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Indian XI is not SA's best

By SHAN

LED from one slaughter to another, the so-called Indian XI in the multi-national games give the impression that Indians are miserably weak as a soccer power.

This is a tremendous disservice to a community which can boast of having produced such greats as Links Padayachee, Dharum Moham, Bob Pillay, Lightie Chinniah and the Matambo brothers, to name but a few players who could have walked into any truly South African side.

The present crop of players who have been put together by the "Meer group" have been selected from a small section of Indian footballers who have elected to play racial football. The vast majority of Indian players have spurned racial football and have joined the non-racial South African Soccer Federation.

In all fairness to Mr. Y. C. Meer, he has admitted this, but his reason for fielding such a team is that Indians must be represented in this tournament which he sees as the first step in breaking down barriers in sport.

COMPLEX

Even conceding this, it is patently obvious, no matter how sincere the intentions, that the image of the Indian as a soccerite and as a sportsman is being harmed.

Can you blame the layman, who finds the complex problems of the fragmented South African soccer set-up beyond his grasp, for concluding from the hammering the South African Indian XI is getting that the Indian is just not good enough in comparison to the other races?

Many of the thousands of soccer fans of all race groups who watch these games do not know that the South African Indian XI is not comprised of the best Indian players in the country.

And from the news reports it is obvious that some sports writers do not know this either. Or if they do they are not informing their readers.

So let's get the picture right.

WEAK

The South African Indian XI is made up of players mostly from Chatsworth and Western Province. There are six players from the Western Province Indian Football Association.

The numerical and playing strength of Province has always been so weak that during the days of the Sam China tournament it invariably finished at the bottom of the log.

Anthony Bonelle, who used to play in the once all-Coloured association at Tills Crescent, could not make the grade in professional soccer at Curries Fountain

when he turned out for Manning Rangers.

Joey Chetty, a reasonably good player in his hey-day, would not, on present form, make any of the first division federation sides. Yet he was considered good enough for the captaincy of the South African Indian XI. Only one player in this group would have made it in the pro ranks of the federation - Nadarajan Moodley.

Generally, most of the players cannot be compared with the talented Indian players in the federation. According to reports, the Indians are ill-equipped not only in terms of essential skills but also in their understanding of trends.

They do not know simple things like letting the ball do the work instead of the player, of getting into the open space and calling for the ball at the right time, let alone the more intricate requirements of formation play.

SCHOOLED

How can such a team be expected to perform well against the Whites, schooled in the different skills and aspects of football from the nursery and who have had top class competition to sharpen them?

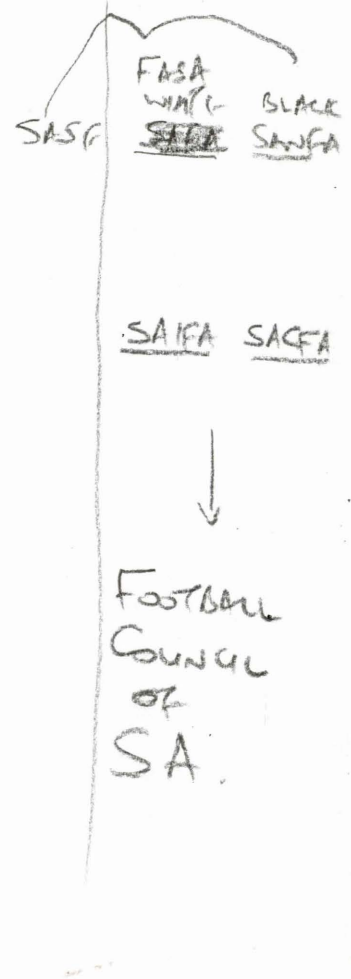
It is like pitting the South African White heavyweight champion against Cassius Clay or George Foreman.

Despite the great advantages enjoyed by the Whites, I venture to suggest that they would have a fight on their hands if they played against a true South African Indian XI - a team selected from Rashid Khan (Cape Town Spurs), Seraj Abbass (ape Town United), Prega Thandrind, Louis Jeevanthem, Alan Moonsamy, Terence Jeevanthem, Siva Pillay, Sundram Moodley (Blue Bells), Gona Padayachee, Baboo Kallichurran, Smiley Moosa, Kola Padayachee, Virgil Padayachee (Swaraj), Toby Hattia, Hamed Saloojee (Dynamos), Gona Arumugum, Vincent Pillay (Verulam Suburbs), Sugar Singh, Paulen Murugan, Deena Naidoo, Jaya Naidoo (Manning Rangers), Daya Maystry, Sadek Ebrahim, Doda Moonsamy, Nassiem Mayet, Dan Maistry, Scampy Bissessar (Berea), Johnny Vadivelu, Blondie Puckree, Rodgers Mariemuthoo, Royston Samuels, Glen Moonsamy (Aces United), Krishna Govender (Maritzburg City), Rosy Francis (Manchester United), not to mention the many other youngsters in the second division and the amateur clubs belonging to the federation.

Rashid Khan, Smiley Moosa and Rosy Francis have played pro soccer in England, and, with Doda Moonsamy and Prega Thandrind, are truly brilliant players. Yet these boys have chosen to forego the lucrative offers of the multi-national games for the sake of a principle.

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