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## 'They are able to play football in South Africa': Austria's 'little Wunderteam' on tour in 1936

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### ABSTRACT

From the end of the nineteenth century South Africa had become a popular touring destination for British and colonial sports teams. Tours in the popular sport of cricket, football and rugby were very popular. These tours tested local opposition against foreign competition, brought in revenue to local and national sports associations and contributed to the development of a white South African identity. Austrian football teams were extensive travellers and popular attractions around the world. Prior to the Second World War Austrian football was highly regarded and was able to compete and hold its own against English and Scottish clubs and representative teams. This article considers an unusual tour by a combined Viennese football team to South Africa in 1936. We consider the preparations for the tour, the different playing styles and the way in which the visitors were received around the country. At the broader political level, the tour was important as leading South African politicians and Austrian diplomats attended matches and functions while on tour. This can be understood in the context of both countries attempting to flex their political identity and muscle in light of more dominant neighbours and colonial masters.

In this article, we consider the unusual tour by a combined Vienna football team to South Africa in 1936. For the Austrians, the tour was part of traditional end-of-season visits abroad where players could enjoy themselves and clubs could earn additional revenues to maintain their professional status at home. The South Africans considered the Austrians to be the first foreign footballers to visit the country, even though English and Scottish teams had visited on numerous occasions from the 1890s onwards. They were unsure of how they would fare against visitors who were seen as excellent exponents of the game. The Austrian national team had recently defeated both England and Scotland in international matches and Austrian clubs had won against their English and Scottish opponents in friendly matches for some time. It was also unclear how the South African football public

would respond to a team from outside Britain and if the Austrian public would take notice of the combined Viennese team on tour in South Africa.

We consider the broader socio-political implications in both countries and look at the discourse used in the press to present the tour to an international political and sporting community. The aims of this article are to consider the tour to South Africa in 1936 by a combined Viennese football team in a broader context. By doing this, we look at the preparations for the tour, the different playing styles, activities beyond the football pitch and the financial and socio-political considerations of the tour.

We draw from a range of politically diverse Austrian and South African newspaper reports from the period under consideration who reported on the tour in different ways. In addition, we consult minute books and reports of various football associations in both countries. We argue that despite the publicity the visitors received and the modest profits generated, the tour was in the end seen as a failure on both sides. The Austrians endured a heavy playing and travelling schedule and experienced a number of injuries. The results were far from impressive for the visitors. While the South Africans appreciated the innovative playing style of the visitors, they were unimpressed with their poor finishing and ability to score goals.

An emerging scholarship considers sporting tours and contacts in interwar Austria<sup>1</sup> and in pre-apartheid South Africa.<sup>2</sup> This scholarship is part of a broader body of work on sport and tours more generally.<sup>3</sup> It demonstrates how tours can fluctuate between the sporting aspirations of international competition and the projection of a national identity profiting from sporting success. Sports tours were also part of the broader context of transnationalism, international relations and the development of a global sporting community.<sup>4</sup> In the case of Austria, the country struggled to assert its nationhood in the aftermath of the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy and the ascendance of its northern neighbour Germany. Sport successes were important in generating national identity and the 'Austrofascist' regime put this into practice from 1934 onwards.<sup>5</sup> In the South African context, national sports teams, particularly in white cricket and rugby, were at the forefront of instilling a South African nationalism and sporting identity, bringing together white Afrikaans and English speakers. While South Africa was firmly part of the British Empire during this period, the fact that a non-British team could visit the country suggests local officials, organisers and spectators saw value in opposition from outside the British Empire. Sports tours produced meanings and significance that went beyond simply playing the game of football. A football team visit from 'Austrofascist' Austria to colonial pre-apartheid South Africa in the summer of 1936 can be seen in broader political terms beyond the football pitch.

The tour can be further understood in the context of 'international exchange in the 1930s' in which mass and elite sport can be seen as a

forum for transnational relations at various levels within society.<sup>6</sup> In both contexts, Austria and South Africa attempted to establish themselves in the international arena.

Despite the seemingly large cultural differences between Austria and South Africa, both countries attempted to flex their sporting muscles on the international stage. In the case of South Africa, it remained an integral part of the British Empire while Austria was increasingly overshadowed by her northern neighbour Germany and the '*Achse Berlin – Rom*' (Berlin-Rome Axis). International sporting contacts could demonstrate normality as well as success on the broader political stage. Both countries used sport in an attempt to create a specific national identity.<sup>7</sup> Austrian and South African sports organisations used sport, especially cricket and rugby union, as an important tool to foster a broader sense of national identity. In the case of South Africa, this was a unified white identity comprised of Afrikaans and English speakers. In the case of Austria, the regime tried to position the country as a second and 'better' Germany in opposition to the *Deutsches Reich*, at least until July 1936. Both countries sent teams to participate in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, which started as the Austrian team was concluding its schedule of matches in South Africa. In the case of South Africa, 26 athletes and five officials comprised the team. South Africa disappointingly won one silver medal as compared to five medals in 1932 and ten in 1920. Austria sent a team of over 200 athletes to Berlin and brought home a total of 13 medals, a record at this point for the Austrian Olympic team. The Austrian *Sport und Turnfront*, led by the *Heimwehr-Führer* Starhemberg, tried at the Berlin Olympics to use sports as an internal as well as external tool to present the country as a successful and powerful nation.

Moreover, South Africa and Austria had been early members of FIFA. Austria joined in 1907 while the South African FA affiliated in 1910 (although it withdrew in 1924), the first national association along with the Argentine Football Association from outside Europe. During the interwar period FIFA had attempted to globalise the game, particularly through the creation of the World Cup (the Olympic football tournament had initially acted as the de facto world championship). In 1931 there were 31 members of FIFA (27 from Europe); by 1938 this number had increased to 57.<sup>8</sup> While FIFA had little input over the tours of individual clubs, the tour of the combined team to South Africa demonstrates this internationalism,<sup>9</sup> which at the political level itself was unfeasible.

But within this growing global context, the tour was also subject to national peculiarities. Both parties had their own motivations for its staging, while the tour also revealed a clash of different footballing cultures. First, we consider Austrian and South Africa football during this period.

## Viennese football in the 1930s: Professionalisation, commercialisation and international tours

By the 1930s Austrian football was highly regarded, popular and professional. In this section we consider a brief overview of the development of the game, particularly in Vienna; the evolution of a distinct style of play; and how foreign tours became part of the Austrian football landscape. Members of the British community played football in Vienna in 1894.<sup>10</sup> Men from wealthy backgrounds initially participated in the fledgling game before being joined by working-class players and spectators. In 1904, the First Vienna Football Club celebrated its tenth anniversary and several thousand spectators watched a Glasgow Rangers side defeat the local team 7–2 in the Hohe Warte Stadium as a part of the celebrations.<sup>11</sup> A number of friendly matches were staged in Vienna prior to the First World War, with the Austrian team competing against the national teams from Germany, Hungary, Italy, Norway and Sweden. The Austrian military further popularised the game. As soldiers returned to civilian life, they formed clubs and participated as players and spectators. In addition, emerging sports media in Vienna reported daily on the development of the game in the city. A number of weekly newspapers were published, such as the *Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung* and the *Illustriertes Sportblatt*, and from 1918 on a daily basis the *Sport-Tagblatt*. With the introduction of an eight-hour working day in 1918 and increased leisure time, football became even more popular.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1920s Viennese football had become part of popular culture.<sup>13</sup> Important league games attracted crowds in excess of 30,000 spectators while in 1923 83,000 people watched a match between Austria and Italy.<sup>14</sup> Elite football was initially characterised by ‘shamateurism’, and a number of foreign players played in Austria during this period, including the former Hungarian internationals Alfred Schaffer, Kalman and Jenö Konrad and Imre Schlosser.<sup>15</sup> In 1924, on the initiative of Hugo Meisl, the famous trainer of the Austrian national team, initially 23, and soon 35, Viennese football clubs switched to professionalism – the first outside Britain – with the formation of initially two, then three, leagues.<sup>16</sup>

Professionalism, however, brought financial problems. Some Viennese clubs faced bankruptcy while others returned to the amateur ranks. In an attempt to allay financial concerns, in 1927 Meisl and his Hungarian counterpart Mor(itz) Fischer initiated the Svehla Cup for the national teams of central Europe and, more significantly, the Mitropa Cup, a cup competition that initially comprised the two top club teams in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia.<sup>17</sup> Prior to the Second World War the Mitropa Cup remained an important source of income for central European football clubs. This income was however insufficient to cover the annual budgets of the large Viennese football clubs. Another potential source of revenue was touring.

At the onset of the twentieth century Viennese clubs had relied on international matches against British teams as well as the leading clubs from Budapest and Prague to generate additional income. For Viennese teams, visits abroad were also important sources of revenue. Towards the second half of the 1920s teams visited Spain, Portugal and Malta during the winter months, while Belgium, France, Romania, Scandinavian and Baltic countries were visited during the summer. Hakoah Vienna travelled further afield to Canada and the United States in 1926 and 1927 and shortly afterwards to Egypt and Palestine.<sup>18</sup> Austrian clubs travelled across to North Africa (Morocco, Algeria and Egypt), the Canary Islands, Greece, Turkey and the Dutch East Indies. Between August 1931 and July 1932 Viennese teams played 338 games against foreign teams, 309 of which were abroad. At the international level Austria defeated Scotland 5–0 in 1931 and England 2–1 in 1936. By the summer of 1933 every side in the Austrian first division and many in the second league had toured abroad.<sup>19</sup> However, the popularity of such tours had waned by the mid-1930s due to a lack of demand in other countries, while not all first division teams were able to undertake gruelling and lengthy tours.<sup>20</sup>

### **South Africa as a sports tour destination**

Unsurprisingly, given their geographic distance, no formal sporting contacts existed between Austria and South Africa during this period. South Africa, though, had been a popular destination for touring British cricket, football and rugby teams since the 1880s. In addition, representative teams from other parts of the British Empire also visited, and included sides from Australia, India and New Zealand and the neighbouring colonies of Southern and Northern Rhodesia. These tours were ostensibly to build and cement the bonds of empire, but they also generated financial profits for sports associations and investors alike. In this section we consider the importance of sport in South Africa and role sport tours contributed to an emerging national identity and source of revenue.

In 1892, the South African Football Association (SAFA) was established and, similar to all other national sports bodies, it was keen to maintain close links with its sister organisations in Britain. SAFA became an honorary member of the English FA in 1904 and a representative was based in London. One of the tasks of the representative was to canvass support for teams to tour the country. Moreover, SAFA had followed the lead of the English FA when it became a member of FIFA in 1910.

British cricketers first visited South Africa in 1888 and on three further occasions before 1900. South Africa received its first rugby visitors from Britain in 1891. In football, the Corinthian FC became the first foreign team to tour South Africa in 1897 and again in 1903 and 1907. These

tours were important, particularly after the South African War (1899–1902), when attempts to forge a new white South African identity occurred.<sup>21</sup> Not only were tours important politically but financially too. They generated significant profits for local associations.<sup>22</sup> South Africa was not only a popular destination for touring sides but the national associations in the three dominant sports of cricket, football and rugby sent touring sides abroad. In 1899, the ‘Kaffir’ football team from Bloemfontein travelled to Europe under the auspices of the Orange Free State Football Association.<sup>23</sup> Despite being sanctioned by the white regional football association, the first tour by this black football team from South Africa was not welcomed in national white football circles. In 1906, the SAFA sent its first whites-only side to South America to play against sides in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. In 1910 the English FA sent its first amateur football team to tour the country. South Africa remained a popular destination for the English FA as teams visited in 1920, 1929 and 1939. A representative white South African football team toured Britain and Holland in 1924. Soon thereafter, the professional Scottish sides Aberdeen (1927 and 1937) and Motherwell (1931 and 1934) visited South Africa. While the SAFA was keen to invite and host foreign white teams,<sup>24</sup> it refused to play against a touring side from India in 1934.<sup>25</sup>

In 1936, the SAFA gave permission to the Southern Transvaal Football Association (STFA), based in Johannesburg, to negotiate with a foreign club to tour South Africa.<sup>26</sup> As part of the jubilee celebrations for Johannesburg and the Empire Exhibition, the STFA intended to invite a British professional team to tour the country. Football on the Witwatersrand was very popular, with large crowds in attendance at matches at the Wanderers Ground in central Johannesburg.<sup>27</sup> However, initial negotiations between the STFA and Manchester City and Glasgow Celtic broke down.<sup>28</sup> At the same time a Johannesburg newspaper suggested that ‘two Continental soccer teams will visit South Africa’<sup>29</sup> as part of the jubilee celebrations and the Empire Exhibition. The report concluded that ‘an offer was received ... from the Vienna Football Club, one of the crack club teams on the Continent, to undertake a tour here’.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the Sporting Club of Portugal was keen to tour too. The STFA noted that ‘the Vienna Athletic Club was a different proposition [to the Portuguese], being a professional club with a known record against English professional clubs’.<sup>31</sup> On 27 May 1936, the *Rand Daily Mail* reported a cable was received from the ‘Vienna Sporting Club’ [the WAC, the Vienna Athletic-sport Club] accepting the invitation of the STFA to play 11 matches across South Africa. Discussions were held with the Lourenço Marques Football Association to stage a match in the Portuguese colony but this did not materialise.<sup>32</sup>



## Preparations for the tour

In June 1936, the Viennese daily *Sport-Tagblatt* ran a report from Wolfgang Oppenheim, a foreign correspondent based in Johannesburg, that a tour of South Africa would be undertaken by the WAC.<sup>33</sup> Oppenheim had formerly been a member of the WAC athletic section and an Austrian pole vault champion, and was now residing in South Africa. The WAC had been established in 1897 as an aristocratic and bourgeois club. It had a football section which had been the most successful Viennese football team at the turn of the century. The team reached the final of the Mitropa Cup in 1931 and four of its players represented the Austrian *Wunderteam* of the 1930s. In the mid-1930s the club struggled and in 1936 were relegated and dissolved the following year. In June 1936 board members of the WAC were in negotiations with FC Wien on a possible merger of the two clubs. These negotiations broke down and as a consequence, the *Österreichischer Fussball-Bund* (ÖFB) ruled that FC Wien instead of the WAC would tour South Africa,<sup>34</sup> because the WAC should not represent Viennese football abroad. FC Wien was formed in 1914 and was originally known as FC Nicholson, named after Englishman Magnus Douglas 'Mark' (MD) Nicholson, a founding official of the *Österreichische Fußball-Union*, a precursor of the ÖFB. The name was changed in 1933 to FC Wien. The decision of the ÖFB was not welcomed, and officials of the WAC and FC Wien agreed to send a team comprising players of both clubs. Officials Hejl and Mayer from WAC and Weinisch from FC Wien accompanied 14 players to South Africa – four players from WAC and 10 from FC Wien. The team boarded a train bound for Genoa and sailed to Cape Town on the Italian-registered vessel *SS Duilio*.<sup>35</sup>

Newspapers based in Johannesburg reported that the Viennese side 'represent the best Austrian soccer standard' and Austrian football was 'considered to be the champion Continental Association and have victories to their credit against England [and] Scotland'.<sup>36</sup> The team would comprise players from leading Austrian clubs and the team would 'practically [be] an Austrian international one'.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, it was suggested the Austrian press were in full support of the tour to South Africa which, it was envisaged, would bring the two football countries closer together.<sup>38</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* incorrectly reported the touring party would comprise seven Austrian internationals and that the team was one of the strongest to tour abroad.<sup>39</sup> In fact only one of the players, Georg Waitz, was an Austrian international: he had played for the national team once in 1932. The Viennese press in general did not report much on the tour to South Africa, nor on the tour undertaken by the Wiener Sportclub to the Dutch East Indies at the same time. More upmarket newspapers such as the *Neue Freie Presse* or the *Reichspost* only noted results of matches played, while the popular press such as the *Kronen-Zeitung* and the *Kleine Blatt* offered more context to the tour in South



Africa.<sup>40</sup> The *Sport-Tagblatt* was the only Austrian newspaper to report at length on the tour, and included lengthy letters from Wolfgang Oppenheim. Despite the limited press coverage of the tour in Austria, interested fans were kept abreast of developments on and off the field of play in South Africa.

## The clash of playing styles

While association football was increasingly a universal language, it could still expose cultural differences. In this section we consider the clash in styles between the tourists and their hosts. South African football was typically based around the manly virtues of the British game – aggression, charging and tackling. By contrast, from the turn of the twentieth century, the ‘Viennese school’ of football was popular across parts of Europe, and Austrian trainers and players became exponents of *Calcio Danubiano*<sup>41</sup> and the short passing game in Vienna.<sup>42</sup> The Austrians played a modified attacking 2-3-5 formation with the centre forward in a withdrawn position as opposed to the more conservative W-M formation popular in Britain and South Africa.<sup>43</sup> This clash in style, reflected through the criticism levelled at the tourists for their inability to score goals, also highlighted some of the contrasting perceptions of what football actually meant in different countries.

Despite the tourists kicking off their tour with a resounding victory, the intricacies of their build-up play and inability to score goals frustrated the South African footballing public and press. The Austrians opened their tour account in Kimberley and defeated a Griqualand West side 7–1 in front of 1,000 spectators.<sup>44</sup> The *Sport-Tagblatt* was confident that the team would be victorious against all South African opposition.<sup>45</sup> The *Diamond Field Advertiser* reported the side ‘take their soccer very seriously and are truly wonderful exponents of the game’.<sup>46</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* suggested the ‘tourists prove [a] formidable force’.<sup>47</sup> In the build-up to the first match scheduled for Johannesburg, the local press commented on the style of play of the Austrians. The *Rand Daily Mail* suggested that they performed ‘soccer as public entertainment’ and were ‘par excellence in this role’.<sup>48</sup> The press noted that the Austrians were considered to be ‘masters of their football trade and will be difficult to beat’. The team was described as

servants of the public dependent on the goodwill and support of the latter at the box-office [and] endeavour, as public entertainers to give the public their money’s worth in clever, attractive football, upon which is grafted all the finer points phases of the game which has captured the imagination of Austria and the other countries on the Continent of Europe.<sup>49</sup>

It was suggested the Austrians saw the use of the ‘W-M’ formation commonly used in South Africa as ‘taboo’ as it ‘excised much of the sparkle out of the game as a spectacle’.<sup>50</sup> Rather, ‘their football is clean, clever and abnormally

fast [and] wonderful quickness of their close passing in which unexpectedness is the outstanding feature'.<sup>51</sup> *The Star* reported that the Austrians' style was similar to the game played in Scotland.<sup>52</sup> The SAFA's honorary secretary Watts noted that 'the Austrians will show us a type of soccer never seen before [and] they practice all the British cleverness but at high speed'.<sup>53</sup> In their first match against an STFA eleven in Johannesburg, the tourists drew 0–0 in front of 18,000 spectators. The result was described as a 'pointless draw [but] still played by professionals in the true sporting spirit [which was] wonderfully clever and attractive soccer'.<sup>54</sup> The press were not as diplomatic in their assessment of the game played on the hard gravel ground of the Caledonian Stadium in Pretoria, watched by 5,000 spectators including the South African Minister of Finance N.C. Havenga.<sup>55</sup> The *Rand Daily Mail* reported that the Austrians would 'have to produce better football [and] it was not a thrilling spectacle'.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, the Austrians were not pleased with the charging employed by the South Africans. The Austrians played their third game in a week in Durban in front of 11,000 spectators against a Natal eleven, drawing the game 2–2. The local press now raised concerns with the Austrians' standard of play. The *Natal Mercury* reported that the team was 'too artistic [and] while pattern weaving is a pretty type of football I failed to see the sense of it'.<sup>57</sup> In contrast, the *Sport-Tagblatt* applauded the defences of the home teams, while it suggested the Austrians could have done more in attack and 'actually we would have expected more'.<sup>58</sup>

In the build-up to the first Test match, it was reported that the visitors would wear the national colours of the ÖFB – which 'at once puts the imprint of international games upon three Test matches'.<sup>59</sup> Despite the resounding victory in their first match, the visitors drew three and lost one match before the game against the South African eleven. The first Test, played on 1 August, also ended in a scoreless draw, watched by over 12,000 spectators.<sup>60</sup> Again the Austrians showed fine ball skills but were unable to score. The *Rand Daily Mail* claimed that

talent the tourists undoubtedly possess in abundance in the shape of exceptional ball control, close passing that is positively mystifying at times in its quickness and unexpectedness ... yet, owing to a lamentable lack of shooting ability ... all the artistry, polish and finesse of these Vienna visitors is being flagrantly thrown to the winds in prodigal fashion ... Judged solely by their shooting ... these Austrian forwards must be rapidly qualifying for the distinction of being the world's worst shots.<sup>61</sup>

In Durban, the second Test was played on 8 August in front of 9,000 spectators, and the tourists won 2–1.<sup>62</sup> The *Natal Mercury* again reported on the poor shooting of the visitors.<sup>63</sup> This dismayed the South African public and press, but unsurprisingly the Austrians saw things differently. The team sustained a high number of injuries due to the number of games played, the hard

grounds (particularly in the Transvaal) and the more aggressive play of the local opposition. The Austrians also suggested that, the 'type of soccer [played in South Africa] was far from modern' in which the local players were very physical, shoulder charged and 'play the man unnecessarily'.<sup>64</sup> Charging and physical play was part of the South African style of play due to the early and continued British influence on the game in the country. *The Star* newspaper in Johannesburg noted the defeat was a 'setback bad from a football aspect: it is good for "finance"', as an official remarked in anticipation of a large crowd for the Johannesburg Test match.<sup>65</sup> After the victory against the South African eleven, *The Sport-Tagblatt* noted that the tourists were a 'little *Wunderteam*' and that Viennese football was played at the same level as the best British teams.<sup>66</sup> In addition, the newspaper noted that the Austrian players had a 'gorgeous impact' and 'impressed and satisfied even South Africa's soccer experts'.<sup>67</sup> Spurred on by their win in the Test match, the Austrians defeated an Eastern Transvaal eleven in Benoni. The press dubbed their game 'cheeky' in which 'they played with a confidence and assurance [and] treated the Benoni public to a brilliant exhibition of ball control and for their exceptional efficiency'.<sup>68</sup> *The Sport-Tagblatt* noted the team were 'gaining momentum'.<sup>69</sup>

In the final Test match played in front of 8,000 spectators in Johannesburg on 15 August, the visitors lost 3–0 to the South African eleven. The Austrians 'were completely outplayed at all points [while] the result should go a long way towards eliminating the inferiority complex which South African teams have appeared to possess in the past when facing overseas teams'.<sup>70</sup> A *Pretoria News* journalist frankly wrote in his report of the match 'that South Africa has learnt little of nothing from [the Austrians]' while 'their clever artistry did not appeal to the football fans'.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the South Africans used 'some good honest shoulder charges' in the defeat of the visitors.<sup>72</sup> *The Star* noted that 'most of the "rough stuff" was perfectly legitimate'.<sup>73</sup> *The Sport-Tagblatt* reported that only in some of their games had the team been able to perform to the high standards of Viennese football. The performance was considered satisfactory while their shooting was poor and in 11 games the Austrians won three, lost three and drew five matches, which was considered well below expectations.<sup>74</sup> Franz Hejl, one of the Austrian managers, remarked that despite earlier comments on the physical nature of the South African play a 'real gentlemanlike spirit [was exhibited] in which our matches were played'. He suggested, perhaps diplomatically, a South African side would prove a 'great attraction in Central Europe'.<sup>75</sup> In the SAFA Annual Report of 1936, the association thanked the selection committee for their

valued assistance towards making an unusual tour successful [and noted] interesting ... style of play adopted by the Austrians, but, as a test of ability, they

were not sufficiently strong enough to extend South Africa, and, in many respects, their exhibition was disappointing ... much good was derived from their visit ... it is doubtful whether the experiment should again be attempted unless a guarantee of the very best is fulfilled.<sup>76</sup>

The criticism levelled at the tourists' style of play by the South African press was not dissimilar to the British press in their assessment of Austria when they lost to England in 1932, and of a Viennese XI against Arsenal in 1934. In reference to the 1934 game at Highbury, the press reported that 'when the Austrians have learnt how to turn all their cleverness into something that counts ... [we will] sit up and take notice'.<sup>77</sup> Despite the frank assessment of ability and value of the Austrians' visit to South Africa in 1936, politicians who attended civic functions in honour of the tourists suggested such sport exchanges were important to overcome differences and bring the two countries closer together.

### Public and press reactions to the tour

How was the tour received both in South Africa and in Austria? Here we consider reactions to events and activities away from the football pitch and look at the transnational sporting contacts and networks developed during this period.<sup>78</sup> Austrian impressions of their hosts were generally favourable and this was reciprocated, indicating some common cultural values. Oppenheim, for example, reported to Vienna about the considerable excitement in South Africa at the prospect of the Viennese tour. Photographs of the team appeared in all local newspapers and on advertising boards in Cape Town. He commented on the 'Britishness' of South Africa in that it was not 'uncivilized' as a country but had British culture in which the 'majority of South Africans are Englishmen'.<sup>79</sup> He portrayed South Africa in a positive light and referred to the country as a rising economic power not yet drawn into the unfolding European crisis. In addition, the country comprised a range of landscapes, with eternal sunshine and an 'allure of a romantic jungle'.<sup>80</sup>

Putting on civic functions and other events for touring teams had a long tradition. As the tour would not generate significant financial returns, a number of matches had to be played to make the tour financially viable. It also meant more functions and opportunities for networking. In the evening after their arrival the team was entertained by a group of Austrians residing in Cape Town.<sup>81</sup> In Johannesburg, after the tourists' first match on the Witwatersrand, the Southern Transvaal and Vienna teams spent an evening together at the Transvaal National Sports Club and watched a wrestling performance. The following day the tourists laid a wreath with a red and black ribbon (the colours of the WAC) at the cenotaph in Johannesburg to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Battle of Delville Wood.<sup>82</sup> In Johannesburg, the tourists watched a war dance performed by African

miners at the City Deep mine and in the afternoon watched African miners play football. Touring sports teams regularly attended war dances by African miners at the diamond mines of Kimberley and the gold mines of the Witwatersrand. In the South African capital, the Mayor of Pretoria, H.W. Dely, addressed a civic function held in honour of the Austrians attended by Alfred Frankel, the Austrian Consul in Johannesburg.<sup>83</sup> Dely optimistically noted that 'sports offers the best form of international contact [and] international sport might perhaps be a better medium for maintaining peace and good-fellowship between nations of the world than the League of Nations'.<sup>84</sup> Frankel remarked that the South Africans had been 'very fair sportsmen, both as players and spectators'.<sup>85</sup> At a civic function held in Benoni in August prior to the match against Eastern Transvaal, the Mayor of Benoni, T. Newby, expressed similar sentiments to his Pretoria counterpart. Newby exclaimed that

it is a great pity that statesmen and politicians throughout the world have not the outlook which we find on the sports field ... tours promote international good fellowship ... [I]n South Africa I think we could learn some valuable lessons from the field of sport ... racialism never appears on the football and cricket fields. If we see thirteen Afrikaners in a national rugby side we do not talk about fifty-fifty.<sup>86</sup>

The president of the Eastern Transvaal Football Association, A. Ruffels, spoke in a similar manner and claimed 'sport which was international in character did more to bring about understanding between nations than the parleys of statesmen'.<sup>87</sup> Despite the exclamations of internationalism and non-racism, South African society and sport in particular was strictly segregated along racial lines. While the Austrians were on tour in South Africa it was reported that Maoris would not play against nor entertain the Springbok rugby team during their tour the following year of New Zealand. This decision was taken

to avoid friction [and] any possible recurrence of the unpleasant incidents during the previous visit of the South Africans, when Maoris had to endure on the field many epithets passed by some of the visitors, resulting in frayed tempers on both sides, and also the general attitude of South Africans on the question.<sup>88</sup>

In addition, throughout the Austrians' tour of South Africa the local press constantly referred to Georg 'Manto' Waitz as 'the team's brilliant Gipsy inside-right [who] is also a clever manipulator of cards',<sup>89</sup> although there is no evidence that he was Roma. It may have been due to his playing style, often described as 'deceiving' or 'trickery'. While the Austrians watched Africans play football, they never expressed any desire to play against Africans while on tour in South Africa. Moreover, British touring football teams only played against white teams in South Africa. Despite the strict segregation and racism on the part of the South African football authorities, they were

keen to attract entrance-paying Africans to watch the tourists play against white South African teams.

The STFA were unsure of how popular a non-British tour team would be with the South African football public. As a result, the association discussed increasing the number of tickets allocated for African (black) spectators. During this period and well into the mid-1970s, sporting tickets were sold to spectators at different prices and sections of stadiums on the basis of 'race'. The STFA 'decided to recommend that the price be reduced to 1/6 and endeavours be made with the Wanderers to accommodate as many [Africans] as possible'.<sup>90</sup> The STFA was unable to increase the allocation of 550 Africans to the match and the ticket price remained 2s. 6d.<sup>91</sup> In Bloemfontein, the Austrians met a Free State eleven watched by a segregated crowd that ended in a 3–3 draw. The local newspaper *The Friend* noted that white spectators could enter the ground through the clubhouse of the Ramblers Ground, while 'the entrance for Natives and Coloured people' was located in West Burger Street.<sup>92</sup>

Shortly before the end of the tour, SAFA President Fred Fell claimed the tour had 'proved a financial success [and] the expenses of the tour have been fully covered; and after paying a certain amount as bonuses to the Vienna Sports Club ... there is still a profit left'.<sup>93</sup> He diplomatically suggested that the visitors were not expected to draw record numbers of spectators as in the tour of the Motherwell Club who were 'the most attractive side to the public ever to visit this country'. The tour generated profits for the SAFA and the STFA; however, the Natal FA reported that they had incurred a loss of £47 7s. 9d. in the second Test match in Durban. The Natal FA requested the STFA contribute to cover the loss as they had been 'very unwilling to accept the match [and the STFA] had made a good profit'.<sup>94</sup> The STFA reported that 'doubts were expressed as to the wisdom of the experiment of introducing for the first time, a Continental Team, but if the financial success of the visit is a criterion then those doubts have been dispelled'.<sup>95</sup> The SAFA's Barbour, who accompanied the Austrians throughout their tour, was more forthright in his assessment of the Austrians. He stated 'the record of the team is far from impressive [while] the team played good football ... their shooting was woefully weak'.<sup>96</sup> Barbour noted that in his attempt to understand why the Austrians were weak compared to Austrian side that had played in England and Scotland he 'made some interesting discoveries which convinced me this team was not in any way representative of the average strength of continental teams'.<sup>97</sup> He noted that Franz Hejl had approached Hugo Meisl of the ÖFB for official sanction for a tour to South Africa. Meisl suggested the team from WAC were too weak and a combination of teams from WAC and FC Wien be sent to South Africa. According to Barbour 'friction arose between the players of both clubs' due to appearance and draw/win bonuses. Moreover, injuries plagued the team and Barbour

suggested 'I had to do all in my power to encourage them to win and so make the tour a financial success'. Barbour complained that each player had only brought one pair of boots after it had been stipulated that they should bring two pairs. In addition, he noted that apart from Hejl and Mayer, no one else spoke English, while 'the team was extraordinarily well disciplined'.

On their return to Vienna the *Sport-Tagblatt* noted the players were 'brave players' and 'fair sportsmen' who represented Viennese football abroad adequately despite the results not being particularly good.<sup>98</sup> Throughout the tour, Oppenheim's reports in the *Sport-Tagblatt* noted the enthusiasm for football in South Africa. He remarked on the perfect pitches, extensive newspaper coverage of the tour in the South African press and the impressive advertising campaign initiated by the local organisers. In addition, he noted the large crowds that came to watch the Austrians. He suggested South African football fans were objective and fair spectators. He concluded by stating 'they are able to play football in South Africa, they even play excellently'.<sup>99</sup>

The Austrian press did not report extensively on the tour. While the *Sport-Tagblatt* did report on results of the matches played, the press more generally was not interested in the tour in South Africa. This may have been due to the fact that the Wiener Sportclub toured the Dutch East Indies at the same time and this was considered by the Austrian press as a more exotic destination compared to South Africa. The South African press reported extensively on the Austrians on tour but these reports were primarily limited to the style of play and strength and weaknesses of the opposition. No mention was made of the broader political context in Austria, caught between the fascist Italy as a protecting power and an increasingly intervening German Reich.

## Conclusion

In this article we have argued that the combined Viennese football team tour of South Africa was important in that while South Africa was a popular destination for British and colonial teams, little contact had been established beyond this realm. The Austrian visit demonstrated a different way of playing football without necessarily overly testing the South African opposition. For the Austrians the tour was part of the traditional end-of-season visit to reward players with an overseas holiday and raise funds for club accounts. While the tour did generate revenues for the Austrian team and the South African authorities, the standard of play was not as high as had been initially expected. It could be argued that the South Africans overestimated the strength of the opposition while the Austrians in turn underestimated the ability of their hosts on the basis of mutual respect and appreciation. This article contributes to an expanding scholarship on sporting tours before the Second World War and demonstrates that South Africa



remained a popular destination not only for British and colonial teams but for others outside the imperial network. Tours were potentially financially rewarding irrespective of the origin of the visiting teams. The press in both countries primarily reported on the athletic endeavours of the tourists; the political and economic spheres more generally were ignored.

In the case of Austria, on the one hand, a decrease in the popularity of Viennese football made it necessary to find new financial sources to sustain professionalism. Even the well-established traditions of summer, winter or Easter tours in and around Europe decreased, particularly in financially lucrative Britain and Scandinavia. On the other hand, an increasing political interest in using sports as a vehicle to strengthen an Austrian self-confidence and identity emerged. In the South African context, sporting successes had primarily been achieved against fellow members of the British Empire. By competing against 'foreign' opposition prior to the Second World War, South African teams could gauge their levels of skill and proficiency on the sporting field while simultaneously cultivating a white South African identity that would come to the forefront of world politics after the war. The Viennese *Sport-Tagblatt* summed up the tour by suggesting they 'would have expected more' – an apt summary. The tour of the 'little Viennese *wunderteam*' to South Africa may not have brought significant financial revenues to the Austrian and South African coffers, nor had the performances of the visitors on the field been spectacular. Yet at the broader political level, the tour was important as leading South African politicians and Austrian diplomats attended matches and functions while on tour in which both countries attempted to assert their political identity and muscle in light of more dominant neighbours and colonial masters.

## Notes

1. See for example Matthias Marschik and Doris Sottopietra, '*Erbfeinde und Haßlieben*': *Konzept und Realität der Bewahrung Mitteleuropas im Sport* (Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2000); Roman Horak and Wolfgang Maderthaler, *Mehr als ein Spiel. Fußball und populäre Kulturen im Wien der Moderne* (Vienna: Löcker 1997); Pierre Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor, *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers* (Oxford: Berg 2001); Matthias Marschik, "'They Lived like Heroes". Arbeitsemigration im österreichischen Fußball der dreißiger Jahre', *Spectrum der Sportwissenschaften* 7, no. 2 (1995): 14–29; Matthias Marschik, 'Wiener Melange. Fußball in Österreich 1918–1939', in *Fussball zwischen den Kriegen. Europa 1918–1939*, eds Christian Koller and Fabian Brändle (Vienna and Berlin: LIT, 2010), 245–64.
2. See for example Dean Allen, 'Tours of Reconciliation: Rugby, War and Reconstruction in South Africa, 1891–1907', *Sport in History* 27, no. 2 (2007): 172–89; Chris Bolsmann, 'South African Football Tours at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Amateurs, Pioneers and Profits', *African Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (2010): 91–112; Chris Bolsmann, 'The 1899 Orange Free State Football Team

- Tour of Europe: "Race", Imperial Loyalty and Sporting Contest', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 1 (2011): 81–97; and Geoff Levett, 'Constructing Imperial Identity: The 1907 South African Cricket Tour of England', in *Empire and Cricket: The South African Experience, 1884–1914*, eds Bruce Murray and Goolam Vahed (Pretoria: University of South Africa, Unisa Press, 2009).
3. In particular, see the special issues of the *Journal of Tourism History*, 5, no. 2 (2013) and 'Australia's Asian Sporting Context: 1920s–1930s', *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 15, no. 4 (2012). See also John Benson, 'Athletics, Class and Nation: The Oxford-Cambridge University Tour of Canada and the United States of America, 1901', *Sport in History*, 33, no. 1 (2013): 1–18; Gabe Logan, 'Pilgrims Progress in Chicago: Three English Soccer Tours to the Second City 1905–1909', *Soccer and Society*, 11, no. 3 (2010): 190–201; Matthew McDowell, 'Queen's Park FC in Copenhagen, 1898–1903: Paradoxes in Early Transnational Amateurism', *Idrottsforum* (published online 14 May 2014); and Matthew McDowell, "'To Cross the Skager Rack". Discourses, Images, and Tourism in Early "European" Football: Scotland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Scandinavia, 1898–1914', *Soccer and Society*, <http://idrottsforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/mcdowell140514.pdf> (published online 11 April 2016).
  4. Barbara, J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).
  5. Reinhard Krammer, 'Die Turn- und Sportbewegung', in *Österreich 1918–1938. Geschichte der Ersten Republik*, eds Erika Weinzierl and Kurt Skalník (Graz, Austria, Vienna and Köln, Germany: Böhlau, 1983), 731–43; Klaus Matscheko, 'Sport und Austrofaschismus. Die Entwicklung vom pluralistischen Sportwesen der 1. Republik zur Einheitssportfront im österreichischen Ständestaat 1934–1938', MA thesis, Vienna 2000; Matthias Marschik, 'Sport im Austrofaschismus', in *Austrofaschismus. Beiträge über Politik, Ökonomie und Kultur*, eds Emmerich Tálos and Wolfgang Neugebauer, 3rd edn (Münster, London, Vienna: LIT 2005), 372–89.
  6. Keys, *Globalizing Sport*, 11; see also Tony Collins, *Rugby League in Twentieth Century Britain: A Social and Cultural History* (London: Routledge, 2006) for a discussion of working-class solidarity in Australian and English rugby league tours.
  7. Marschik, 'Sport im Austrofaschismus'.
  8. Paul Dietschy, 'Making Football Global? FIFA, Europe, and the Non-European Football World, 1912–74', *Journal of Global History* 8 (2013): 279–98.
  9. Harald Oelrich, *Sportgeltung, Weltgeltung: Sport im Spannungsfeld der Deutsch-italienischen Außenpolitik von 1918 bis 1945* (Berlin, Hamburg, Münster, Germany: LIT, 2003), 334.
  10. David Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round: A Global History of Soccer* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2006), 139.
  11. Matthias Marschik, *Vom Herrenspiel zum Männersport: Modernismus – Meisterschaft – Massenspektakel: Die ersten dreißig Jahre Fußball in Wien* (Vienna: Turia und Kant, 1997), 99.
  12. Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 195.
  13. Roman Horak and Wolfgang Maderthaner, *Mehr als ein Spiel: Fußball und populäre Kulturen im Wien der Moderne* (Vienna: Löcker, 1997), 18.

14. Andreas Tröscher, 'Torlos für die Ewigkeit – oder: Als in Döbling die Rampen barsten. Österreich-Italien 0:0. 15. April 1923, Hohe Warte – Wien', in *Sternstunden der österreichischen Nationalmannschaft*, ed. Matthias Marschik (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2008), 71–84.
15. Wolfgang Maderthaner and Roman Horak, 'Die Eleganz des runden Leders', in *Die Eleganz des runden Leders. Wiener Fußball 1920–1965*, eds Wolfgang Maderthaner, Alfred Proser and Roman Horak (Göttingen, Germany: Die Werkstatt, 2008), 26–48.
16. Robert Franta and Wolfgang Weisgram, *Ein rundes Leben. Hugo Meisl – Goldgräber des Fußballs* (Vienna: Egoth, 2005), 132; Huw Richards, 'Austria and Hungary: The Danubian School', in *The Cambridge Companion to Football*, eds Rob' Steen, Jed Nowick and Huw Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 49–64; Jonathan Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid: The History of Soccer Tactics* (London: Orion Publishing, 2009), 55. Professional leagues were introduced in Hungary in 1925 and Czechoslovakia in 1926. Matthias Marschik, *Massen – Mentalitäten – Männlichkeit: Fußballkulturen in Wien* (Weitra, Austria: Bibliothek der Provinz, 2005), 66.
17. Matthias Marschik and Doris Sottopietra, '*Erbfeinde und Haßlieben*': *Konzept und Realität der Bewahrung Mitteleuropas im Sport* (Münster, Germany: Lit Verlag, 2000); Matthias Marschik, "'Mitropa": Representations of "Central Europe" in Football', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 36 (2001): 7–23; Andreas Hafer and Wolfgang Hafer, *Hugo Meisl oder: Die Erfindung des modernen Fußballs. Eine Biographie* (Göttingen, Germany: Die Werkstatt, 2007), 132.
18. Werner Skrentny, 'Hakoahs Exodus. Importe für die US-Profiligen', in *Davidstern und Lederball. Die Geschichte der Juden im deutschen und internationalen Fußball*, ed. Dietrich Schulze-Marmeling (Göttingen, Germany: Die Werkstatt, 2007); and Bernhard Hachleitner, 'Bannerträger jüdischer Stärke. Die Wiener Hakoah als Vorbild für hunderte Vereine in aller Welt', in '*... mehr als ein Sportverein*' *100 Jahre Hakoah Wien 1909–2009* (Innsbruck, Austria: Studienverlag, 2009), 131–49.
19. Leo Schidrowitz, *Geschichte des Fußballsports in Österreich* (Vienna: Traunau 1951), 184 and 190.
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21. Dean Allen, 'South African Cricket, Imperial Cricketers and Imperial Expansion, 1850–1910', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25, no. 4 (2008): 443–71.
22. Chris Bolsmann, 'South African Football Tours at the Turn of Twentieth Century: Amateurs, Pioneers and Profits', *African Historical Review* 42, no. 1 (2010): 91–112. See also Peter Alegi, 'Playing to the Gallery: Sport, Cultural Performance, and Social Identity in South Africa, 1920s–1945', *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 35, no. 1 (2002): 17–38.
23. Chris Bolsmann, 'The 1899 Orange Free State Football Team of Europe: "Race", Imperial Loyalty and Sports Spectacle', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 1 (2011): 81–97.
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25. Chris Bolsmann, 'White Football in South Africa: Empire, Apartheid and Change, 1892–1977', *Soccer & Society* 11, nos. 1–2 (2010): 29–45.

26. South African Football Association Annual General Meeting March 7, 1936 Historical Papers Collection, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand AG3827.
27. See *Rand Daily Mail*, May 15, 1936 by way of example. The STFA organised nine senior open male white leagues in Johannesburg during this period as compared to four in rugby.
28. 'Continental Teams for S.A.', *Rand Daily Mail*, May 12, 1936, 16.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Southern Transvaal Football Association Minutes of the Emergency Committee, May 18, 1936.
32. Southern Transvaal Football Association Minutes of the Emergency Committee, July 10, 1936.
33. 'Südafrika erwartet die Fußballmannschaft des WAC', *Sport-Tagblatt*, June 4, 1936, 2.
34. 'Vor einer Fusion zwischen WAC. und FC. Wien?', *Reichspost*, June 14, 1936, 20.
35. 'Der FC Wien übernimmt Südafrikareise', *Sport-Tagblatt*, June 13, 1936, 3.
36. 'Vienna Athletic Club's South African Tour', *Rand Daily Mail*, June 5, 1936, 18.
37. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
39. 'Seven Internationals in Brilliant Vienna Soccer Team for Union', *Rand Daily Mail*, June 16, 1936, 18.
40. 'Der Fußballsport in Südafrika', *Das kleine Blatt*, June 25, 1936, 14.
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42. Pierre Lanfranchi, 'Fußball in Europa 1920–1938. Die Entwicklung eines internationalen Netzwerkes', in *Die Kanten des runden Leders. Beiträge zur europäischen Fußballkultur*, eds Roman Horak and Wolfgang Reiter (Vienna: Promedia, 1991), 163–72; and David Forster, Bernhard Hachleitner, Robert Hummer, and Robert Franta, *Die Legionäre. Österreichs Fußballer in aller Welt*, 2nd ed. (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2013).
43. Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 66.
44. 'Austrian Soccerites Nonplus the Griquas', *Diamond Field Advertiser*, July 16, 1936, 11.
45. 'F. C. Wiens erster Sieg in Südafrika', *Sport-Tagblatt*, July 17, 1936, 3.
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47. 'Austrian Soccer Players Open Tour with Big Win', *Rand Daily Mail*, July 16, 1936, 17.
48. 'Soccer as Public Entertainment. Austrians Par Excellence in This Role', *Rand Daily Mail*, July 18, 1936, 18.
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50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. 'Austrians Open Their Tour', *The Star*, July 13, 1936, 23.
53. 'The Austrians at the Wanderers', *The Star*, July 17, 1936, 28.
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56. Ibid.
57. 'Third Draw in Four Matches', *The Natal Mercury*, July 27, 1936, 23.

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61. 'First International Match', *Rand Daily Mail*, August 1, 1936, 20.
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64. 'Tendency to Play the Man: Austrian View of S.A. Soccer', *Rand Daily Mail*, August 11, 1936, 18.
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69. 'Ein Sieg des F. C. Wien in Johannesburg', *Sport-Tagblatt*, August 14, 1936, 5.
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76. South African Football Association Annual General Meeting, March 6, 1937 Historical Papers Collection, William Cullen Library, University of the Witwatersrand AG3827.
77. Quoted in Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 65.
78. See Matthew Taylor, 'Editorial – Sport, Transnationalism, and Global History', *Journal of Global History* 8, no. 2 (2013): 199–208.
79. 'Kapstadt erwartet die Wiener Fußballer', *Sport-Tagblatt*, July 13, 1936, 2.
80. 'Südafrika erwartet die Fußballmannschaft des WAC', *Sport-Tagblatt*, June 4, 1936, 2.
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