

# POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE GAME OF FOOTBALL IN NAMIBIA: "I SHALL NEVER FORGET"

Seth Mataba Boois

**The National leadership inside Namibia spearheading all efforts for the goal of liberating our country, one way or another, was involved in the game of soccer.**

The intellectually in tune late Daniel Tjongarero, affectionately known as only Dan, was such a figure. Through them (Dan and Agness), the entire BA-F.C has always supported the liberation movement. Of course, he was always supported by his wife, suster Agnes Tsu-dao Tjongarero. There were a familiar couple and faces, circumstances allowing, at all events and activities of the Black Africa

Stories abound about how the founding president of BA, Mr. Mihe /Goagoseb and his executive had to answer questions about the new 'political organization' i.e. Black Africa, already as early as 1964! Quite a number of us, as young Augustineum students, had the privilege to visit and learn from him (Dan) and others at the Swapo offices in down town Windhoek about the unfolding events.

It was in 1976 while as a first year student at the Augustineum Training College that the first real stories of guerilla fighters reach us. Some of us were indeed ignorant youngsters when we learnt that Comrade Lazarus Guiteb has been arrested for feeding armed combatants, tried first before magistrates and in Pretoria and then sent to Robben Island.

I was flabbergasted. How could someone be sent to prison for such a long period of time for aiding or rather just giving food and water to a fellow human? These were my thoughts at the time. Of course, coming from Otjiwarongo's rural setting, there was just no way we could know about all the draconian laws governing Namibia under apartheid rule at the time. It was only later on that we learn about the Suppression of the Communism Act with all its stipulations, that we became aware of the power of those dreadful laws!

1976 was a big year, really, for the struggle. In middle of that year, there were this big clashes of titanic proportions between students in South Africa and the murderous security forces as Bantu Education and Afrikaans was rejected as a medium of Instruction. This has spilled over into our country by year-end and many young people left the country.

These 1976 events and student uprisings has radicalized many innocent young people and those hitherto apathetic about the fight for independence were simple blown away with information that was taken into the homes of almost all oppressed black Namibians to all corners of the country by the young school

children. Parents, grandparents, neighbours, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters were bombarded about the news of freedom coming. There was to be no despair henceforth! The feeling was that the oppressed black people had nothing to lose but everything to win by engaging in the struggle, one way or another!

And Oh Yes, one year onwards, in 1977, the struggle for liberation was intensifying and our national leaders inside the country were under constant police harassment. Indeed, it was during the year of 1977 that for a time Katutura has become a battle ground. A Plan guerilla fighter, known to be one Kanisius Henelessi put a courageous, one man stand against the entire police force and after a serious battle, it was reported in the local press that he escaped.

Unfortunately, his acquaintance was wounded heavily, reportedly paralyzed waist-down. This did not stop the gangster like apartheid Regime from trying him under the hated Suppression of the Communism Act, hanging the black man in his own country for a just quest for freedom and justice!

It is worthy pointing out that, after independence, we are now sitting with the policy of National Reconciliation! Very good, the problem is that it has not wholly been embraced by the former oppressors, our white compatriots. Nay, they are using it to block black economic emancipation! How this happening, one is might be tempted to ask... Look at it from another angle.. There is said to be more than 51% unemployment but how come? The whites in Namibia has artificially pushed up unemployment by turning stolen commercial land into lodges and dropped their erstwhile farm-workers unceremoniously in towns and cities.

This has led to Shanty-towns all over Namibia, requiring the local authorities and government to provide for increased water & sanitation services, more police stations, more houses, more schools, more clinics... thus multiplication of needs! You see, the children of colonizers are creating more problems for black people in Namibia today while they are comfortably sitting and enjoying the fruits of ill gotten riches under apartheid, benefitting from Arm Blanke Vraagstuk and now holders of lucrative tender contracts!

But for us it is still 'aluta continua' as it used to be before independence and during those days, as a final year Welfare Student in 1978, we were required to visit mental hospitals and prisons for researching the psychological trauma and how rehabilitation could be enacted. Those visits turned into psychological trauma for us young students because many a time we came



Seth Mataba Boois

upon guerillas, from as far as afield as from Zimbabwe, who were tortured and left in a state of total confusion. On another occasion, I stumbled in Windhoek Central on an elderly man from Kavango, known only as Tshitenya. He was very traumatized since he was on a death-row for feeding a plan fighter! We brought this to the attention of late Dan Tjongarero and eventually, through the intervention of Council of Churches in Namibia, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment!

Still, while at Augustineum Training College in Windhoek, I got a fright of my life when one day, my fellow Welfare Student and soccer player Gotlieb !Nau-Eiseb Mundjanima, arrive one day afternoon in 1980 at school from Katutura with an AK-47 assault weapon. He carried it in a soccer-tog bag all the way from Katutura from the house of Mr. //Gamxamub, a school teacher. The latter was under police surveillance at the time, apparently shortly after a guerilla arrived at his house and they hastily put the weapons into a chicken corner at his house. Mendoza was tipped off and took the stuff to Augustineum, of all places, but he, like myself, was a member of the underground student movement known as council of 50.

Not too long afterwards, maybe a day or two apart, Mendoza invited me very early morning, about 5 am, to the kitchen. There an elderly chap from the north, known to us students as 'Jakarras' was in charge. But there was also a new face helping to cook! Imagine, then Mendoza said, "Na a aorob ge", meaning 'that's the guy'. Sometime later when I asked Mendoza about this guy and the rifle, he shrugged off his shoulder and indicated that he doesn't know what I was talking about (Freedom talk)! I was flabbergasted, to say the least!

Those were the days at Augustineum but in 1985, BA was invited to play soccer match in Oshakati against Oshakati

City Football Club. The whole thing was organized by Matheu Shikongo (now City Mayor but was a business tycoon leading Metropolitan Insurance giant at the time) and a very flamboyant chap known to us as Kumalo.

Hendrik Christians and Genno Himarwa, both active with Metropolitan on the one hand and with BA on the other hand, were instrumental in making the trip possible with the help of BA. Chairman Five Hochobeb. He was also still actively playing at the time. This was arguably the first time a team from Windhoek was to play a match in the war zone. At the time, I was employed at Post & Telecommunications Engineering Division as an administrator of sorts with now a paparazzi but then a liberal-like, pro-independence, photographer John Liebenberg. He advised me to go, enjoy the game and forget about soldiers and the koevoet. So we travelled to the north, nice and easy even though we encountered some questioning at the border post of Oshivelo. The late Ou Gegu Francis - to policeman, well known to me as he was a talented football player in Otjiwarongo during the early 1970's, was at Oshivelo and he kept the Border police away from us.

We had very nice time in Oshakati, played and lost 2-1 during the day of the match. It was during the evening that B.A. heavily under booze, started all the tricks in the book (Katutura style) to provoke a fight with all and sundry! A trio of us with Fighter Louis and Mike Awaseb, deserted the main group and when into the Cuca Shops.

Since Fighter could speak very good oshivambo, we had nice team with some of the guys in the dark shebeens (street lighting was non existing.) On our way back to Windhoek, that's when the trouble was brewing. Five Hochobeb told us that he recruited a player and he was coming with us to Windhoek.

At Oshivelo, the young recruits of the South African Defense Force wanted to count each one of us. But Five Hochobeb said that his players are not to be counted by 'boers'! "Wat will die bore he", Fighter Louis, very good, quite person when sober, screamed. As we get down from the bus, there was a little disorder, because some of the players, including myself, in our exited and intoxicated state were ready for some kind of an 'off the field' action. So a shouting match brought once again Ou Gegu Francis on the scene. When he saw us, he was like 'dis weer hierdie dronk soccer spellers van Windhoek.' With that, we were allowed free passage and back at the training after two days, when we ask Five Hochobeb about the whereabouts of the new player from Oshakati, he said simply that we were suffering from hangover... I was flabbergasted!

It was only after independence that Five Hochobeb told me that the guy was a guerilla fighter. But it was still not the end of my notoriously stunning experiences in this regard. Just after the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1989 (this date must surely ring a bell) I was on my way to Katima Mulilo in Caprivi, working for a research company from South Africa that was engaged in establishing a possible polling pattern beforehand. I was accompanied by Charles, our Caprivian translator, Mr. Titus Tsibeb (a childhood buddy) and Tiger /Goagoseb (who later turned into an excellent Brave Warriors defender, also coached by me) Once in Katima Mulilo, I engaged Church leadership and very aggressive youth league members about the objectives of my trip! It was a very humid day and sweating profoundly, I had to do some explanations: Who are you, who sent you, why this, why that...! Finally, they encouraged me to go head

And when, around November 1989, the Liberation Movement called for support from Bakkie owners, I registered duly and a Guerilla Fighter from the Caprivi Area was assigned to me in due course... was it de ja vu? The first of these trips took me to the Rehoboth Area accompanied by Moses !Omeb, Willie Swarts and Mr. Dax (formerly a mayor at Rehoboth). What amassed me was the capacity of the Baster people to use vulgar language, apparently it is their lingua fringua! Willy Swarts and Mr. Dax were able to deal with it (vulgar language) without problems. But the most interesting part was when we encountered an elderly man, claiming to be related to !Nanseb Witbooi, resistance war hero of 1904. He was touted to be part of the Turnhalle, according to him but he admitted that he was such

an un-rehabilitated drunkard, by his own admission, that he never set foot in the Turnhalle Beraad. As we were chatting, an Aero plane passed high in the skies. From where he was sitting on horseback, he looked in the sky, saying it was his boss on his way to meeting God to as ask God why he created useless Hottentots! I was flabbergasted!

"So, Witbooi continued, are you know telling me I must go and vote against such powerful man?" I certainly don't want to go to hell, he said. He was of the opinion that only his boss can provide for him! "Bliksem"... That's all I could say! Upon hearing all this, Moses !Omeb turned the whole discussion into a public gathering, explaining the aims and objectives of the Liberation Movement... that there was nothing to fear, that the enemy has already lost diplomatically and militarily and now surely, they will lost at the polls. Moses !Omeb was subsequently proven right!

But It is worth noting that the depth of oppression is un-measurable that today, not only do we need economic emancipation but freedom of the mind as well. It is clear that the colonialist succeed in replacing the mindset of our people with total inferiority, euro-centric falsehoods in most cases and that needs to be freed... correct education and liberation theology has a huge role to play here!

Another of my 'campaign trips took me to the Farming land around Okahandja with another group of people. The farmers were addressed on the day by Dr. Peter Katjavivi who won many hearts. Then I took a group of five, including three ladies who recently returned from exile, passing Dordabis, we went to the heartland of what is today known as the Omaheke Region in an independent Namibia.

On this trip, we were accompanied by a former Plan Political Commissar, Comrade Masule. At one stage, when we encountered a group of armed, intoxicated angry looking white racist farmers, as I stopped the car, Masule, without any warning or waiting for any invitation, he jump over the fence and before the huge dogs or anyone else could react, he was standing in the middle of this huge, big boers. He said to the boers: "We are here to free you." He was fearless, brave, non-chalant, standing tall. At that moment I realized that surely freedom has come to Namibia! We were later joined by singing black workers.

I was NOT flabbergasted AND I shall never forget the Bravery of that former Plan Political Commissar and those of the students, the soccer players and that of my young brother Levi !Nanuseb who went to join the fight in exile - he never returned and his blood and those of all the fallen heroes truly waters our freedom. **Of course, I shall never forget!**