

Orlando Pirates

humble beginning: great tradition



Sunday Times

Orlando Pirates (1937 -)

Mkwazi and Mokgosinyane founded the Pirates soccer club in the 1930s in Orlando. Mkwazi and later Mokgosinyane wanted to prevent the boys, in what was then a very rough place, from becoming tsotsis by giving them something fun and constructive to do. They also wanted to make the boys feel united. Apparently the boys used to do a lot of other things together besides playing soccer, like playing cards and going to the movies. At first, only boys from Orlando were allowed to play for Pirates.

By 1942, Pirates became the top team in Johannesburg. When semi professional soccer came to South Africa in 1960, Pirates joined the non racial South African Soccer League (SASL). But the League was not allowed to use municipal grounds because it was against government policy to have Africans, Coloureds and Indians playing together.

Subsequently, Pirates overcame some formidable obstacles and are still one of the top teams in the country.



Orlando Pirates meeting held at Orlando YMCA, members from left: John Mabaso, Bobby Makwetla (chairman), Irvin Khoza & Moses Mazibuko Sunday Times

Tradition as Historical Source

In this lesson plan, learners are asked to think about how the oral traditions that people create around their favourite sports teams can be a historical source.



Orlando Pirates supporters dressed for success Bailey's African History Archive, August 1973



John Mabaso of Orlando Pirates at the presentation of the trophy for the 1981 Sales House Champion of Champions Joe Sefale, Sunday Times



Wits vs Pirates - Shakes Ntsoseng makes a dramatic tackle on Wits' Rodney Bush Johnnic Library, 15 April 1979

'Mokgosinyane, a self-appointed social worker and keen footballer, invited a group of boys to his big yard at No 4305 Orlando East. The yard became theirs for football practice ... this is how the mighty Orlando Pirates was born in 1937.'

We found Mokgosinyane seated on a tiny bench in his backyard...

'Ya, those were the days,' Mokgosinyane said. 'When I rounded up the boys, they used to call themselves Orlando Youth Club. Together with Andries Pele-Pele Mkwazi, I decided to form a team made up of these local youths. I bought them all their equipment. I am not sure, but as I recall the name Pirates was suggested by Pele-Pele. Yes, today Pirates players drive snazzy cars and jet all over for their matches, but things were tough in those early days. We used to walk from Soweto to George Goch for our games. We had guys like the legendary Isaac "Rocks" Mothei, "Baboon" Shepherd Shabangu and "Buick" Buthelezi'.

DRUM, June 1980



Pirates vs Wits - Godfrey "City" Radebe of Pirates is flanked by Wits defenders Johnnic Library

Pirates vs Higlands - Jeff Ntsibande tries to foil charging Martin Cohen Johnnic Library, 23 May 1982

You've probably heard about the Sonos or at least about Jomo Sono. Jomo's dad was known as 'Scara' Sono.

'Scara (Eric) came from Langa in the Cape to Orlando when he was a child. His father lost his sight soon afterwards, and had to go into a special home. Scara was one of nine children! He spoke only Shangaan so he found it tough in Orlando, and was bullied by the big kids who lived next door. To deal with them, Scara learned boxing, and soon fought back. He did well at boxing but also played soccer for his school. He was drawn into the Pirates' teams in his late teens. By 1958 he was playing inside left for the first team and was elected team captain. He led them during their most successful season ever. He attributed his success to regular training and no drinking or smoking. He also believed strongly in integrated teams. (A year after Drum did this feature, Scara died in a car accident.)' *DRUM, April 1963*



Orlando Pirates players, Sugar Ray, Motale & Scara Sono *Sunday Times*



Orlando Pirates stalwart Eric "Scara" Sono *Sunday Times, 1963*

Ephraim (Jomo) Matsitela Sono grew up to 'fit handsomely into his late father's boots.'

In 1980 Drum was wondering whether younger brother Julius Sono would follow in the 'great family tradition'.

DRUM, June 1980

Learner Activities

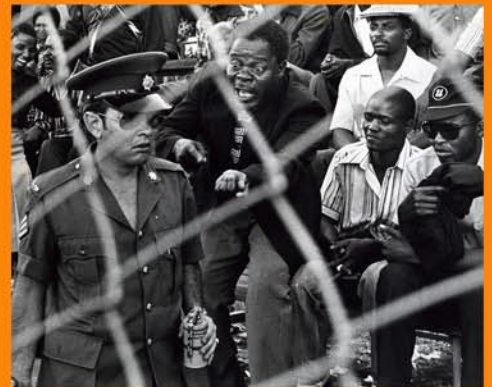
- You have seen that Drum liked the idea of a 'family tradition' in the case of the Sonos. There are a lot of traditions connected to football – to its players and supporters. What are some of these?
- Construct a history of a sports team that interests you. You may have collected some of the memorabilia yourself. Talk to older people about the team's history and ask them to show you any memorabilia that they have. Do you see that the team's history is mostly carried forward as an oral tradition?

Other Ideas

Mokgosinyane seems upset about what has happened to Bucs players since the game became professional. Have a debate about whether or not the money to be made from soccer has corrupted the game and the players.



Nale "Mzayoni" Mofokeng- Pirates no 1 Supporter *Katherine Muick, Sunday Times, 23 July 2002*



Dynamos vs Pirates *Johnnic Library, 18 November 1979*

Criteria for Assessment

- Learners are able to construct a history of a sports team, locating its important victories, defeats and so on, and identifying the most famous players.
- Learners demonstrate an appreciation for the fact that the history of sports teams is mostly preserved and developed as oral tradition.

Curriculum Link – Grades 10 & 11

LO 1, AS 4

LO 4; AS 3

Grade 11 Content link – How was segregation a foundation for apartheid (1930s – 1950s)?