilling the Board's aim of drumming up excitement and encouraging the local Jewish community to be a part of it.

SAJBD National Chairman Zev Krengel is passionately patriotic and wants his fellow Jews to be so too. In a recent "Above Board" column, he described the thrill of sharing Bafana Bafana's victory over Colombia with the huge crowd at Soccer City in Soweto (Bafana Bafana won the friendly 2 - 1) and urged South African Jewry to rally behind the national side as they prepared to challenge the world's best.

Many Jewish families are looking forward to poignant reunions with their relatives who have emigrated, but will

be back in the country for the tournament as expats. Also taking advantage of the émigrés' visit, are the Jewish day schools. Among other things, the King David Schools' Foundation is hosting fetes, day trips, and accommodation for former Davidians.

Individuals and organisations are further taking advantage of the outreach, cultural and tourism opportunities on offer. The Jewish National Fund's "One Tree One Goal" project invites locals and visitors to "replace their carbon footprint" by purchasing a tree.

In partnership with other organisations, the JNF is also raising funds for the Twinned Peace Sport Schools project run by the Peres Centre and Al Quds Association in Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

For sightseeing with a difference, former CNN and current South African sports journalist Graeme Joffe, is co-ordinating visits of a township development programme; Country Communities Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft is on hand for those wanting to trace their family roots.

A few hundred metres away from Ellis Park, the central World Cup stadium, the century-old Lions Synagogue is hosting services, a tour and pre-game lechaims. All these are just a few of the World Cup initiatives emanating from the ranks of South African Jewry.

Beyond all the individual projects, a renewed spirit of enthusiasm about South Africa, and in being South African, is in welcome evidence throughout the Jewish community. For six heady weeks, the country will once again be the focus of international attention, this time for reasons that are entirely positive.

2010 Fifa World Cup is providing a welcome antidote to the cynicism, pessimism and general disengagement that has regrettably characterised what have been a difficult few years for the country as a whole. Dare one hope that this spirit will continue after the final whistle has blown? Whatever the future holds, South Africans are for the time being thoroughly enjoying the ride.

...Tracing the Jewish footprint in SA football

Continued from page 1

Although Hymie's parents were not keen on his playing football, the principal of the Jewish Government School encouraged him, and he eventually played for the Marist Brothers club. In June and July 1950, the 21-year-old Kloner represented South Africa. Later that year he went to England on trial and was taken on by Birmingham City.

He later returned to South Africa to continue his playing career and during that period represented Southern Transvaal. In 1954 all three played against a touring Israeli team at the Rand Stadium. Morrie, who passed away in 2005, had a copy of the Rand Daily Mail which on the front page, had a photograph of himself, the Israel captain and Danny Kaye,

who was performing in South Africa and was given the honour of kicking off the game.

Morrie went on to play for Rangers, which was owned by Sy Chaitowitz, and found himself caught up in the tangled web of professionalism, which was eroding the amateur status of the game at the time. Dave Snaier was the man, like King Canute, who was attempting to hold back the professional wave.

On the other side of the coin was Sy Chaitowitz, who was spurred on by his team coach and manager, Lubbe Snyman, and Viv Grainger, pushing the pedal of professionalism.

For just a couple of 100 rands, Morrie became the first player to be transferred for a fee, and from then on the flood gates opened.



In 1976, Martin Cohen spent a successful season in North America playing for the Los Angeles Aztecs with George Best as a team mate and was finally able to compete against top class international players such as Pele.

Hymie, fondly known as "Fish" became a legend in the world of journalism.

On the subject of soccer journalists, one would have to mention Sy Lerman, who this year will be celebrating his 50th year as a soccer scribe. When he wrote his first few lines last weekend about Bafana Bafana, it was the start of his ninth World Cup.

"My first World Cup was in 1974 in West Germany. The only one I have missed since then was in 2002 when it was staged in Japan and South Korea," said Sy.

As we move in to 2010 the number of Jewish players in professional South African soccer clubs has dwindled markedly. Martin Cohen's son, Larry, is one of the few still around.

Until his recent retirement from the sport, Warren Lewis, was another. He was born in Durban and played for Durban City between 1991 and 1994. He earned his first cap for Bafana Bafana in a 2000 COSAFA Cup semifinal match against Zimbabwe and his only other appearance for South Africa came in an Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against the Congo in Pointe Noire in September of that same year.

During his career he played for Wits University, Southern New Hampshire University, AmaZulu, Orlando Pirates and Moroka Swallows. However, after a few seasons playing for The Birds, Warren became shomrei Shabbat and would no longer play on a Saturday.

Last year he coached the Maccabi South Africa side at the Maccabiah in Israel.

There is also Cape Town-born Dean Furman, who is currently playing for Oldham Athletic in the UK. The 21-year-old has shown interest in playing for Bafana Bafana as well as Israel. He did receive a South Africa call-up for a friendly in August 2008 against Australia, but he ended up as an unused substitute in that match.

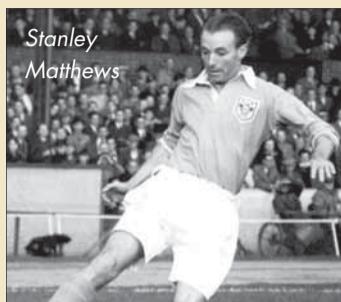
On the journalistic front there are three Jewish media men whose voices we will hear during the World Cup - Trevor Cramer, who is the sports editor for Jacaranda FM, radio and television commentator Michael Abramson, and Gary Boruchowitz, who is with e.tv.



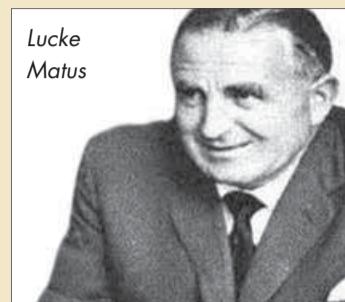
Gerry Ostrofsky, the well-known Jewish soccer referee, coming onto the field to officiate at the Castle Cup semi-final match between Cape Town City and Durban City in Cape Town, 1968. The linesman behind him is Mo Levin.

SPORTS MAD!

Jewish owners of SA soccer clubs



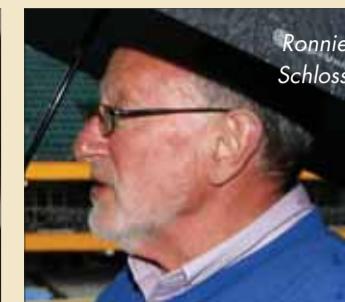
Stanley Matthews



Lucke Matus



Raymond Hack



Ronnie Schloss



Abe and Solly Krok

JACK MILNER

IT IS ironic that in Britain right now so many Premier League teams are owned by Jewish businessmen. That, until quite recently at least, was also true of South Africa.

Syd Chaitowitz owned Rangers Football Club in its heyday, when it could be called the Manchester United of South Africa. It was the club that indirectly led South African soccer into the professional world and brought out some top international people, such as Sir Stanley Matthews, to play for the team.

Lucke Matus was the man who formed Highlands Park, which was the professional arm of Balfour Park. Although his roots were developed with the amateur structure, Lucke had the vision to realise that professional football was both inevitable and desirable.

In 1959, he formed Highlands Park (Pty) Ltd and immediately started to assemble his playing staff with hand-picked players, while at the same time working hard on the construction of Balfour Park stadium.

Eventually it was a group of the old Balfour Park officials who got together and put in some of the money.

Years later it was taken over by Rex Evans, who although not Jewish himself, had married into the Miller family from OK Bazaars fame.

In 1982, Highlands Park Football Club was sold to Jomo Sono for R80 000. Two years later, the club's name was changed to Jomo Midas Cosmos. The decision to sell the club both perplexed and angered many of the club's former players, many of whom believed alternatives could have been found.

In the early 1990s Blackpool, then an NPSL first division team, bought the Highlands Park franchise and changed its name to Highlands Park. Phillip Ephron and Brian Pincus initiated the move in the hope of incorporating Balfour Park Juniors with the newly-formed Highlands Park FC.

But when the team was relegated to the second division a year later, the sponsors pulled out and the franchise was sold for the second time - to Welkom Eagles FC.

Dudley Zagnoev was one of the owners of the Wits University team before he became general secretary of the now defunct Football Association of South Africa. When he moved out, Raymond Hack and Ronnie Schloss joined the Wits board. They too moved into the world of soccer administration and as such, moved on from the club.

In 1988 Abe and Solly Krok decided to enter the world of soccer and they bought Sundowns off Standard Bank, who had picked up the club when taking over the assets of Zola Mahobe.

The Krok brothers engaged Mario Tuani to coach the team and he brought in Angelo Tsichlas as his assistant, while his wife, Nastasia, joined as secretary.

When Tuani left, Nastasia ran the club and she and Angelo became shareholders in the club, taking over 49 per cent. In the early 1990s Patrice Motsepe, who was an ardent Sundowns fan, bought the 51 per cent owned by the Krok brothers and eventually bought out the Tsichlases as well.

Abe Krok and Motsepe always had a great relationship and Abe remains honorary life president of Sundowns.

More recently, Silver Stars was bought by Larry Brookstone who was a long-time fan of the club. He bought it out of receivership and re-established it as an amateur club. Within a few years they had won all the amateur silverware and were again eligible to play in the professional league.

The club merged with Silver Stars, and became known as HP Silver Stars, subsequently

shortened to Silver Stars.

In 2006, the club, then still known as Silver Stars, and the Royal Bafokeng nation, agreed on a sponsorship deal with the team, moving its home games from Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg) to the Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace near Rustenburg in Northwest Province.

In May 2007, the investment vehicle of the Royal Bafokeng nation, Royal Bafokeng Holdings, bought a 51 per cent stake in Silver Stars. The club was later renamed Platinum Stars, to

reflect the historic association of both the Northwest Province and the RBN with platinum mining in South Africa.

As of 2009, the club is fully owned by the Royal Bafokeng tribe, who had previously only owned a majority. The new club owners replaced Larry Brookstone and moved the club from Moruleng Stadium in Modderfontein to the Royal Bafokeng Stadium in Phokeng, a move that made Platinum Stars the only Premier League club in the Northwest.



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SPORTS MAD!

In Memoriam: The old Wanderers Club

LIONEL SLIER

Corlett Drive in Illovo.

THE ORIGINAL Wanderers Club was originally situated just north of the Johannesburg CBD, past Platform 12 of (then) Park Station and surrounded by Noord, Wanderers, Wolmarans and Ris-sik Streets.

In March 1890 a lease was granted to the residents of Johannesburg to establish a sports ground in the area of Braamfontein, known as Kruger's Park (named after President Paul Kruger of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek). The lease was to run for 99 years.

As most of the people living in Johannesburg at that time were newcomers, "Wanderers" the name chosen for the club was most appropriate. (Johannesburg had only been founded in 1886).

The club became the social centre of the town. Not only did it cater for sporting events such as cricket, football and rugby, but also for gymnastics, boxing, tennis, bowls, cycling, athletics, hockey and baseball. Dances were held in the hall, as well as concerts by the Orchestral Society. Anyone who was anybody had to be seen at Wanderers Club affairs.

In 1932 greyhound racing was held on Friday nights but this was banned in the late 1940s.

In 1935 the club secretary, Victor Kent, was responsible for the purchase of a large piece of land in the Illovo area, north Johannesburg proper, where a golf course was laid out.

But the days of the Club were doomed in the 1940s; the Railways wanted the land just north of Noord Street for the expansion of the station and the Club lost a court case which found in favour of the Railways and sport came to an end there in 1946 as the Club moved to its (present) grounds - then called Kent Park - on

A trivia note: The longest six ever recorded in a cricket match was hit at the old Wanderers ground in 1902 by South African Jimmy Sinclair against the Australians. The bowling was from the south railway end. Sinclair cleared the boundary with a mighty hit and the ball sailed out of the ground and landed in an open truck of a goods train.

The ball was found in Cape Town. For many years the ball was on display at the new Wanderers Club. It might still be there for all I know.

The war years (1939-'45) and one year later (1946) were the golden years of the old Wanderers. As a schoolboy, still pre-teen, I used to go every Saturday in winter to watch the Transvaal League Football matches, with my three cousins.

The oldest brother, whom we called "Big", used to dictate what we did. For example, we had to sit in one of the southern stands, in the same place every time, and as we went early enough we could always get to those seats on hard wooden splinter-giving slats.

We used to watch the curtain-raisers, which were usually under-18 teams, followed by (usually) two senior matches.

I can remember the names of all the teams that formed the (amateur) league. As the war was on, there was no promotion or relegation as many teams had players serving "up North" in Africa and later in Italy.

The teams were Marist Brothers, Rangers and JSAR (Johannesburg South African Railways) from Johannesburg, Benoni, Benoni Callies and Delfos from Benoni, Germiston Callies and GRI (Germiston Railway Institute) and from Pretoria, there were Municipals, Berea Park and Arcadia.

One of the highlights of the Saturday afternoon was the ice cream seller. He was simply called "Shorty".



An aerial view of the old Wanderers grounds with the railway track in the foreground at the south side of the ground. On the left is the main pavilion and the hall. Behind that - at the west side - is the old Pirates rugby ground. Behind the north stand is Wolmarans Street. To the right is Wanderers Street, with flats overlooking the grounds.

PHOTOGRAPH MUSEUMAFRICA

He would carry a large iron container on one shoulder and whistle as he approached a stand. People would order either Eskimo pies or wafers and he would throw, with his left hand, up to six at a time to the top of the stand, if necessary, and they travelled in a perfect parabola, to land in the buyer's lap. The buyer, in return, would throw the small coins down to Shorty who would never miss a coin and would then stuff the coins into his pocket and get on with the next sale.

There was a problem, though. Shorty was an epileptic and sometimes he would have a fit and fall writhing to the ground. People would whistle to attract the attention of the St John's Ambulance crews who were in the ground and they would come and attend to him. As far as I could tell, Shorty would recover and continue with his sales.

Then there were the regular fights that inevitably took place. There were numerous bars around the ground with men standing there having a drink or five and

probably not paying much attention to the football.

There would be a disturbance and people would rush to watch the alcohol-fuelled fight, almost always involving a soldier and a civilian.

Mostly it was pushing and shoving and occasionally a blow with a fist would result in a bleeding nose. There were never any police around or if there were, they remained out of sight. After a while the fight would end and often the pugilists would repair to the bar, sometimes with their arms around each other.

The odd thing about Marist Brothers Football team was that the "big cheeses" in the club were Jewish. Odd, as Marist was a Catholic order who came to South Africa from France to teach in Catholic schools.

We were very supportive of any Jewish players but there were not many of them. Some names that come to mind are Lubbe Snyman the Rangers goalkeeper. He was one of 10 Snyman

boys and a sister who came, I believe, from Mayfair. (The Rangers Club indeed did.). The story was that the Snyman family had a soccer team and the sister was the goalie.

There was Eddie Kassel and the legendary Charlie Segell, both from JSAR, although Segell later played for Marist Brothers. The shouts around the ground were: "Give it to Charlie!" He had a terrific foot on him and mostly sent the ball sailing over the crossbar.

I simply cannot recall any others, although there may have been some, but we are talking about 60 years ago. In the 1950s a number of Jewish players made their mark, but by that time the original Wanderers ground had been absorbed into Johannesburg station.

In 1947 a Springbok team was chosen to tour Australia and the trials were held at the Wanderers and players from all over the country were seen in these matches. This was the swansong of the Grand Old Lady. Golden years indeed.

With World Cup here, it's time to recall some football stories

LIONEL SLIER

WITH THE arrival of the 2010 Fifa World Cup, everyone is talking, eating and drinking football. Moreover, everyone has become an expert on the off-side rule, tactics, central defenders, added time, penalty kicks, dives, yellow cards, red cards, section winners etc, etc. We have virtually all become soccer meshuganers.

When the Old Wanderers in the Johannesburg CBD was taken over by the railways in 1948, local football had to find a new home. The best available ground at the time was Wembley Stadium south of the city and a short walk away from Turffontein Racecourse.

Meanwhile the STFA (Southern Transvaal Football Association) acquired ground in Rosettenville (in the

south) and built the Rand Stadium in 1951 at a cost of £6 000.

The three Johannesburg first league teams - Rangers, Marists and Ramblers - used it as their home ground. Ramblers - The old JSAR (Johannesburg South African Railways) team, had once been a club for railway employees but it was years since this relic of old Johannesburg had a railwayman playing for them - so Ramblers it was.

The Rand Stadium could seat 15 000 spectators but with the arrival of professional football in about 1966, it increased its capacity to 25 000, installed floodlighting and entered the modern age with Moroka Swallows later having it at some stage as its home venue.

In 1954, an Israeli national team came to South Africa and suddenly many Jews, particularly among the women, suddenly became football fans. In the match against South Africa, Danny Kaye, the great American actor/comedian was present and before the kick-off he was introduced to the crowd.

Of course, everyone expected a joke but sadly the best he could do was to say: "I hope both teams win."

Many well-known overseas club sides came to the Rand Stadium, including Newcastle United, Tottenham Hotspur, Real Madrid and others. For some reason Newcastle were disliked and I

was at one match watching them playing South Africa.

A man sitting in front of me bought a cardboard cup of ice-cream and just then a Newcastle player received the ball, in a possible off-side position and scored a goal. The man with the ice-cream was furious and hurled his unopened ice-cream at the linesman and hit him on his back. The linesman glowered at the crowd but the now ice-cream-less man cowered down.

One year Port Elizabeth City arrived for a match against Boksburg, but there was no accommodation anywhere on the East Rand. Johannesburg, too, was chock-a-block for some reason. The only hotel that had place was the Wynton Joy in Berea on the Friday night before the match.

The manager of the team was given these instructions: There must be no noise as most of the residents are elderly and no smoking and for breakfast tomorrow they must not ask for bacon with their eggs. The Wynton Joy was a kosher residential hotel!

Now the Rand Stadium has become very much the poor relation of soccer in Johannesburg. With the upgrading of the Soweto Stadium and the launching of Soccer City as the top ground for Fifa 2010, the Rand Stadium has become a practice ground only.



Article by Sports writer Eric Litchfield from the Rand Daily Mail, Friday May 14, 1954

SPORTS MAD!

World Cup could become a rally point of pride

LIONEL SLIER

SOUTH AFRICAN Jewish children had the immense benefit of growing up in a country blessed with excellent weather which bred an ethos of outdoor activities.

Tennis and swimming were the most popular, but team sports particularly football and cricket, were also widely played and often in pick-up informal games. Rugby, however, had to be played in more structured circumstances.

Running and cycling became late favourites among the Jewish population. As people grew older, bowls became the sport of choice.

However, were there differing perceptions among the various sections of the community to sporting activities?

Rabbi Matthew Liebenberg of the Claremont Wynberg Hebrew Congregation in Cape Town, says: "Good health is not the only benefit of sport for our youth. For many the dream of becoming national or even international soccer players is the goal of a lifetime (excuse the pun!)."

"When your average slum-dwelling young man or woman takes a keen interest in sport and notices that many top athletes had humble beginnings, they begin to picture themselves as the sportsmen and women of the next generation.

"I have lost count of the number of soccer players, runners, rugby players and cricket players who started life in the townships and became national and international sensations. Sports can lift people out of their surrounds and place them in new lives of hope, pride and financial independence and even wealth.

"This benefit cannot be underestimated. The ability to make someone financially independent is one of the greatest mitzvot of the Torah. The Rambam (Hilchot Matanot Anaim 10:7-14), in his formulation of the laws of charity, notes that there are eight levels in the fulfilment of this mitzvah.

"The highest and most noble of all is to set someone up on their own two feet by giving them an [interest-free] loan, entering into a partnership with them or finding them gainful employment. There is

no doubt that the hype generated by this (Fifa) World Cup will motivate many young men and women to seek out a career in sports.

"Non-governmental organisations will establish soccer clinics for underprivileged children with two purposes in mind: to uplift the previously disadvantaged, but also to find the talent that is hidden in the shacks and slums of South Africa."

Rabbi Liebenberg said of course many would fall by the wayside. Not everyone could become a great sportsman.

"The Midrash says the same thing about Torah scholarship (Kohellet Rabba 7:28): 'A thousand people go to study Scripture and one hundred emerge to study Mishnah. Of those one hundred, ten emerge to study Talmud and of those ten, one emerges who will be qualified to rule on matters of Jewish law.'

"But even those who will not become great sportsmen, will find their way out of poverty and a life of crime through an attachment to a more wholesome lifestyle.

"There is an almost inestimably positive aspect of the World Cup. Hosting a global sports event has the ability to unite a nation. This is not some pipedream or fantasy. We in South Africa have experienced this before when we hosted the Rugby World Cup in 1995, just one year after the first democratic elections.

"Rugby was still very much an Afrikaner game and yet (former President) Nelson Mandela seized the opportunity to back the Springboks and unite South Africans of all colours behind the national team.

"South Africans could use the World Cup as a way of refocusing their attention and fostering national pride and patriotism. The feeling in the streets is already one of great pride in the country.

"Hundreds of cars are flying the national flag on their mirrors and everywhere you look South Africans across the colour spectrum are coming together to celebrate the fact that their country is hosting such a prestigious event. G-d looks favourably upon such unity, even if other problems exist.

"Marc Freedman, a practising religious person and a sports broadcaster and

her son out.

Then there is the story of the mother who, with a little more understanding, said: "The bottom of a scrum is no place for a Jewish boy."

Perhaps she was right, because of the 10 Jews who have played rugby for South Africa, only one - Okey Geffen - was a tight forward, always in a scrum.

There is the story of the mama whose son was hit on the nose while batting in a cricket match and it was broken. "To tink," she lamented, "dat I gave dat ingelege such a beautiful nose!"

Then as the first generation of South African Jewish children grew up and had families themselves, they encouraged their children to play sport: indeed Balfour Park sports ground had football teams, populated by Jewish boys, ranging in age from under-16, through under-18, under-21 and on to senior levels. In summer these boys switched to cricket.

Here is a story that has morphed over the years with regard to time and place,

commentator, asks: 'What is the shortest book in the world? Some would argue that it is the book about Jewish sports stars.' It's a quip but there may be an element of truth in it. Seriously though, South Africa's sporting history is characterised by some successes of Jewish achievers.

"The Jewish doctor and Talmudic luminary, Maimonides, wrote quite extensively about a need for people to maintain a healthy physique and in this regard sport serves as an outlet for the spiritual objective.

"If one believes that Jews strive to be a moral example and not just a competitor in the field, perhaps it is in this area where Jews can add the most to sport. When Jews have been involved in sport, they have often excelled as captains and leaders out of proportion to their numbers on the field and this extends to roles as administrators.

"(Cricketer) Ali Bacher not only captained South Africa to a 4-0 whitewash of Bobby Simpsons' 1970 Australians, but then went on to lead South Africa out of cricket isolation.

"Many members of the community, indeed most, are traditional Orthodox; they are reasonably frum at home, go fairly regularly to synagogue, always one of the major chagim, fast on Yom Kippur and are more than just three-times-a-year Jews. Yet Saturdays are spent either playing sport, or watching it on television. They have no conflict about this.

"In the years at Balfour Park, which later in the professional era became Highlands Park, the support of the community for the team was massive." Their attitude was that there was a place for Yiddishkeit and there was a place for sport.

"This can be confirmed by the corporate involvement of major Jewish companies in sponsoring sport, such as Pick n Pay with the Argus Cycle Tour, Bidvest backing the Wits soccer team, Discovery in various fields and others...

"Let us pray that the World Cup will be the unifying factor that we have been praying for and that South Africa will emerge from it a better and more mature nation and an example to the rest of the world."

but the essence is the same. Ali Bacher was captain of the Transvaal Cricket team and his mother was at a match in which Transvaal was playing.

Transvaal was batting and people around her were complaining that Transvaal had enough runs and should declare. Mrs Bacher got up and went to the players' dressing room to speak to her son. Soon afterwards, Ali Bacher declared Transvaal's innings closed.

He explained: "My mother said that I must declare."

There is the story of a nice Jewish boy, a member of Maccabi en route to Israel, who became enamoured of an air hostess and moved to try and kiss her.

She resisted and gave him a frusk. "If you want to kiss, then there is the mezuza by the door," she said.

Sport became very much a part of Jewish life, as it is today, both playing and following as spectators and TV couch potatoes. And everyone is an expert...



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SPORTS MAD!

The vexed religion versus sport dilemma

JACK MILNER

SOME 60 YEARS ago soccer player Morrie Jacobson was faced with a dilemma. He was in England with the South African team and they had to play a match on Yom Kippur.

He came from a religious family and his first action was immediately to tell the team manager he would not play. However, he was told that he had to play and if he did not, he would be shipped back to South Africa and would never play for the country again.

Morrie sent a telegram to his father to ask for advice and the response came, giving Morrie his support, in whatever decision he made.

After much thought, Morrie played and sadly for him it was one he would regret and the guilt came back to haunt him for the rest of his life.

Morrie's dilemma is one faced by many Jewish sportsmen because the answer is quite simple: With the odd exception, you cannot do both. It has to be either sport or religion, because you cannot compete on Shabbat or on a chag as is unfortunately required by most sports.

The obvious exception is New York-based boxer Yuri Foreman, who is studying to be a rabbi and was, until a couple of weeks ago, a world champion. But boxing is a sport in

which you only have a few fights a year and you can dictate, to a point, when you will fight. Most world title fights take place late on a Saturday night, well after Shabbat is over.

In South Africa we have had two prominent cases of sportsmen who gave up their professional sporting careers to become shomrei Shabbat - cricketer Mandy Yachad and soccer player Warren Lewis.

However, both of them were at the end of their respective careers when they made the decision, so it does make it a lot easier as you are not giving up that much. It's much tougher on the way up than on the way down.

One person who has been faced with the dilemma is canoeist Shaun Rubenstein, who represented South Africa at the Beijing Olympic Games.

"In my sport, as is the case with soccer, rugby and cricket, most of the events take place on Saturday afternoons. If you want to compete at the top level you have to compete in these events.

In Sydney in 2004, the canoeing Olympic final was on Yom Kippur. If you made it, what do you do?" remarked Shaun.

"In team sports, if you don't play the match, you forfeit your spot in the team and you lose income. Most sports are no longer amateur. Today



Shaun Rubenstein practising at Emmarentia dam, Johannesburg

these are people's jobs.

"Personally I try to keep what I can. Whatever new city I go to I always try to find a shul and, even in Beijing, I went to shul."

The biggest decision in this regard for Shaun came in the 2006 World Marathon Championships, which took place in Hungary on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. "It was really a tough choice, but I decided to compete. The K1 event only took place late in the afternoon so it was really

just two hours before the end of the holiday. My brother was with me and we each had our machzor and did our own service."

Shaun ended up winning the event and that in turn opened many doors for him on the international stage.

"Looking back it was a 'make' decision rather than a 'break' decision for me. But at the time, it was a tough one to make."

Last year the Israeli Davis Cup team reached the semifinals of the compe-

tion for the first time and had to play against Spain in Spain. The Saturday was Yom Kippur but the men opted to participate.

The reaction from home was somewhat mixed, to say the least, and there were many Israelis who celebrated their defeat.

But they made their decision and after speaking to Harel Levy when he was in South Africa, he said it had not been taken lightly and it had been one the team had not regretted.



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SPORTS MAD!

Has the 'inward turn' left the sports road?

DAVID SAKS

"AS A lifelong sports fan who also happens to be Jewish, I am mystified why Jews in the Diaspora just don't seem to make it to the same levels of sporting success as their gentile neighbours. Apart, that is, from Israelis and South Africans."

This flattering observation by UK writer Donna Greenberg is correct up to a point. In a country where sporting prowess has traditionally been held in high regard, South African Jews for many years did not do at all badly. Certainly, their record is strikingly better than that of other Diaspora communities.

Take rugby, for example, where from Morris Zimerman, Syd Nomis to Joel Stransky, the community produced a complete "minyan" of Jewish Springboks. Remarkably, this number is double the total of Jewish rugby internationals produced by the rest of the Diaspora combined.

The cricket record is even more lopsided. At least seven South African Jews have won international colours as opposed to one in Australia and, it would seem, none at all elsewhere.

In virtually every other major sport - tennis, hockey, swimming, athletics, road running, soccer, karate, motor racing, horse racing etc - individual South African Jews have made an impact, to an extent generally exceeding that of their Diaspora counterparts.

Sporting success at one time went a long way towards boosting collective Jewish self-esteem. In 1963, the then SA Maccabi Council Chairman Alf Blumberg, spelled this out in his foreword to Arthur Goldman's 1963 book "Stars of David".

The emergence of the Jew in the realm of sport during the 20th century, he wrote, had "done wonders for Jewish public relations", since by his participation in all forms of sport right up to international level, the Jew had "clearly shown his gentle colleagues that, now freed of ghetto narrowness, he too can successfully practise the 'healthy mind in a healthy body' philosophy".

Even 50 years ago, Blumberg's Thomas Arnold-like paean to athletic accomplishment had a decidedly archaic ring to it. Already before the turn of the century - witness Colonel Albert Goldsmid's Jewish Lad's Brigade - many Jews had become fixated on confounding the weak, degenerate ghetto Jew stereotype through proving their worth in the athletic arena.

That such words could be written in all seriousness as late as the 1960s, is revealing of the lingering nature of this form of Jewish insecurity. More positively, it would seem to at least in part explain the relatively successful record of Jewish sportsmen in South Africa up until then.

Fortunately, the days when Jews felt the need almost to justify their existence by recording successes in the sporting field are over. Could it be, however, that this has in turn contributed to levels of Jewish sporting achievement the world over currently being at such a low level?

As intimated, Greenberg's exclusion of South African Jewry from her general lament about Jewish sporting under-achievement, needs qualification. Certainly, the record throws up a fair number of important



Julie Kaplan represented South Africa in a memorable match against a British All Star team in 1973 which South Africa won and again against a Portuguese invitation team which resulted in a 3-1 win for South Africa.

names, but on closer examination one finds that nearly all belong to a bygone era.

Prior to around 1975, there was indeed a fairly steady stream of Jewish sports achievers in South Africa, but since then the numbers have dropped off steadily. Today, a community that once regularly produced Springboks, no longer produces even provincial players. In the administrative sphere, where there was once significant Jewish involvement, there has likewise been a considerable falling off.

Other white South Africans, certainly when judging by the continued white preponderance in such team sports as rugby and cricket, remain significantly involved, although here too there are signs that this is not always the case.

In football, for example, the number of white players is in steep decline, a fact commented upon with regret by Mr Justice Albie Sachs recently.

A number of reasons might be suggested for the dearth of top echelon Jewish sportspeople in the contemporary era. One might be the oft-commented on inward turn that the Jewish community has taken post-1994.

Maybe Jews just do not identify as much as before with the affairs of the wider society and sport, after all, has long been highly politicised in this country. Part of the answer must also be the greater levels of Jewish religiosity, which put Saturdays off limits and thereby make serious involvement in competitive sport impossible.

Then there is the end of apartheid factor, which has resulted in whites now having to compete on equal (indeed, in light of "affirmative action", often on decidedly unequal terms) with people of colour, with the latter outnumbering them five to one. Finally, it must always be remembered that the Jewish population today is significantly smaller than it was 30 years ago, down from 120 000 to around some 75 000.

All this would explain why there are fewer top Jewish sports-people out there today, but it does not seem to be the whole story. If the Jewish community could in the past produce competitors as accomplished as, to name just a few, Syd Nomis, Wilf Rosenberg, Ali Bacher, Ilana Kloss, Shane Dorfman and Shaun Rubenstein, surely it could do so today?

It is hard to disagree with the prominent Jewish sports personality Raymond Hack when he says that Jews today simply lack the necessary hunger to succeed when it comes to

higher level sport.

Whatever the reasons, the reality today is that post-school Jews nowadays are involved in sport primarily as spectators rather than as participants, and there are no signs of the situation changing in the near future.

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