

HISTORICAL SURVEY OF RAND STADIUM 1949- 1987 AND PRELIMINARY STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Sue Krige

September 2006

Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Origins of Rand Stadium	2
Construction and Development of Rand Stadium 1951-1959	3
Professionalisation of Football and the City Take over of Rand Stadium 1958 -1963	4
Improvements made Under City Auspices 1960s	5
Apartheid and Rand Stadium	6
International Developments and Rand Stadium – the 1970s	6
Apartheid, ‘Multi-National’ Soccer and the Rand Stadium - the 1970s.....	7
Television and Rand Stadium – The 1970s.....	8
‘Mixed’ Boxing at Rand Stadium	8
The Eclipse of Rand Stadium – the 1980s	9
Conclusion: Significance of Rand Stadium and Associated Structures	9
Recommendations	10

Introduction

This report gives an overview of the history of the Stadium until 1986. Time constraints have precluded a more in depth study. The report outlines the structures within the boundaries of Rand Stadium. It lists the buildings older than 50 years built between 1951 and 1955, including the stadium itself. It also deals with structures built during the 1960s. Footnotes indicate the wide range of sources consulted during a short period of time.

Origins of Rand Stadium

The establishment of Rand Stadium was the direct consequence of the relocation of Wanderers Club. The Wanderers grounds were expropriated by South African railways, as the area was earmarked for new Johannesburg Station in Braamfontein. In 1945 the Club was given six months to move. There was a major public outcry to save a site 'hallowed by a thousand memories of great incidents and occasions... a cradle of traditions which cannot be transplanted.' Ironically, it was a soccer match which sealed the fate of this ground. Gross overcrowding at a 'wildly popular soccer final' in August 1945 demonstrated that Wanderers simply did not have the capacity to host such games. In spite of this, a lengthy court battle ensued and the final leave taking ceremony took place in October 1947. The new clubhouse and facilities were built at what was Kent Park, now Illovo, where Wanderers is today.¹

However, the new Wanderers did not offer a suitable stadium for soccer matches. In the Northern suburbs, soccer was not as popular a sport as in the southern suburbs, and rugby took pride of place. Its members also prided themselves on the club's grandeur and elite nature. This cost the Club a considerable amount of income in its early years in Illovo.² Wanderers was too small, too far and probably too expensive for players from elsewhere in Johannesburg, particularly the Southern Suburbs.

In November 1948, the Johannesburg City Council (JCC) agreed to lease 4.7 morgen of land at Hector Norris Park, south of the city, near Wemmer Pan for 30 years to the Southern Transvaal Football Association (STFA). The STFA began

¹ Thelma Gutshe, *Old Gold: The History of the Wanderers Club* (Howard Timmins, 1966)

² Ibid

planning the construction of a substantial football stadium, in spite of 'conditions of high and mounting costs which have followed the war'.³

Construction and Development of Rand Stadium 1951-1959

The STFA borrowed £ 60,000 to build Rand Stadium. A foundation plaque on the Stadium indicates that construction was commenced in November 1949, and a second, unveiled in 1952, indicates the members of the Board of Control of SATF in 1949.

Plans at the City of Johannesburg Plans Office cover the period 1951-55 only, when the stadium was built and owned by STFA. The following buildings were constructed:

Stadium seating 15 000 people	1951
Scoreboard Tower	1951
Men's and Women's Toilets, Blocks 1-5	1951
Native Toilet	1951
Groundsman's Cottage	1951 with additions 1953
Dormitory Block	1951-2
New Lavatory Blocks	19512
New Storeroom [However, plans have <i>Cancelled</i> written across them]	1952
Garage	1954
Gate wall and cash boxes	1955

See JPEG Attached

From November 1952, the JCC had an agreement with STFA concerning the rentals to be paid. This included percentages of gross takings from matches, gross income from sub-letting for other activities, and radio broadcast rights, and sums received from foundation members.

³ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 29 April 1958

Financial problems plagued the STFA, to the extent that no building could take place after 1955. The JCC minutes noted that in 1956, STFA could not afford to build its own change rooms, and had to hire premises from the Council. By the end of 1957 it was unable to pay rent due to the Council, and would have 'difficulty financing visits from teams from elsewhere'. The Council agreed to waive amounts owed and put in place a moratorium in respect of loan interest and share of gate receipts for a period of seven years from January 1958, after which the original lease agreements would be reinstated. STFA had to agree to undertake no capital projects during this time without Council approval.⁴

Professionalisation of Football and the City Take over of Rand Stadium 1958 - 1963

In 1959 the National Football League (NFL) was launched as the country's first entirely professional club league. It was reserved for Whites only. During 1958 and 1959 major amateur soccer clubs turned professional and were unwilling to negotiate with the STFA for the use of the Rand Stadium for professional matches. As a result the STFA found its self in serious financial difficulties. This advent of professional football on the Witwatersrand in 1959 made the City look closely at the 'possible effects on the Council's substantial investment in the Stadium'. STFA applied to the City for permission to hire out the ground for professional football in the 1960 season. The City argued that 'this would lead to a profound change in the policy which led the Council to lease the Stadium'. The policy had been to foster amateur football and to ensure that at least one premier league match was played at the Stadium every Saturday. Now that so many soccer clubs had turned professional, the lease needed to be revised, to protect the Council's investment.

The previous (1958) moratorium was to be cancelled from 1 January 1960, except for mortgage payments. Agreements regarding leases to professional football clubs had to be approved by Council.⁵ In July 1960 the City decided to cancel the lease and the mortgage bond, as the hiring of the Stadium for professional matches had not improved the finances of STFA. There would be negotiations on the amount to

⁴ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 29 April 1958

⁵ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 8 December 1959

be paid to STFA in compensation.⁶ The City took possession of the Stadium in January 1961.⁷ In May 1963, the City paid STFA R120,956 in compensation.⁸ STFA challenged this and was finally awarded R290,000 in July 1963.

Improvements made Under City Auspices 1960s

NB Plans for work done under the City auspices are non-existent, as is the case with many city-owned buildings.

In mid-1962, Parks and Recreation Department, under whom the Rand Stadium fell, applied for R50,000 for much-needed change rooms within the Rand Stadium enclosure.⁹ In July 1963, a special meeting of the Council noted that circumstances demanded major improvements to the stadium. They were:

- Advent and expansion of professional soccer
- Visits from international/overseas teams
- Need to host national soccer fixtures

The Parks and Recreation Department requested R70,000 for improvements to the booking offices, replacement of existing unsafe seating and provision of extra seating and lighting, particularly in the parking area. The seating capacity needed to be increased to 50,000. The amount of R70,000 would not be enough to cover this.¹⁰

STFA was being challenged in other ways by the National Football League on its home ground. In June 1963, the NFL requested permission to exercise jurisdiction over the 'new trophy room at Rand Stadium', in effect granting it permission to 'have its headquarters at the Rand Stadium.' The NFL proposed 'to furnish the building' at its own cost. The Department of Parks and Recreation raised no objections, but said that agreements had to be reached with the JCC and the STFA. Permission was granted after consultation with the Clerk of the Council.¹¹

⁶ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 27 September 1960

⁷ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 31 January 1961

⁸ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 28 May 1963

⁹ Special Meeting of JHB City Council, 31 July 1962

¹⁰ Special Meeting of JHB City Council, 30 July 1963

¹¹ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 25 June 1963

In the period June 1964 to July 1965, extensive alterations were carried out. These included

- Additional change rooms
- Club rooms
- First Aid Room
- VIP Stand
- Additional seating¹²

Apartheid and Rand Stadium

There were separate toilet facilities for 'natives' on the 1951 plans. It is not clear if there was a separate stadium section for 'non whites' from 1951. Rand Stadium seems to have admitted Black spectators, by virtue of a permit from the Department of Community Development. More heavy handed apartheid policies made themselves felt by 1969. In 1969, the JCC minutes noted that a section of 4-5000 seats was to be set aside for 'non whites', 'demarcated by tubular piping barriers'. However, the South African Police demanded that there should be a 6 foot high barrier fence 'to prevent encroachment' from either side'. When the City objected, the SAPS threatened to withdraw the existing permit if this was not constructed.¹³ The fence was erected at a cost of R1,000. It is not clear if traces of the tubing or fence exist.

International Developments and Rand Stadium – the 1970s

There is no space here to go into SA's racially divided football bodies relationships with the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA). Suffice to say that these did impact on the use of the Rand Stadium. In 1973 the FIFA executive gave special permission to the white Football Association of South Africa to have overseas teams participate in the South African Games in Pretoria, asking for assurance that Blacks would be allowed to watch the games.

However, FIFA withdrew the special permission it had given to amateur football teams to take part in the South African Games, when it became clear that FASA is planning separate teams for different racial and even possibly ethnic groups. FIFA

¹² Annual Report of the Department of Parks and Recreation July 1964 to June 1965

¹³ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 27 May 1969

had temporarily lifted suspension on the FASA on the understanding that the Games would be multi-racial.

Apartheid, 'Multi-National' Soccer and the Rand Stadium - the 1970s

The Minister of Sport and Recreation, Dr. P.G.J. Koornhof, announced in the House of Assembly that the Government had given approval

'for the staging in 1974 of an open national soccer tournament in which the different South African nations can participate on a multinational basis. This is so that a South African representative white team, a South African representative Coloured team, a South African representative Indian team and a South African representative Zulu, Xhosa or any other Bantu (sic) national team can compete in the tournament.'¹⁴

The popularity of soccer among Black people put it at the forefront of these cosmetic changes. On March 27 and 31 1973, 45,000 fans crammed into Rand Stadium, which had capacity for 32,000. A Whites-only team defeated a Blacks-only team twice in the 'in the 'multi-national' South African Games (4-0; 3-1). The Embassy Multinational Series at the Rand Stadium in 1974 was set up in a similar way. The White team won 2-0, after the first goal scored by the Black team was disallowed. In a dangerously overcrowded stadium, Blacks were squeezed behind barbed wire fencing. Tempers flared, the crowd threw missiles and the referee fled the field before half time. The second half saw the defeat of the Black team, one of whom was Jomo Sono.

Things became even more tense at the government sanctioned 'Chevrolet Champion of Champions' series between white and black clubs. A near riot at Rand Stadium occurred between Hellenic and Kaiser Chiefs when Hellenic scored from an apparently offside position. Both these series illustrated how 'multinational football was a festering time bomb that is ready to explode at any time'. South Africa was expelled from FIFA in 1976. In the same year the new Football Council of South Africa brought together whites, blacks and two

¹⁴ [www.sahistory.org.za]

minor Coloured and Indian organisations, under the leadership of George Thabe.¹⁵

Television and Rand Stadium – The 1970s

The advent of television in 1975 saw major changes to the lighting and use of Rand Stadium. R 140,000 was spent on TV lighting and another 2,000 on flood lighting.¹⁶ From 1978 to 1983, the Council and Department of Parks and Recreation pleaded for the expansion of sports facilities, and the construction of an indoor multipurpose stadium. Rand Stadium, along with Ellis Park, was identified as one of the stadiums to be enlarged, to accommodate 'expected crowds'. The Council spent money on upgrading Hector Norris Park, which was next door to Rand Stadium. By the mid 1970s, Hector Norris Park had become a mixed sports facility of note, with extra soccer fields.

The advent of television coincided with the National Party's policy of allowing of 'multinational' and multi-racial sports events. JCC minutes noted that, 'in particular, major venues such as Rand Stadium, Hector Norris Park and Ellis Park should be enlarged to cope with the large crowds expected'. Lighting should be improved and comply with television standards. It also made extension of toilet facilities for 'non whites' a priority.¹⁷ It is not clear what improvements were made at Rand stadium.

'Mixed' Boxing at Rand Stadium

The first 'mixed' bout in South Africa (between a black and a white fighter) took place in Johannesburg on December 1, 1973 when Bob Foster retained his world light heavyweight title against Pierre Fourie¹⁸. At the time the attendance figure of 37 4704 spectators, the gate money of approximately R500,000, and the guaranteed purse of \$200 000, were world records for the light-heavyweight division.¹⁹

¹⁵ *African Soccer Mirror*, quoted in Peter Alegi *Laduma! : soccer, politics and society in South Africa* Scottsville, South Africa : University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, c2004., 140-1

¹⁶ Minutes of Ordinary Meeting of JHB City Council, 24 June 1976

¹⁷ Annual Report of the Department of Parks and Recreation July 1975 to June 1976

¹⁸ www.superboxing.co.za, 'Firsts in SA boxing', by Ron Jackson

¹⁹ www.sahistory.org.za/pages/people/fourie-pj.htm

The Eclipse of Rand Stadium – the 1980s

By 1983, Rand Stadium no longer appears in City minutes or reports as a target for major upgrading. Reasons for this need more research. It was eclipsed by the improvements and or building of other stadia, and the emergence of corporate sponsored structures, the first of which was the Standard Bank Arena. There was also a decline in the number of whites watching football.²⁰

From the mid 1980s, it was used for other activities besides soccer. It was one of the hosts for SA Games in 1986. Between 1986 and 1987 the following events took place, demonstrating its mixed use and lower status:

- STFA played 218 games
- National Professional Soccer League played 63 games
- Special events
 - # Nashua Road Race attracted 20,000 people
 - # International Boxing attracted 15,000 people
 - # Two Rock festivals attracted 8000 and 1000 people
 - # Jehovah's Witnesses Rally 30,000 people²¹

Conclusion: Significance of Rand Stadium and Associated Structures

The Stadium structure is significant because:

- It was important in permanently locating both white amateur and professional soccer in the southern areas of the city after the Second World War
- It was directly affected by national trends in soccer, particularly the professionalisation of the game. It represents the dilemma faced by the City and white amateur soccer associations of how to keep access to sports facilities open to all whites, in this context.
- It was one of the sites where the apartheid government enforced spectator apartheid in a gross and humiliating manner, which lead to great racial tension and near riots

²⁰ Peter Alegi *Laduma! : soccer, politics and society in South Africa, p141*

²¹ Annual Report of the Department of Parks and Recreation, July 1986 to June 1987

- It was one of the most significant sites where the apartheid government (with corporate sponsors) 'played out' its multi-national sports policy in response to FIFA hostility. Indeed the apartheid government identified soccer as a priority in this policy. Ironically this policy led to great racial tension and near riots at Rand Stadium in the mid 1970s.
- It represents clearly the impact of television on sport and on soccer in particular

Recommendations

Therefore the Stadium as a whole itself should be conserved in a way sensitive to its significance. The role of the pavilion in its history is obscure. Care should be taken when considering the future of this structure. The scoreboard tower should be preserved. *It is important that the location of segregated seating be identified before enhancements are made to the stadium.*

Beyond the stadium itself, none of the structures older than 50 years has any great significance, beyond the significance of the Stadium structure itself. There should be some effort made to remember the structures, including the segregated amenities, and their relationship to the stadium. Structures built in the 1960s have little significance in the history of the stadium. Again, there should be some effort made to remember the structures, including the segregated amenities, and their relationship to the stadium.