
FOOTBALL AND SOUTH AFRICA



On the sidelines of the FIFA Congress in 1956, the representatives of four national football federations - from Egypt, Ethiopia, South Africa and Sudan - met in Lisbon, Portugal, where they decided to create the African Football Confederation (AFC) and to stage the first African Nations Cup in 1957 in Khartoum, Sudan.

The draw between the four nations produced the following combinations: South Africa vs. Ethiopia and Egypt vs. Sudan. Unfortunately, South Africa refused to enter a mixed team made up of white and black players, and instead proposed that it would form a team of either all black players or all white players. South Africa was excluded because of its policy of apartheid, and Ethiopia qualified for the final by default, where it was beaten by Egypt, which had previously won against Sudan.

This is how the fight against apartheid in sport was launched by the only pan-African organization that existed at the time. The founder members included honorary IOC member Dr. Abdel Mohamed Halim of Sudan, and the late Ydnekatchew Tessema of Ethiopia, also

an IOC member. Both were AFC presidents and members of the FIFA executive committee.

Thirty-nine years later, South Africa hosted the 20th African Nations Cup and won 2-0 against Tunisia in the final, under the delighted gaze of the President of the Republic, Nelson Mandela.

The Cup presentation ceremony was in itself highly meaningful politically, as Mandela was accompanied by his vice president, Frederik De Klerk. With rugby, which was the white community's favourite sport, and now with football, the favourite sport among the black community, South Africa has once again celebrated its reconciliation as a nation through sport and through its national football team, who go under the name "Bafana Bafana" ("The boys, the boys"), which is made up of black and white players. Had it not been for the immoral policy of apartheid, which spread physical and emotional suffering among Nelson Mandela and his people, the "Bafana Boys" could have taken part in the first African Nations Cup in

South Africa, winner of the African Cup.

(From left to right) King Goodwill, Frederik de Klerk, Neil Tovey, Steve Tswete, Nelson Mandela and Issa Hayatou.





*Dr Abdel Mohamed Halim,
IOC honorary member in Sudan.*

Khartoum in 1957. One of the people who lived this historic moment in African football in Johannesburg, was Dr. Abdel Mohamed Halim of Sudan. the organizer of the first African Nations Cup who has since attended 20 editions of the Cup and will be 86 on April 10th this year. His successor, the energetic young Cameroonian Issa Hayatou, has also reaped the fruits of the fight against apartheid in South Africa, which the AFC pursued through to the end.

F.K.

*The late Ydnekatchew Tessema,
IOC member in Ethiopia.*

