

## Book Reviews

DARBY, PAUL. *Africa, Football and FIFA: Politics, Colonialism and Resistance*. Sport in the Global Society Series. London: Frank Cass, 2002. Pp. xvi+236. Bibliography, index. \$24.95 pb.

This intriguing book demonstrates the ways in which Africa holds the key to a deeper understanding of world soccer's international relations, past and present. Based on primary and secondary sources, it is organized around a short introduction, eight narrative chapters, a conclusion, and an epilogue. Its introduction establishes how the "pattern of power relations in the soccer world bears considerable semblance to that which has underpinned broader inequalities between first and Third World nations" (p. 6) while the first chapter outlines the diffusion of the modern game from Europe to Africa during the era of colonial rule. Other chapters discuss the close relationship between soccer and African nationalism, offering a rich discussion of both the game's role in African independence movements and, after decolonization, African calls for fair representation within a Eurocentric FIFA, and an examination of how Africa's growing post-war self-confidence and assertiveness threatened the status quo in world football and, as a result, led Europe to "doggedly protect its interests and status" (p. 49). Chapters Four and Five are the heart of the book, showing the ways in which African votes delivered the FIFA presidency to the Brazilian businessman and former Olympian João Havelange in 1974 and assessing the impact of Havelange's economic strategy on African football with the creation of development programs, new international youth competitions, and the increase in African teams in the World Cup finals (from one in the sixteen-team 1978 event to five in the thirty-two-team 1998 competition). Other chapters look at the institutional and personal politics within FIFA during the 1980s and early 1990s and the 1998 FIFA presidential election won by Havelange's protégé Joseph "Sepp" Blatter over UEFA's reformist candidate Lennart Johansson. "The key to the outcome, as in 1974 and 1994," Darby posits persuasively, "lay in the hands of the African delegates" (p. 147). In chapter eight Darby uses world systems theory to explain Africa's contempo-

rary role in the political economy of global soccer while his epilogue ponders the real possibility that an African country may host the World Cup finals in the near future.

The contemporary marginality of Africa to international relations makes this critical inquiry into Africa's powerful stake in FIFA affairs especially valuable. Darby does well by moving beyond simplistic arguments about cultural imperialism. "FIFA undoubtedly operated," he argues, "as a body which articulated the interests of the Third World and provided with a forum on which to resist or challenge European hegemony;" but, he adds, "FIFA has also featured in the post-colonial exploitation and manipulation of emergent nations" (p. 108). A strength of this book is its sharp description of the critical role played by leading powerbrokers in the Confédération Africaine de Football (CAF), such as Abdelaziz Abdallah Salem (Egypt) and Ydnecatchew Tessema (Ethiopia), in their fostering progressive institutional change despite the opposition of conservative, paternalistic, and, at times, racist Europeans. Darby's new and penetrating insight into the pan-African struggle against apartheid and its main allies, such as FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous, extends our understanding of why Africa's votes were cast in favor of Havelange rather than Rous in 1974 (pp. 68-84).

On a more critical note, the use of jargon, and numerous typographical errors and block quotations dilute the clarity of Darby's analysis and may lead to the book's having a smaller audience than it deserves. Specialists and non-specialists alike will regret the absence of maps and illustrations. Style and presentation aside, Darby only partially assesses the impact of racism on Africa-Europe relations. Most notably, he underplays the racial dimension of the broader causes driving the growing political and material inequality between Africa and the West. For example, he misses an opportunity to critique the infamous statement made by UEFA president Lennart Johansson in November of 1996: "When I got to South Africa, the whole hall was full of darkies and it looks hellishly dark when they all sit down together" (p. 137). For the record, Johansson followed this comment with another racist observation and then added a tragicomic defense that he could not possibly be a racist because he has many black friends (*sic!*). Finally, Darby's choice of world systems theory in chapter eight to explain the changing relationship between FIFA and Africa is problematic for two reasons. First, theoretical approaches are better exploited when placed in the introduction, where they strengthen the intellectual architecture of the book. Second, Wallerstein's mechanistic model of underdevelopment (dependency) theory tells us very little about the power and agency of the elite African representatives in the world politics of soccer. Africans cannot be relegated to the role of victims of external European (and South American) power plays.

Paul Darby has written a provocative study with many strengths and certain limitations. This book represents a call for future researchers to investigate internal tensions within the African soccer movement more thoroughly; to conduct in-depth research on African soil; and to engage the sophisticated Africanist scholarship produced in the last two decades in the social sciences and humanities. With the North-South gap in the FIFA boardrooms and on the international playing fields narrowing steadily, the role of regional divisions, as well as the African elite's growing disconnect from the difficult economic conditions facing African sport and societies needs to be examined in more detail. The failed South African 2006 World Cup bid, as has been argued elsewhere,

enthusiastically endorsed black capitalism and trickle-down social development. In other words, a nuanced juxtaposition of local dynamics and global trends can portray more clearly the complex nature of Africa's and Africans' struggles in contemporary world sport.

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