SPORTS CONTACTS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH AFRICA

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The staging of the 1984 Olympic Games on American soil has had a major impact on the extent of sports exchanges between South Africa and the United States over the past four years.

Shortly after President Reagan was inaugurated, the State Department was suddenly flooded with visa applications for no less than seven South African teams to visit the United States. South African officials correctly assessed that Reagan would follow a different line on sports contacts than under the Carter Administration. Within months visas had been granted for the Springbok Rugby team to play 3 matches in the United States after the completion of their highly controversial tour of New Zealand. The visas were granted in spite of a threatened boycott of the Olympics by the African nations.

Domestic protest around the matches was tremendous. Five cities cancelled matches; the Houses of Representatives voted 200-198 in favor of a non-binding resolution to keep the Springboks out; the US and International Olympic Committees pleaded with the State Department to cancel; Nigeria threatened to cut off oil to the US; the United Nations criticized the Administration. But the Boks were allowed to come. Of the 3 matches played, two were played in secret, including
the test match which took place on a farm field in upstate New York. The only public match took place in Albany, New York where 3,000 demonstrators protested on a cold rainy Tuesday night. They outnumbered spectators by more than 6 to 1.

Many believe that protest opened the Administration's eyes to the possibility of an all-white, all-Western Olympics in Los Angeles that could cause very serious domestic protest in Los Angeles. While Reagan seemed unconcerned about a Soviet-led boycott, he was suddenly very concerned about domestic protest regarding an all-white games.

The result was that the visa applications for the other South African teams were quietly rejected. The word was out that there would be no more teams from South Africa in American until after the 1984 Games. There have been none.

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN RESPONSE**

But South Africa knew it had a great deal to gain if it could provoke an African boycott, especially before it was certain that the Soviet Union and other countries would withdraw. If Africa alone were to boycott, then the American public might perceive that Black Africa was the spoiler of THE AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF THE 80'S. The public might then become susceptible to the claim of the apartheid regime that anti-Communist and pro-American South Africa was our real friend. In response to this, the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa has changed its strategy so that it will not boycott games in a simplistic response to South Africa's provocations. The Supreme Council decided that rather than to isolate independent Africa by boycotting events like the Olympics that it would hammer away for the total isolation of the South African racists and the accomplices. Thus they have targeted Britain for action at the 1986 Commonwealth Games rather than
themselves being forced to boycott Los Angeles in response to the 1984 British rugby tour of South Africa.

Denied competition with their teams in order to suit Reagan's pragmatic political purposes, the South Africans opened the bank vaults to lure American athletes into competing with South African athletes. Golf and tennis were the sports where South Africa was most successful in enticing American individual athletes. Of the 103 American entries for the two 1983 Register(s) of Sports Contacts with South Africa, 54 were from those two sports. Most of the others were from relatively minor sports like water skiing, trampolining, surfing, etc. South Africa staged the richest tennis and golf events in the world in 1983 and succeeded in getting big names like Jimmy Connors, Chris Evert-Lloyd, Andrea Jaeger, Billy Jean King, Johnny Miller and Lee Trevino to come. The lesser events brought most of the others — men and women whose careers were either just beginning or ending.

Protest against individuals competing in and with South Africans has always been a difficult and frequently unrewarding task. Yet such events brought strong reactions in some segments of the sports and entertainment communities in the United States. Led by Arthur Ashe and Harry Belafonte, more than 100 top figures joined Artists and Athletes Against Apartheid in an effort to convince their colleagues not to go to South Africa. While it is too early to judge their effectiveness, all the signs are most promising. Athletes like John McEnroe persist in refusing to be tempted by million dollar paydays. But more will have to follow his lead. To date, the cultural boycott has seemingly had more success against individuals.
South Africa is taking nothing for granted as it continues its attempt to break out of sports isolation. Christian Barnard once made South Africa famous for heart transplants. Now three "transplanted" South Africans are grabbing the sports headlines in 1984. Sydney Maree and Zola Budd, South Africa's greatest runners, have suddenly become citizens of the United States and Great Britain, respectively. Both are likely to compete on their new nations' Olympic teams. No less than six other lesser-known South African transplants will be competing in Los Angeles for their new countries: Israel, Portugal, the Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Botswana and Lesotho.

The third person is Gerrie Coetzee, the WBA heavyweight boxing champion. Now living in America, he claims he will apply for citizenship. He is scheduled to fight Larry Holmes for the over-all championship later this year. Holmes has been promised more than $12.3 million to break his career-long pledge that he would never fight a South Africa. This was a great blow to the anti-apartheid community.

These transplants claim to abhor apartheid. The press extols their virtues as non-racial sportsmen and women. Yet Sydney Maree calls for an end to South Africa's isolation and Coetzee becomes a blatant propagandist for the racist regime. Only this week he told SPORT'S ILLUSTRATED's Lynn Darling, "I'm still proud to be a South African. I believe the government is making huge steps toward the right principles. There are changes every day, life is changing for the better. They are helping people."

FUTURE SPORTS CONTACTS WITH SOUTH AFRICA

There is little doubt that by mid-August of 1984 there will be a
number of visa applications for South African teams in Washington. If the Reagan Administration is returned to office in November, then their stamp of approval will be forthcoming and South Africa will be helped out of its team isolation.

Anti-apartheid groups across the country must be ever-watchful for signs of applications so that protests can be mounted. Activists or concerned citizens should immediately contact groups that are active in the sports boycott (a list is attached) and the United Nations Special Committee Against Apartheid, and the Organization of African Unity. As has been proven in every case where a South African team either came to the United States or was slated to do so, effective protests can be mobilized and South Africa's potential propaganda coup can be turned into a blow against apartheid. The sports boycott is unique and it is up to the anti-apartheid organizations to maintain its effectiveness.

ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE ON THE SPORTS BOYCOTT

American Coordinating Committee for Equality in Sport and Society (ACCESS)
c/o Center for the Study of Sport in Society
Northeastern University
360 Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02115
(617) 437-3982

American Committee on Africa
198 Broadway
New York, NY 10038
(212) 962-1210

Athletes and Artists Against Apartheid
c/o TransAfrica
545 Eighth Street, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20003
(202) 547-2550

International Campaign Against Racism in Sport (ICARIS)
P.O. Box 59364
Chicago, IL 60659 01
(312)677-7416

South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee
P.O. Box 235
London NW3 5TS
United Kingdom
01-435 8142