Following the Ball: The Migration of African Soccer Players Across the Portuguese Colonial Empire, 1949–1975, by Todd Cleveland

Kraig Larkin

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Association portrayed football as an instrument for educating people who were in need of guidance and as a game which thus benefited society as a whole.

The experimental approach is taken the furthest in the second history, in which Piercey undertakes a fictionalized journey through the Rotterdam of August 1914, just after the Dutch army has mobilized in response to increasing international tensions. He ‘meets’ a myriad of football enthusiasts and ‘discusses’ their love for the game, but leaves the reader feeling a bit unsatisfied. Not only because the fictional elements raise questions about the academic significance of his projections, but also because they do not offer insights into the way broader historical developments, like war and arising nationalism, influenced the lives of ordinary (sports) people.

The third history is more similar to the first history, as daily newspapers are used to examine how discourses about football and discourses about values were intertwined in early twentieth Dutch society. Here, Piercey suggests again that football was part of wider disciplinary strategies, which certainly holds case, but as an explanatory factor remains somewhat one-dimensional. Social and educational initiatives—including sport—cannot be reduced to the endeavour for docility and social control alone, while players and spectators did have agency to cope with disciplinary tactics in their own best interests.

In the last history, Piercey offers a familiar glimpse into the disappointments that are often part of the historical profession. Studying the diaries of C.J.K. van Aalst (1866–1939), one of the most important Dutch captains of industry and main financier of the Amsterdam Sportpark, he hoped to encounter references to great matches, discussions about sport and business, and ideas about the value of sport, only to find none. He uses his findings, or lack thereof, to reflect on the way historical narratives are designed, structured, written and produced. Readers interested in factual Dutch sports history will find this chapter least relevant.

From a theoretical point-of-view, *Four Histories* is a valuable contribution to more traditional approaches to sports history, as it emphasizes the constructed character of history writing and the defining position of the historian as a historical actor. By using Foucauldian theories, Piercey provides useful insights into the way football—and sport—was connected to wider social and educational initiatives, although the influence of disciplinary thinking should not be overstressed. A definite history about football in the Netherlands between 1910 and 1920 the book is not, and the author never claims it to be. Piercey envisages *Four Histories* to be a stimulus for further research and thinking about the past. ‘These have been my histories, my proposals. What do you think?’ (p. 176).

Jelle Zondag
*Radboud University Nijmegen*
✉ jelle.zondag@let.ru.nl

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*Following the Ball* is a transnational history of football players in the Portuguese colonies and their migration to Portuguese clubs and the national team in the final quarter
century of the repressive Estado Novo (New State). Todd Cleveland’s central argument revolves around the active roles that the footballers themselves played in shaping their experiences, both within the colonial territories and the metropole. Admittedly, the strategies that players could deploy were often impacted by the Salazar regime, such as the limitations that prevented players from playing for foreign clubs and state surveillance. Despite such restrictions, Cleveland is able to demonstrate through oral histories and contemporary media that players were not inherently tools of empire. In so doing, Cleveland draws attention to how and why scholars must be mindful of the aspirations and interests of the players, both professionally and off the pitch.

Following a brief introduction, the first chapter provides an overview of the Portuguese empire, Lusotropicalism (the belief that Portugal was uniquely positioned and better at colonizing), and the sport’s arrival in the colonies. Though its introduction may have been tied to cultural imperialism and attempts to control the colonial body, soccer proved to be immensely popular within the Portuguese African territories, in part because it provided a space in which Africans could safely interact with Portuguese settlers, thereby ‘transcending the racial divides that pervaded every colonial setting’ (p. 36). Interest in the sport continued to grow as Portuguese clubs toured the colonies and especially when Africans began to play for teams in the metropole beginning with Mário Wilson and Júlio Cernadas Pereira in 1949. Chapter two concentrates on the adoption of soccer among the Africans, including makeshift balls and pickup games, the development of a ‘creolized’ style of play, the formation of organized leagues, and the use of tactics that prioritized structure over improvisation. Notably, Cleveland argues that indigenous soccer associations did not represent a form of anti-colonial resistance (p. 58) since players ‘were much more focused on playing well and advancing their careers than on the “the destruction of colonial power”’ (p. 76–77).

In chapter three, Cleveland traces the movement and assorted logistical, and political issues related to the migration of African players to the metropole, which the Estado Novo reluctantly enabled due to mounting pressures tied to decolonization, the Cold War, and poor performances by the national team. Club allegiances formed in the colonies, the pursuit of the best financial offer, fortuitous scouting, and familial connections (as in the case of Matateu and Vicente Lucas), as well as the opportunity to pursue an education (as in the case of several players who opted to play for Académica de Coimbra) helped determine which Portuguese teams players joined. Chapter 4 continues to focus on life and soccer in the metropole, touching upon housing, the adjustment to the professional game, and the ‘double duty’ of military service (p. 144). Two noteworthy claims in this chapter reiterate earlier arguments offered by Cleveland that soccer players within the Portuguese context experienced minimal racism on and off the pitch (p. 130) and that players were active agents in shaping their experiences through secondary migration (i.e., transferring to new clubs once they reached the metropole), such as Wilson’s 1951 transfer to Académica (p. 170). As evidence for the former, Cleveland points to mixed social relationships and marriages among players and Portuguese women, as well as the relative absence of ‘stacking’ African players at positions that presumably depended upon physical rather than intellectual ability (p. 140).

At the outset, Cleveland contends that most African players made the strategic decision to prioritize professionalism and practiced ‘conspicuous apoliticism throughout the turbulent period’ (p. 7). This represents the central focus of the final chapter, which explores how African players navigated the politically tumultuous environment following the outbreak of colonial wars of independence in the early 1960s. Here, following Benfica’s success against other European clubs and Portugal’s run to the 1966 World Cup
semifinals, the regime actively sought to appropriate the popularity of key players to symbolize that Portugal and its colonies remained ‘one nation’ (p. 180). Many players sought to appear apolitical, including Benfica’s star striker Eusébio. Others, including Wilson and Benfica midfielder Mário Coluna, repeatedly risked antagonizing the state by acting as ‘important elements for the decolonization of Africa’ engaging in dialogue with ‘subversive types’ (p. 192). Four dissident athletes fled Portugal following the conclusion of a 1962 summer tour to the African colonies (p. 195).

*Following the Ball* has surprisingly little to offer with respect to gender and its engagement with questions of national identity are limited, which is peculiar given the existence of independence movements. Cleveland occasionally refers to potential complications related to the deployment of Africans on the Portuguese national team, such as when foreign media questioned whether Eusébio should be permitted to take the pitch during the 1966 World Cup (p. 180) and offers a brief section on players who elected to remain in Africa, including Ernesto Baltazar, who recalled that ‘Mozambique was my country’ (p. 112). The limited engagement with this issue is all the more perplexing since Cleveland bookends the work with two anecdotes that demonstrate the legend’s emotional reaction to being defeated in the 1966 semifinals and his burial in the National Pantheon in 2014, both underscoring the deep but complicated relationship between the player and the nation. Still, *Following the Ball* represents an important addition because Cleveland successfully foregrounds players’ agency to demonstrate how they actively worked to make sense of the changes in their own lives and the Portuguese empire, even if their experiences were not uniform. In doing so, Cleveland illustrates the relationship between the histories of colonialism, sport, and labour.

Kraig Larkin
Colby-Sawyer College
kraig.larkin@colby-sawyer.edu

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Samantha Lane has stated that while the title *ROAR* is in reference to the ‘almighty, heartfelt roar’ that echoed through Princes Park oval in Melbourne, as the first ever AFLW match commenced in front of a capacity crowd, it could also be read as ‘raw’. The latter interpretation referencing the heartfelt profiles and interviews she brought together in the book from the game’s trailblazers and modern heroes.

Lane wrote *ROAR: The Stories Behind AFLW—A Movement Bigger Than Sport*, to celebrate and document the inaugural 2017 AFLW season. A season which saw women play in a first ever national Australian Football League (AFL)-sanctioned competition. The book was launched prior to the second season commencing in February 2018.

*ROAR* could be read in two parts and could almost be split into two books, albeit one would be a small offering of only 67 pages. The first section, a long introductory chapter titled, ‘State of Origins’, offers a very modern history of women’s Australian rules