

# World soccer body firm: SA still out of big league

It would be suicidal for either the Soccer Association of SA or the National Soccer League to seek recognition from Fifa or to attempt to gain affiliation to the world body at this stage.

The expulsion of South Africa from Fifa in 1976 – in fact that of the white Football Association of South Africa – and the resultant isolation of this country from international competitions is widely supported by footballing nations of the world.

This was the impression I gained when I was in the UK last week where I held discussions with top ranking officials of the English Football Association in London and with the Scottish Football Association.

The secretary-general of the Scottish Football Association, Ernie Walker, is a high-ranking and influential member of the Fifa executive board.

Walker made it clear that Fifa believed the stringent conditions it has laid down for the re-admission of South Africa to the world body have not been met.

He also made it clear that the member associations of Fifa have no intention of defying the controlling body by individually recognising South Africa.

Walker – an impressive, forthright and amiable man – treated me with empathy and with utmost courtesy.

The key Fifa conditions for the re-admission of South Africa to the world controlling body, according to Walker, are:

- No country in which racial discrimination is practiced by law will be recognised by Fifa.

- There must be one non-racial soccer controlling body.

**SOLOMON "STICKS" MOREWA**, secretary general of the Soccer Association of South Africa discusses the international sports boycott.

- There must be a majority rule government in South Africa

Although Walker recognises as well as we do that these conditions have not been met in South Africa, he nevertheless believes that this does not deny us the right to make contact with Fifa members.

Sasa resolved at its recent biennial general meeting that contact should be made with other soccer associations around the globe for the following reasons:

- To keep abreast with the technical development of the game.

- To study constitutional, legal, and structural provisions of other associations.

- To compare their fund-raising methods, as well as administrative policies, with ours.

The Sasa general meeting specifically resolved that we should not attempt to obtain recognition since we fully accept that the conditions stipulated by Fifa are far from being realised.

To seek world acceptance is an imprudent move that would be pointless, suicidal and impolitic. Sasa has never had such intentions.

However, we optimistically cherish the dream that these Fifa conditions will be met in the not too distant future. It is for this reason that while we are not active members, while we do not enjoy international participation in events like the World Cup, we must nevertheless prepare ourselves for the post-apartheid era.

For that matter we can export some of our ideas as well. The scope, size and extent of the organi-

sation and sponsorship of the Chappies Little League made a big impression on the British administrators, for example.

They were similarly awe-struck by the fact that a league is putting up a giant stadium on its own accord and steam.

In Europe, in fact the world over, stadiums are either owned by clubs or by local government institutions.

Having stated that, the big question is: What is Sasa's attitude towards soccer boycotts, player banning and rebel tours?

To start with it is our stated policy that we do not encourage rebel tours.

A moratorium was placed on rebel tours when our organisation was born on May 12, 1985 at the Maharani Hotel in Durban. We have neither organised a rebel soccer tour nor participated in one.

So I do not see our policy changing in this regard. The organisation of rebel tours is a complex exercise that breeds hatred and is fraught with danger. The rugby people can vouch for that.

Many countries express their abhorrence of apartheid by supporting the UN-inspired cultural boycott campaign against South Africa.

Similarly, South African sportsmen are generally barred from participating freely in top sports events around the world.

There are many arguments for and against the anti-South Africa sports boycott policy. It is argued that by isolating the sports-mad rulers of this country they will take

cognisance of world opinion – which is at variance with their system of government.

On the other hand it is argued that the boycott policy is a double edged sword that hurts the very people it is intended to help. Why, the protagonists of this points of view argue, is Jomo Sono barred from playing in Harare while Gary Player is blazing a glorious trail on the lush lawns of the universe?

To me the latter argument is neither here nor there. It is premature to cry foul while a policy is unfolding and evolving. After all the world is not a unitary structure that acts unanimously and implements action programmes simultaneously.

Our view therefore is that if our players are hosted by overseas countries, good luck to them! If however a country rejects our players it is an act of indiscretion to cross swords with them.

Our players must therefore refrain from forcing their way into these countries. It will save them and many others embarrassment. After all, such countries think they are trying to help the very player by highlighting his political plight in this country.

It is a recognised fact that the boycott policy has led to some changes on the sporting-social scene in this country, and it would be futile for a body like Sasa to actively oppose it.

The question of foreign players who make a living out of soccer in this country is debated in a similar vein.

Our view here is that the individual player who is attracted to the lucrative local market must make up his own mind. He has to weigh the rich



Sasa's Solomon 'Sticks' Morewa

rewards of playing for Kaizer Chiefs against a life ban that is imposed on him by his Fifa-recognised national association.

Our view is that foreign players and coaches have a decisive positive influence on our soccer. They play here as individuals and not as official representatives of their countries.

We know that the African Football Confederation (Caf) is not taking kindly to this view.

Our view is that these players are a tiny drop in the ocean of South African and world football. They are hardly missed in their countries of origin. In fact Fifa generally turns a blind eye to these players.

This policy may be described as a dog in a man-

Rush and others playing today?

The issue of boycott is a fairly new ball game for our organisation and we cannot therefore profess to have the most profound views on this matter. We have not had any meaningful interaction with the advocates of this policy and have relied largely on the media to form opinions.

Our views are therefore in the formative stage and by no means correct, authoritative or exhaustive. What I have stated above is all in good faith.

The Sasa general meeting also resolved that contact must be made with neighbouring states and with the Confederation of African Football (Caf).

It is only through direct communication that we will be able to truly comprehend the perceptions of our colleagues north of the Limpopo.

African football is generally a closed book in this part of the world and it would be worthwhile to have talks with Caf.

It will also be a great eye opener, in that we would be able to compare our structures and procedures with theirs in the same manner in which we are doing with the UK associations.

This will also assist us in crystallising our views on the delicate subject of soccer politics.

Finally I wish to state that it was incorrectly reported in a recent edition of *City Press* that we may ask Caf or whoever to relax the boycott momentum.

We have never entertained such ideas.

Sasa is extremely sensitive to the needs of our people and we are watching the socio-political barometer with keen interest.

We believe firmly that we must contribute positively to the realisation of a genuine non-racial society that is free of discrimination and marked by the true application of the universal franchise and one in which we can co-exist peacefully.