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## **The South African Council on Sport and the Antiapartheid Sports Boycott**

In the 1970s and 1980s the antiapartheid movement recognised the South African Council on Sport (SACOS) as its domestic sports wing. This paper analyses and evaluates SACOS's politics in the context of apartheid, the international sports boycott, and moves by the National Party to deracialise sport. In the belief that sport transcended race and

politics, SACOS pursued negotiations with white sports officials to integrate and democratise South African sports. Failed negotiations, state harassment of SACOS leaders and a thorough analysis of the relationship between apartheid and sport convinced SACOS that black sports people would continue to experience discrimination while apartheid existed. The international sports community and foreign governments agreed, and in the late 1970s the sports boycott became a strategy against apartheid per se. But SACOS assumed too much of the sports boycott; noncollaboration became a principle rather than a strategy. SACOS refused to acknowledge government reforms, negotiate with white sports officials, or even enter political alliances with other resistance groups, and members who dissented faced expulsion and isolation. In the late 1980s negotiation supplanted noncollaboration and a group of SACOS members formed a rival antiapartheid sports organisation which eventually brokered a new sports order in South Africa. SACOS, however, refused to negotiate and effectively denied itself the means of struggle.