

The necessity for an in-depth reorganisation of national sports structures has led the Congo to draw up a dynamic policy called the *“Democratisation of Sport”*.

In order to do this, a suitable organisation was set up, entitled the National Council for Physical Culture and Sport (CNCPS). This council held its first session in Brazzaville from 20th to 25th February 1981, and adopted a policy aiming at providing a highly extended basis for mass sport, thus ensuring a rich melting-pot for elite sport. Five years after its introduction, the popularisation of sport has experienced both victory and failure.

Through this popularisation of sport, the government of the Congo intends to bring about a change in thinking and to generalise the practice of sport at all social levels. The objectives to be achieved are clearly laid down : to ensure leisure activities for the people, to contribute to social and economic development and finally to increase the population’s health. In this way, the means undertaken were intended to achieve mass participation in sport through its popularisation. There were two main objectives within these means :



- the practise of sport by everyone everywhere, the pledge for good health and the increase of workers’ productivity ;
- an increase of elite athletes available.

To respond to this double objective, the planning of the National Sports Federation’s activities

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# SPORT'S GROWING POPULARITY

## THE CONGO'S EXPERIENCE

by BANZOUZI MALONGA



obliges multi-discipline clubs to take part in all-category championships (youth, junior, senior). A coherent policy for the most beneficial use of sports leaders and the creation of a commission for sports research, working in close collaboration with the national council for scientific research is also envisaged. The task of the commission for sports research would be, amongst others, to study questions relating to the practice of sports within companies and administrative bodies, and the effective handling of sports activities in areas of towns, settlements, and districts.

As far as elite sport is concerned, the National Council is striving to give new impetus to the technical infrastructure with a view to

improving competitiveness and the level of elite athletes towards better performances. Coaches are also being re-trained, and athletes are subject to medical controls.

Schools sport is considered to be the basis of sports policy. It is the best organised source of national sports potential. The National Council of Physical Culture and Sport is at present carrying out a "study of financial, material, educational, moral, medical and psychological conditions essential for the development of elite sport in schools and universities". Whilst awaiting the results of this study, school competitions have been entrusted to an office for school and university sport.

### MATERIAL QUESTIONS

The struggle for the popularisation of sport has many facets, both on an ideological, strategic and organisational level. Customs deeply rooted in tradition have therefore undergone an upheaval.

The popularisation of sport is also a struggle against the exploitation of sport to promote tribalism which very often brings violence into the stadia of the Congo. The CNCPS is therefore stressing the intensification of educational work through the mass media and political discussion. The aim here is to simplify rules and regulations of sport to the greatest possible extent and to fight hard against irrationalities whilst taking legal measures where necessary. The Olympic idea, without doubt, demands fair play.

The practise of sport does, however, imply a large infrastructure. The equipment currently available is extremely basic in towns and in schools, and constitutes a handicap to the process of popularisation. The systematic creation of sports facilities is therefore essential and, moreover, has already begun. It is in this way that some sports installations have been built, such as the "Stadium of the Popularisation of Sport" which, in fact, marks the first stage in this process (photo).

The achievement of this task of popularisation, however, depends on the financial means available ; the international economic situation has not spared the Congo from financial difficulties, and some projects within the popularisation of sport have therefore had to be postponed.



### INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS

Whilst undertaking the process of popularising sport, the Congo has honoured its commitments regarding international competitions. For some years now, however, the contribution from our country's athletes on an international scale has been nil. Apart from handball, in which the Congo dominates the African continent, other disciplines are unsuccessful. It is now time for immediate results.

For this reason, the Congo has been turning to a renowned expert for nearly a year to assist in creating its destiny : Mr Jean-Claude Ganga, recently elected member of the IOC. During a sports forum organised at the beginning of the year (5th January 1986), Minister Ganga — recognising the utility of the CNCPS — declared "this organisation's methods of work are only valid for the medium and long term, given the importance of the questions they handle (...) which need a somewhat long period in order to be put into practice". Mr. Ganga has therefore been entrusted with the task of re-establishing sport within the Congo on the short term, and of obtaining immediate results whilst continuing the process of popularisation. "It is high time" declared the Minister for Sport "to create conditions which break with everything which might hold back the Congo's real entry into this century (...) — a century where the high-performance athlete can be defined as the product of high demands".

The Sports Forum was therefore the starting point for an ongoing relationship between athletes and the Minister.

The popularisation of sport is a challenge for the athletes of the Congo.

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