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Sunday Times Reporter

Police rout demos at opening of Varachia stadium

SWIFT ACTION by police prevented a group of youths from continuing their protest against the opening of the M R Varachia Stadium in Lenasia yesterday.

The revamped Lenasia cricket stadium, has been renamed after the president of the South African Cricket Union and Transvaal Cricket Council, Mr. M. R. Varachia, and was officially handed to the Johannesburg City Council at a lavish function on Friday night.

Present at the function were the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. Piet Koornhof, and the deputy-mayor of Johannesburg, Mr. C. A. Long.

All the cricket grounds in Lenasia, including the stadium, are controlled by the Johannesburg Cricket Council, an affiliate of the TCC.

The rival non-racial Transvaal Cricket Board is opposed to cricket grounds in Lenasia being given solely to the Johannesburg Cricket Council by the Johannesburg City Council.

Yesterday saw the opening of the stadium, but before the game could get underway about a dozen youths staged a placard protest outside the main entrance.

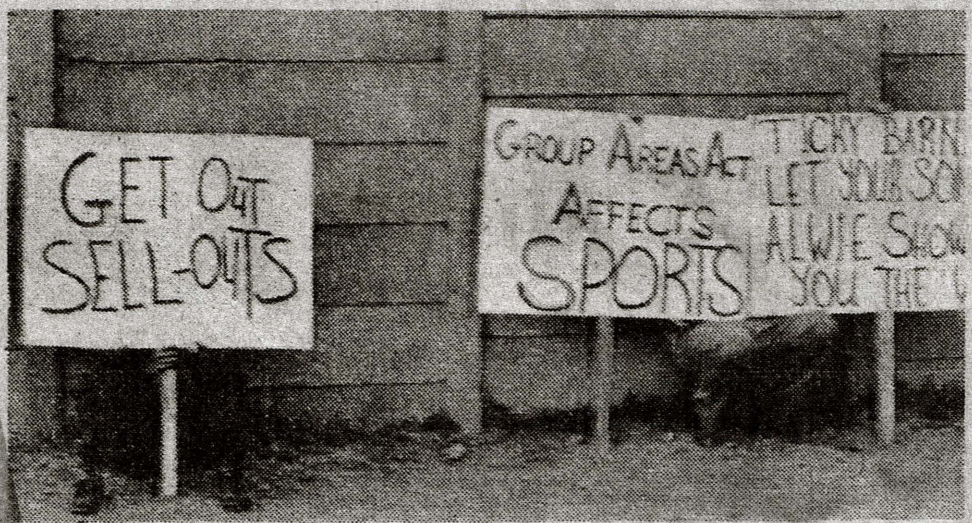
Their protest was short-lived. While they stood at the entrance plainclothes police radioed for instructions. About ten minutes later, the police moved in and took the names and addresses of those involved in the demonstration.

The placards were then torn in half and placed into the boot of one of the police cars, and the demonstrators moved off.

When the first game — between a Rashid Varachia XI and Transvaal Invitation XI — finally got underway, there were a number of police cars and policemen inside the stadium, placed at strategic points around the playing area. During the first half hour of the game, the policemen outnumbered spectators.

Included in the two selected sides were a number of black players. Among them were Solly Chotia, Joe Rubidge (Transvaal), Yacoob Omar, Baboo Ebrahim (Natal), Omar Henry and Jock Mahoney (Western Province).

Tiffie Barnes, another black cricketer was included in the Transvaal side but he



Some of the placards outside the M R Varachia stadium before they were removed by plainclothes policemen.

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