

Football in North and South Korea  
c.1910-2002: Diffusion and  
Development

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## **Abstract**

Politics has been an integral part of Korean football since the Japanese colonial era when the game became a vehicle for the Korean independence movement. The split between North and South Korea following the Korean War further accentuated the intrusion of politics into the domain of Korean football. As Koreans residing on either side of the border followed the game with intense interest and often regarded performance in international competition as a signifier of national prestige, the governments of both North and South Korea attached more importance to football than to any other sport and became its foremost patrons. In these circumstances it is not surprising to find that the relative performance of the national teams of North and South Korea mirrored changing economic and political conditions. Thus the rapid rise of North Korean football in the 1960s was a reflection of the state's systematic and successful postwar reconstruction. Since the 1980s, however, South Korea, with its booming economy, has clearly surpassed its increasingly impoverished northern counterparts in the football field.

Undoubtedly, the most two important events pertaining to the development of Korean football were the 1966 and 2002 World Cups. They provided occasions when nationalist sentiment could be expressed through football in both North and South Korea. They also provided opportunities for Korean footballers, through their achievements on the field, to show that the gap between the traditional periphery and core of world football was narrowing. At the same time, participation in competition at this level, whether by teams from North or South Korea, suggested that there was a recognizable and distinctive Korean football style nurtured in training camps where the emphasis was on producing players with sufficient stamina to run at their opponents for ninety minutes. Tireless running football has been the characteristic of successful teams from both North and South Korea. Thus, while recognizing the profound ideological differences that separate North and South Korea, this thesis also emphasizes the football tradition and culture that ethnically homogenous Koreans have in common.

## List of Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Full Title</b>
<b>ACFC</b>	All Chosun Football Championship
<b>AFC</b>	Asian Football Confederation
<b>AGF</b>	Asian Games Federation
<b>ASF</b>	Australian Soccer Federation
<b>CIC</b>	Counter Intelligence Corps
<b>CONCACAF</b>	Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association Football Associations
<b>DCM</b>	Dehli Cloth Mills
<b>DPRK</b>	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
<b>FIFA</b>	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
<b>GANEFO</b>	The Games of the Newly Emerging Forces
<b>IAAF</b>	International Association of Athletics Federations
<b>IOC</b>	International Olympic Committee
<b>ISL</b>	International Sports & Leisure
<b>KASA</b>	Korea Amateur Sports Association
<b>KBS</b>	Korea Broadcasting Company
<b>KCIA</b>	Korean Central Intelligence Agency
<b>KFA</b>	Korea Football Association
<b>KSA</b>	Korea Sports Association
<b>MBC</b>	Munwha Broadcasting Company
<b>Park's Cup</b>	President Park Chung Hee's Cup Asia Football Tournament
<b>PMH</b>	Provost Marshal Headquarters
<b>UAR</b>	United Arab Republic
<b>UEFA</b>	Union of European Football Associations
<b>YMCA</b>	Young Men's Christian Association



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Many experienced scholars and my colleagues told me that researching any subject of history could make me feel lonely and frustrated at times before I attempted to begin this study for my PhD thesis. This advice was partly true. However 'doing PhD' also provided much pleasure which was derived from not only new findings but also those who gave me a great deal of interest and encouragement.

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Finally special appreciation must go to those closest to me. My wife, Kim Jong Soon always offered considerable academic and non-academic support for me and our cute baby, Lee Yun Ju has been a source of much pleasure. My mother has provided me with continuing reassurance and encouragement and my late father inspired me to have an interest in Korean cultural history. This thesis is dedicated to the memory of him.

## Introduction

### (1) An overview: a national game for the two Koreas

Over the course of the twentieth century the Korean people suffered a series of unusual and agonizing experiences: Japanese colonization, the Korean War, and then the division into two nation states, North and South Korea. The Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 gave rise to a movement for independence, and the ensuing struggle meant that anti-Japanese sentiments became deeply entrenched in the Korean psyche. However, it is unfortunate that the liberation from Japanese imperialism in 1945 was followed by the tragic Korean War (1950-53). After the split, North and South Korea rapidly fell into Cold War politics in which both camps attempted to defeat their neighbours in any field. These socio-political circumstances have contributed to the strong sense of national identity that exists in both North and South Korea and sport had played a major part in this process. All the modern sports introduced into Korea helped to foster the spirit of the independence under the Japanese and sports later turned into a high-profile battleground during the Cold War. As Ha and Mangan have argued, modern sport in Korea was essentially 'the consequence of its political priorities'<sup>1</sup>

Changes in Korean society over the years are clearly reflected in the history of Korean football. For the Koreans there has been no sport to surpass football in terms of its

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<sup>1</sup> Nam-gil Ha and J. Mangan, 'Ideology, Politics, Power: Korean Sport-Transformation, 1945-92', in Fan Hong and J. Mangan, (eds.), *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present*, London, 2002, 213.

popularity and national importance. During the Japanese colonization era, football emerged as a national game since it provided more victories over Japanese than did any other sport. This established a patriotic tradition that meant that the two Koreas attached great importance to football at the outset of the Cold War. The World Cup successes enjoyed by North Korea in 1966 and South Korea in 2002 exemplify the Korean effort to put their nations on the international map through football. As far as the totalitarian North Korean government was concerned their team's football's memorable feat in reaching the World Cup quarter-finals in 1966 provided evidence of how their post-war reconstruction and state-making programmes were on track. The miracle in England quickly became a source of North Korean national pride and for 36 years could be claimed as a unique achievement because no other Asian national team reached the quarter-finals until 2002.<sup>2</sup> In another sense, however, 1966 has evoked nostalgic feelings for North Koreans especially as it came to represent the summit of the nation's football achievement. In 36 years North Korean football never achieved the same level of success and disappointing performances on the field seem to have reflected the experience of an increasingly impoverished and internationally isolated society. In addition, periods of absence from international competition caused either by the ruling party's intervention or because of punishments prompted by the violent behaviour of its players, have not helped the development of North Korean football.

Ironically, North Korea's success in 1966 may have had a greater impact on South Korea where football development was significantly stimulated by the success of their northern neighbour. In a nation with a political culture characterized by pervasive anti-

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<sup>2</sup> Dong-gyu Lee et al., *Football: Past and Present*, Pyongyang, 2001, 140.

communism it was seen as important to match or even surpass North Korea's achievements and this prompted the government to inaugurate a new international football tournament, a significant watershed that established football as a component of South Korean national consciousness. Developments in South Korea were also influenced by the sudden emergence of Japan as a football power when its team captured the bronze medal at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. The traditional rivalry between Korea and Japan dating from the colonial era provided a further incentive for the South Korean military regime to encourage the game's development. Indeed, as one social critic has noted, 'Japan and North Korea supplied the two most important impetuses for [the government] to cultivate South Korean football'.<sup>3</sup> Thus, though it took a different form, state intervention was as important a characteristic of football development in the South as it was in the North. For both North and South Korea victories in football internationals, including the 'Korean Derby' were increasingly regarded as a matter of national prestige.

The success of South Korea in the 2002 World Cup, like the success of North Korea in 1966, had important ramifications. It was not just what happened on the field that was significant. South Korea's role as co-host in staging this global event sent out reassuring signals about the nation's ascent to the status of an advanced society. The real sensation, however, was brought about by South Koreans coming out to the streets. Crowds of passionate red-shirted people rooting for South Korean team at the City Hall plaza in Seoul, where a host of ordinary people had called for political reform from the authoritarian government in 1987, symbolized South Korea's internal shift to a more

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<sup>3</sup> Jun-man Kang, *Football is Korea: A 124-year History of Korean football (1882-2006)*, Seoul, 2006, 12.

democratically mature entity. 'This fervour over the World Cup', a Korean sociologist has observed, was 'about national pride, identity, and confidence'.<sup>4</sup> Against this social backdrop, the South Korean team manager, the Dutchman Guus Hiddink, emerged as a national hero. Every corner of South Korean society was awash with high praise on his leadership. South Koreans were particularly impressed by his impartial and pragmatic team selections. This seemed to defy the cronyism and favouritism which had become deeply ingrained in South Korea during the period of rapid economic development.

The wave of red in the streets, it has been argued, indicated that South Korea had begun to free itself from the endemic 'red complex' of pervasive anti-communism. The 'good old days' of North Korean football became a matter of common interest to Koreans on both sides of the border, especially when South Korea upset Italy at the stadium festooned with plastic cards reading 'Again 1966'. Significantly an edited hour-long version of this match was aired by the Korean broadcasting company, Chosun Joongang TV.<sup>5</sup> This was a very exceptional decision for North Korea. It might have been the intention to refresh fading memories of 1966 by broadcasting this match. In the context of the policy of appeasement towards the North being pursued at the time by the incumbent South Korean president, Kim Dae Jung, the 2002 World Cup helped to remind all Koreans of the proverb: 'blood is thicker than water'.

For all its positive effects, the 2002 World Cup generated some concerns about South Korean football. The fanatical World Cup fever surrounding the national team represented a marked contrast with the public indifference to local professional fixtures.

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<sup>4</sup> Gi-wook Shin, *Ethnic Nationalism in Korea: Genealogy, Politics, And Legacy*, Stanford, 2006, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *North Korea*, July 2006, 128.

This characteristic was rooted in early twentieth century Korean history when Korean football became inextricably bound up with nationalism and resentment of Japanese rule. Kang Jun Man has pointed out, that Koreans, are fond of obtaining 'values and meanings through football rather than football itself'.<sup>6</sup> It is undeniable that the Korean professional football league has been dwarfed by the immense popularity of 'FC Korea'. This phenomenon could also be attributable to a weak connection between the football clubs and regionalism. It is through baseball that regional identity in the South has been most strongly expressed. Thus there is a clear sporting demarcation. For South Korean sports enthusiasts, it is the performance of the national team in international competition that matters, while domestic baseball is their staple diet.

## **(2) The historiography of Korean football**

The existing literature on the history of football in Korea is not extensive. The Korea Football Association (KFA) sponsored two official histories published in 1986 and 2003. However, although these books provide an outline for understanding how the game in Korea has been transformed, they concentrate, to a considerable degree, on international matches which are looked at with an uncritical eye.<sup>7</sup> Later, in 2005, the KFA published a collection of biographies of six Korean football celebrities, including Cha Bum Kun, the all-time leading scorer for the South Korean national team, and Guus Hiddink, to mark their induction into the Korean Football Hall of Fame. This book came up with a few new facts but lacked any analytical perspective.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Kang, *Football is Korea*, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Korea Football Association (KFA), *A 100-year History of Korean Football*, Seoul, 1986 and 2003.

<sup>8</sup> KFA, *Korea Football Hall of Fame*, Seoul, 2005.

Former journalists have made a major contribution to the historiography of Korean football. *A National Pastime: Football and its Bright Morning* (1997) and *A National Pastime: Football and its Brilliant Traces* (1999) are both worthy of notice.<sup>9</sup> The former, in dealing with the Korean football during the colonial years, illustrates the story of Korean football's early development and diffusion through a myriad of colorful anecdotes. The latter indicates how Korean football has challenged to the World Cup following the years of the liberation onwards. Along with these books, *A History of Korean Footballers* has recently been published by another former journalist, using oral history gathered from interviews with old Korean international players. However, though these books have their uses and are cited here where relevant, they make little attempt to relate Korean football to its changing social context.

Kang Jun Man has added to our understanding of the characteristics of Korean football and the changes it has experienced by setting them in a wider context. He has made use of Korean primary sources to demonstrate the relationship between Korean politics and football, focusing mainly on Korea-Japan and South-North football contests. His work makes the point that Korean football history is an essential part of modern Korean history that should not be overlooked by serious Korean historians. Korea-Japan football rivalry has also been researched by a Japanese author, Ohshima Hiroshi, who has drawn on a range of Korean and Japanese sources and weaves some important football matches between the two nations into his account of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The main strength of his study, *The Legend of the Kick-off between Korea*

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<sup>9</sup> Gyung-heon Yun and Chang-shin Choi, *A National Pastime: Football and its Bright Morning : A Story of Korean Sports History*, vol. 3, Seoul, 1997; Duk-sang Shin and Duk-gi Kim, *A National Pastime: Football and its Brilliant Traces. A Story of Korean Sports History*, vol. 10, Seoul, 1999.

*and Japan* (1996) is that demonstrates how Korean football has been viewed in Japan and how it has been influenced by Japan and vice versa.<sup>10</sup> In relation to this theme, a former Japanese football journalist, Goto Takeo, also provides us with compelling narrative on the subtle relations surrounding football issues between Korea and Japan. His two books, *The Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer* (1997) and *A History of Japanese Soccer* (2007), for instance, have elucidated some critical points on the 1986 World Cup preliminaries and 2002 World Cup bidding race.<sup>11</sup>

There have been few attempts to explain the history of Korean football to an international readership. Most of studies on Korean football in English have been written either as part of the history of world football or as a theme pertaining to the 2002 World Cup. William Murray has very briefly outlined the development of Korean football along with football in other Asian and African nations in his *Football: A History of the World Game* (1994).<sup>12</sup> He later modified this brief account for a chapter on Asian football in Stephen Wagg's edited collection *Giving the Game Away* (1995). However, it was still insufficient to grasp Korean football clearly, though including a more detailed account of North and South Korean World Cup challenges.<sup>13</sup> David Goldblatt has described Korean football along the same lines of Murray while clearly suggesting that the rapid rise of South Korean football, especially after 1970, could be attributed to 'the authoritarian, militaristic and nationalist foundations', established under the Park

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<sup>10</sup> H. Ohshima, *The legend of Kick-off between Japan and Korea*, Tokyo, 1996, 10-384.

<sup>11</sup> T. Goto, *The Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, Tokyo, 1997, 61-78; *A History of Japanese Soccer: the Ninety years of Japanese national team (1917-2006)*, Tokyo, 2007, 297-299.

<sup>12</sup> B. Murray, *Football: A History of the World Game*, Basingstoke, 1994, 200-227.

<sup>13</sup> B. Murray, Cultural Revolution? Football in the Societies of Asia and the Pacific, in S. Wagg (ed.), *Giving the Game Away: Football, Politics and Culture on Five Continents*, London, 1995, 138-161.



dictatorship (1961-79).<sup>14</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to suggest that this analysis has been widely accepted by Korean academics.<sup>15</sup> The South Korean government's interventionist strategy has been studied by Chung Hong Ik, a Korean sports sociologist, whose chapter in Manzenreiter and Horne's edited collection *Football Goes East* (2004) has argued that the government began to channel its energies and resources into the development of Korean football for two main reasons, firstly, because of its deep 'colonial roots' as a form of social resistance to Japanese rule made it an effective way of forging national identity and, secondly, because it offered the opportunity of 'early dominance on the Asian circuit'.<sup>16</sup> *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup* (2002), also edited by Manzenreiter and Horne, contains some valuable studies on Korean football, notably a chapter by Sugden and Tomlinson concerned with the 2002 World Cup bidding race between Japan and Korea and the way in which it was enmeshed into the politics of world football. The co-authors focused on the strategic alliance between the president of the KFA, Chung Mong Joon, and Lennart Johansson, the president of UEFA (Union of European Football Associations), which thwarted Japanese ambitions to be the sole host and led to the 2002 World Cup being a co-hosted event.<sup>17</sup> Finally of all foreign literature relating to South Korean football, Podoler's recent study (2008) has offered the

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<sup>14</sup> D. Goldblatt, *The Ball Is Round: A Global History of Football*, London, 2006, 835.

<sup>15</sup> Ha and Mangan, 'Ideology, Politics, Power: Korean Sport', 213-242; Hak-rae Lee, *A Contemporary History of Korean Sports*, Yongin, 2008, 166-187.

<sup>16</sup> Hong-ik Chung, 'Government Involvement in Football in Korea', in W. Manzenreiter and J. Horne (eds.), *Football Goes East: Business, Culture and The People's Game in China, Japan and South Korea*, Abingdon, 2004, 123.

<sup>17</sup> J. Sugden and A. Tomlinson, 'International Power Struggles in the governance of World Football: the 2002 and 2006 World Cup Bidding Wars', in J. Horne and W. Manzenreiter (eds.), *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup*, London and New York, 2002, 58-61.

most comprehensive narrative. It is important because he has assessed South Korean football in comparison with the football of its sister-adversary, formulating a hypothesis in which Korean football is seen as demonstrating both the ethnic unity of the two Koreas and as something which divides the two warring states. He has also aptly represented the very intimate nexus between politics and football in South Korea by analyzing key historical episodes, one of which is the 2002 World Cup and its positive outcome for the South Korean people. In addition, the development and changing culture of football in North Korea is covered with a special focus on why women's football in North Korea has become more important than men's football as a source of national pride since the late 1990s.<sup>18</sup>

As for literature on North Korean football, little has been published in North Korea itself and what little there is not easily accessible. *Football of Our Nation* (2001) consisted of the football history in North Korea and of football skills and tactics. What struck me most deeply throughout the history section was North Korea's efforts to improve its football by frequent international contact until the early 1960s, by which time they had developed a unique national football style. An all-out attack, as this official history argues, became established as the main feature of North Korean football in this period.<sup>19</sup> *Football: Past and Present* showed that the North Koreans regarded what is often described as their miracle of 1966 as having made them the foremost football power in Asia, thus ensuring that their national prestige was very much at stake when

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<sup>18</sup> G. Podoler, 'Nation, State and Football: The Korean Case', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25 (1), 2008, 1-17.

<sup>19</sup> Byung-ha Kim et al., *Football of Our Nation*, Pyongyang, 1963, 16-25.

they played international matches against other Asian countries later.<sup>20</sup> Significantly, some statements made by Kim Jong Il regarding the role of football in North Korea were included in published collections in 1997 and 1998. These are essentially primary sources but are helpful in understanding the North Korean leader's intentions and plans.<sup>21</sup>

North Korean football has never been thoroughly researched by South Korean academics. If we consult *The Sports of North Korea* (2004), by Lee Hak Rae and Kim Dong Sun, we get only a glimpse of the history of North Korean football.<sup>22</sup> Kang's *Football is Korea* (2006) and the work of Jung Hee Jun, a sports sociologist, looked at North Korean football largely within the context of North-South relations, hence they had limitations in locating the nature of North Korean football in a wider perspective.<sup>23</sup>

Sometimes fiction can be helpful to historians and two novels published in Pyongyang with sporting themes and based on real events provide some important insights into North Korean football. Ham Yong Gil, a former North Korean sports journalist, in his novel *Comets* (2003) has shown how the historic quarter-final game against Portugal in 1966 was portrayed by the regime to its people. North Korea's 5-3 defeat was

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<sup>20</sup> Dong-gyu Lee et al., *Football: Past and Present*, 140-141.

<sup>21</sup> 'With regard to Popularising Sports and quickly developing Sports Skills: Kim Jong Il's statement to the Central Committee of the Chosun Worker's Party, 19, May, 1986', in *A Selection from the Statements of Kim Jong Il*, vol. 8, Pyongyang, 1998, 400-423; see also 'With regard to developing Sports: Kim Jong Il's statement to the leaders of North Korean sports, 2, June, 1989', *Ibid*, vol. 9, Pyongyang, 1997, 333-341.

<sup>22</sup> Hak-rae Lee and Dong-sun Kim, *The Sports of North Korea*, Paju, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> Kang, *Football is Korea*, 103-107, 137-145; Hee-jun Jung, *Sports, Korea Fantasy: A Korean Social and Cultural History*, Seoul, 2009, 86-91, 126-129.

attributed to unfair refereeing in the match.<sup>24</sup> An earlier novel, *A Laurel Wreath* (1999), by Kim Duk Chul, a former North Korean basketball player, pointed to some problems of North Korean football, such as age fraud, and also described the gloomy atmosphere in Pyongyang after the national team's failure to qualify for the 1994 World Cup.<sup>25</sup> His novel provides some useful insights into how both North Korean society and its men's football ran into difficulties after the end of the Cold War.

Two persons who escaped from North Korea into the South and are now working as journalists have written of their experiences regarding North Korean society and football. They provide important evidence particularly in relation to the World Cup heroes of 1966 who experienced a dramatic reversal of fortunes when they lost favour with the regime.<sup>26</sup> However, as far as this thesis is concerned, the most important information on North Korean football was obtained through an interview with Moon Ki Nam, a former North Korean footballer and coach to both the men's and women's national teams, now living in Seoul. Given the difficulties in obtaining information from North Korea this was invaluable. Due to his direct and continuing involvement in North Korean football as player and coach through many years, the interview with him has allowed me to come close to the realities of North Korean football, which had been hitherto cloaked in a shroud of secrecy.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Yong-gil Ham, *Comets, vol. 1*, Pyongyang, 2003, 360-362.

<sup>25</sup> Duk-chul Kim, *A Laurel Wreath*, Pyongyang, 1999, 3-80.

<sup>26</sup> Sung-ha Ju, *A Pyongyang Story Written in Seoul*, Seoul, 2010, 201-20; Chol-whan Kang and P. Rigoulot, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, New York, 2005, 95.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct, 2010.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a small body of work by foreigners relating mainly to North Korea's 1966 World Cup heroics and how they impacted on other countries. Martin Polley, drawing on Foreign Office documentation in the National Archives has dealt with a thorny issue of sports diplomacy - whether the North Korea team would be permitted to participate in the 1966 tournament as the state which it represented was not recognized by the British government – and how this was resolved.<sup>28</sup> What happened to the North Korean team when it arrived in England and how they were remembered was the subject of Daniel Gordon's documentary film *The Game of Their Lives* (2002) which explored the reason why people in Middlesbrough, where the North Korean team was based, took their Asian visitors to their hearts.<sup>29</sup> John Foot, in his study of Italian football, *Calcio* (2007), has focused on the impact of North Korea's defeat of Italy in the qualifying stages of the tournament and the impact of this event on Italian football.<sup>30</sup>

### **(3) Main themes and sources**

As we have seen, the history of football has not attracted much attention in Korean academic circles. What we know about it has generally been written by sports journalists rather than historians. We should not underestimate their contribution to our understanding of the subject. Journalistic essays and newspaper articles – details of controversies, reports of matches and important anecdotal evidence – help us to grasp

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<sup>28</sup> M. Polley, 'The Diplomatic Background to the 1966 Football World Cup', *The Sports Historian*, 18 (2), 1998, 1-18.

<sup>29</sup> *The Game of Their Lives*, (2002) Documentary Film, Directed by D. Gordon. UK: VeryMuchSo.

<sup>30</sup> J. Foot, *Calcio: A History of Italian Football*, London, 2007, 488-494.

the intricacies of Korean football. However, the literary bias towards history written by journalists means that it is safe to say that the history of Korean football has not generally been regarded as an aspect of cultural history, albeit with some possible exceptions. One consequence of this is that Korean scholars, when they have turned their attention to football, have tended to overemphasize the government's role in its development. Similarly, though it is important, too much emphasis has probably been placed on the symbolical significance of football in relation to the independence movement. This means that the view we have of the development of the game in Korea currently focuses on the impact of strategies devised by political leaders and squeezes out the contribution of the people involved at lower levels on and off the field. Bridging this gap is one of the aims of this thesis. It is also important to widen the focus of inquiry to explain, not just how and why Korean football engaged internationally, but how Korean football was seen from the perspective of other countries. This is another question that has not been adequately addressed to date. In addition, it is now possible to take advantage of some new and previously unexploited sources – for example, the accounts of North Korean exiles such as Ju Sung Ha and Kang Chol Whan, the oral testimony of Moon Ki Nam - thereby providing a new lens to help to observe Korean football in a broader and richer context.

A number of key themes are identified and explored in this thesis. The first to which we turn our attention is nationalism and regionalism in Korean football under Japanese rule. The pioneering study of Korean sports history, Lee Hak Rae's *A 100-year History of Korean Sports* (2001), has underscored that argument that the Koreans, during the colonial era, tended to view any sporting victory over Japan as a form of compensation

for Japanese political suppression. He went on to argue that sports had helped to provide the conditions in which independence movements could emerge by inculcating national consciousness into the minds of Koreans.<sup>31</sup> It is beyond doubt that Korean sports in this period were intertwined with their resistance against Japan as other studies have shown.<sup>32</sup> In particular, it is in this period that the people's sense of allegiance for the Korean eleven became deeply rooted since football, undoubtedly offered the best opportunities in sporting terms of revenging the oppression and arrogance of the Japanese colonizers. This sense of national identity embedded in Korean football was strong enough to make it a national pastime with an enormous following.

However, there is another defining characteristic of Korean football in the Japanese colonial period that merits our attention: the division between Pyongyang in the north and Gyung-sung (Seoul) in the south, which was emphatically reflected in Korean football in particular. This split was evidenced by the two separate All Chosun Football Championships (ACFC) held at Gyung-sung and Pyongyang respectively, and by the rivalry that was forged through the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang football matches which became a popular fixture of Korea's sporting calendar. Kang has indicated that the popularity of this football match was caused by the regional enmity between the northern part and southern part of Korea. He has explained the historical and social

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<sup>31</sup> Hak-rae Lee, *A 100-year History of Korean sports*, Seoul, 2001, 231.

<sup>32</sup> Gwang Ok, 'The Political Significance of Sport: An Asian Case Study – Sport, Japanese Colonial Policy and Korean National Resistance, 1910-45', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22 (4), 2005, 649-670; Nam-gil Ha and J. Mangan, 'A Curious Conjunction – Sport, Religion and Nationalism: Christianity and the Modern History of Korea', *Ibid*, 11(3), 1994, 329-354.

background to this conflict, indicating the contrasting social milieu of the two cities.<sup>33</sup>

There is some published work on the nature of this rivalry. The Gyung-sung-Pyongyang football match was chronicled in detail by Yun and Choi in *A National Pastime: Football and its Bright Morning* (1997).<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile Ohshima has focused on the football culture at Pyongyang, explaining why and how Pyongyang came to rise as a real football city.<sup>35</sup> It is important to assess the phenomenon of regionalism in the Korean football which co-existed alongside nationalism at a time when the Korean people had to bear the brunt of Japanese imperialism. Though, for patriotic Koreans, the relationship between football and nationalism was undoubtedly important, many of them were at the same time entangled with this internal, inter-regional rivalry in football and in other spheres. The published diaries of Yun Chi Ho, especially for the years 1921 to 1943, and recent work by Kim Sang Tae in 1988 are particularly important in this regard because they explain the extent to which Korean intellectuals were concerned with this schism.<sup>36</sup> The importance of this theme also justifies the extent to which the three major newspapers under Japanese rule, *Donga Ilbo*, *Chosun Ilbo*, and *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* have been relied upon rather heavily in this thesis because these dailies were the sponsors of the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang football match and the two ACFC. The dual purpose of Korean football functioning simultaneously as the focal point of for both national identity and inter-regional rivalry has paralleled elsewhere such as rugby union in Wales. While great significance was accorded to defeating any team

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<sup>33</sup> Kang, *Football in Korea*, 40-41, 50-54.

<sup>34</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 33-69.

<sup>35</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 45-55.

<sup>36</sup> Chi-ho Yun, *The Diary of Yun Chi Ho*, vol. 8, 9, 10, Seoul, 1921-33; Sang-tae Kim, 'What did the Regional Antagonism emerge?', in The Research Association of Korean History, *How Did We Live For The Past One Hundred Years*, vol.2, Seoul, 1988, 262-263.



from England from the late Victorian period onwards, rugby in Wales was also marked by an intensive inter-regional contest, notably between the south-west and south-east, as Smith and Williams have indicated.<sup>37</sup>

However, it also has to be recognized that the importance of domestic football in terms of its popularity waned over the course of the second half of the twentieth century. How can we explain this phenomenon? First of all, the North and South Koreans have been extremely obsessed with their international fixtures, especially when their national teams have played each other, thus the inter-regional rivalry between Gyung-sung and Pyongyang dating from the colonial times was completely transformed into an intense international contest. Moreover, within the Cold War context, the two nations tended to regard the football ground as their alternative battle field. Thus the result of the Korean Derby was often regarded as a visibly critical measure of their national power by the rival regimes. It was for this reason that the respective political leaderships of North and South Korea intervened heavily in football and always paid great attention to the development of their national teams. Indeed, enhancing elite football skills in the two countries for the purpose of boosting their national prestige in the international arena have largely stemmed from government initiatives. Football has been nicely fitted into their national projects, not least because it offers a number of prestigious international stages, including the World Cup, the Olympics and the Asian Games, on which political, economic or ideological superiority could be demonstrated. In addition, the deep-seated, traditional rivalry with Japan provided a supplementary reason for governments to inject resources into the development of their national football elevens.

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<sup>37</sup> D. Smith and G. Williams, *Fields of Praise: The Official History of The Welsh Rugby Union*, Cardiff, 1980, 1-170.

Domestic football in the two Koreas has been considerably obscured by the importance of international football fixtures. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to domestic football in the media. In the South, high school baseball had greater popular appeal than domestic football even in the 1970s. By 1971, when President Park Chung Hee's Cup Asia Football Tournament (Park's Cup), in which South Korea's national team usually participated, was established, high school baseball tournaments had become deeply entrenched in the hearts of South Koreans, particularly who had left their home town to grab an opportunity to make a living in an increasingly industrialized and urbanized society. The attraction of these baseball tournaments drew on the strength of local patriotism and would crucially contribute to the formation of strong ties between local professional baseball clubs and fans in the 1980s, a factor which was largely absent in South Korean professional football.<sup>38</sup> This has been the major difference between the two professional sports in South Korea in terms of their popular appeal.

The second theme to be explored in this thesis locates Korean football in the wider context of international relations in an era of sports globalization. Undoubtedly, the politics of the Cold War exerted a powerful influence on both North and South Korea from partition onwards. It was a situation which led the two Koreas as two new nation-states to focus in a competitive fashion on gaining recognition abroad. As they sought friends abroad, football, as the most widely disseminated sport in the world, began to play an important part in support of foreign policy. Footballers from North and South Korea effectively became ambassadors for their respective countries as they sought to improve their image internationally and to establish new diplomatic relationships. The

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<sup>38</sup> Jong-sung Lee, 'The Peculiar Relationship between Regional Antagonism and Korean Baseball: 1970s-1980s', MA dissertation, De Montfort University, 2008.

governments of the rival nation-states accorded great importance to the pursuit of foreign policy objectives through football, especially in the 1970s. By entering international competitions and seeking fixtures with teams from other countries the strategy of the regimes in both Seoul and Pyongyang were following a strategy similar to that of Franco's Spain in the 1950s, where relative diplomatic isolation had also been a problem. In 1959, it was said of Real Madrid that they had done 'much more than many of our embassies scattered round the world'.<sup>39</sup> The governments of North and South Korea expected their national teams to have much the same effect.

This emphasis on football diplomacy had the additional advantage of enhancing the skills of Korean players by exposing them to international competition. However, North and South Korea did not take quite the same path in this respect. In the 1980s there were few opportunities for North Korean players to compete against foreign sides who could help them learn and improve, mainly because its government turned its back on the capitalist world in this period, and thus the development of football in the North was thwarted. At the same time their southern counterparts, with the confidence that their emerging economy and ascending global positioning justified, frequently played against world class teams, particularly after the Seoul Olympics of 1988. Moreover, the situation of North Korean football in this respect did not improve in the 1990s. It was already difficult to find opponents and this problem worsened in the aftermath of the break-up of the Eastern bloc following the fall of communism in the 1990s. As they prepared for the World Cup in England in 1966 the North Korean heroes had been able

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<sup>39</sup> The Real Madrid FC Bulletin, no. 112, November 1959, cited in T. G. Aja, 'Spanish Sports Policy in Republican and Fascist Spain', in P. Arnauld and J. Riordan, (eds.), *Sport and International Politics: the Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport*, London and New York, 1998, 110.

to play warm-up matches against strong East German clubs, such as Hansa Rostock.<sup>40</sup> It was no longer possible for North Korea's footballers to gain experience in this way.

One indication of how serious this problem had become came in 1989 when North Korea's 'Dear Leader', Kim Jong Il, officially acknowledged the difficulties of being cut off from the rest of the football world and called for more friendly matches against foreign opposition.

*Along with stepping up football training, playing as many away matches as possible in countries with high degree of skills is required in order to develop [our] football. We have to allow our footballers to play many away matches in order to develop their courage and skills, as they would play football matches in the South in the future. If such Latin American countries as Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina invite our football clubs, we should go to play there without reservation. ... It does not matter that our nation has not established diplomatic relations with those countries.<sup>41</sup>*

Despite the urging of Kim Jong Il, however, there was only a limited improvement in the 1990s when the national team's exposure to foreign opposition was largely restricted to Asia. Indeed, the South Koreans were probably the most powerful adversary encountered by the North in any friendly match in this period. In contrast to the isolated North, South Korea became one of Asia's major football powers by qualifying for the final stages of four successive World Cup tournaments between 1986 and 1998. While football in the North had been stagnating, South Korean players had been

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<sup>40</sup> *Corriere Della Serra*, 25 June 1966.

<sup>41</sup> 'With regard to developing Sports: Kim Jong Il's statement to the Leaders of North Korean Sports, 2, June, 1989', 334.

gradually learning how to deal with the world's established football giants. Though success proved elusive South Korea learned through trial and error, a process that ultimately led to success in the 2002 finals, when its team progressed to the semi-finals.

In the era of decolonialization, it was natural for Asian and African nations in the wake of their liberation, to look for ways to publicize their existence as a nation-state. Participation in sporting events of global significance was especially suitable for this purpose and events like the World Cup and Olympic Games could also help to strengthen a sense of identity for the people of these 'new' states. 'In participatory terms, the World Cup and Olympics', as Tomlinson and Young have argued, 'offer a platform to all nations, and most of all small nations of the world that is unrivaled by any other cultural or political body, even the United Nations'.<sup>42</sup> However, for so called Third World countries the World Cup proved more problematic than the Olympics due in part to the relatively unfavourable distribution of World Cup final places. Only one place from sixteen, for example, was open to African and Asian countries in 1966. It might also be argued that it is inherently more difficult to achieve a good result in a team sport, like football, than in some Olympic sports where outstanding individual talent can guarantee success.

However, in 1966, North Korea proved that it was possible for an Asian country to make a mark through its performances on the field in the final stages of the World Cup. It can be argued that this did not just impact on North Korea but also helped to increase

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<sup>42</sup> A. Tomlinson and C. Young, 'Culture, Politics and Spectacle in the Global Sports Event: an Introduction', in A. Tomlinson and C. Young (eds.), *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup*, New York, 2006, 2.

the global impact of the World Cup, not least because the event was broadcast around the world via television. Thus the process of sport globalization was progressed by the success of this inscrutable team from the 'Far East'. North Korea's exploits, coming after the controversy regarding FIFA's unfair allocation of final places that led to the African boycott, was a palpable sign of what could be characterized as a formative phase of globalization. The era of European and South American domination had not yet passed but the possibility of a new world order in football was glimpsed for the first time.

There is some literature which has outlined how the North Korean miracle in 1966 and South Korean jubilation in 2002 were influenced by football globalization and also how they have impacted on it. Paul Darby's *Africa, Football and FIFA* (2002) and Peter Alegi's *African Soccerscapes* (2010) provide insights into how Africa changed the world's game which might be usefully applied in connection with North and South Korea.<sup>43</sup> Sensing the African associations' deep discontent and the growing demand for a power shift in the governing body of world football, the Brazilian, Joao Havelange, built an alliance with Third World countries, which undermined the privileged position enjoyed by European nations within FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and enabled him to defeat the Englishman, Sir Stanley Rous, in the presidential election of 1974. Havelange rewarded his allies by increasing the number of World Cup final places thus making it easier for African and Asian countries to reach the final stages of football's mega event and establishing a trend towards globalization which could not be reversed.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, these developments coincided with the emergence of South

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<sup>43</sup> P. Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA: Politics, Colonialism and Resistance*, London, 2002, 43-135; P. Alegi, *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game*, Athens, 2010, 1-126.

<sup>44</sup> See P. Lanfranchi et al., *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, London, 2004, 222-269; also

Korea as a leading football power which was also capable of providing the necessary economic and technological infrastructure to co-host (with Japan) Asia's first World Cup finals in 2002.

The patrons of Korean football provide the third major theme of this thesis. It will be argued that in most cases they devoted their energies and resources to the development and promotion of the game either because they saw it as fulfilling an important social function or because they were carrying out the government's intentions. A study of patrons also reveals how the social and political circumstances at a particular time have impacted on Korean football. During the colonial period, for example, many football patrons were involved in either education or missionary work or in the newspaper industry. They were primarily influenced by the passion of disseminating modernity and the spirit of independence into the wider society. At a later date, some patrons invested their capital in football either for their pure pleasure or because it might help further their political ambitions. For example, in the wake of the Korean War, the most influential football patrons in the South were the military but, in the early 1960s, the military began to give way to politicians and high-ranking public officials. In the 1970s entrepreneurs began to emerge as major patrons of football which became increasingly an extension of corporate business. Yet their active involvement with football was largely attributable to their desire to assist government initiatives rather than the pursuit of profit via sport. This trend has persisted in South Korean football, in the era of the professional football league, established in 1983. The principal source used here for tracing the involvement of patrons is *Wolgan Chukgu*

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T. Mason, 'When Was The First Real World Cup?', *Proceedings of the Conference on Globalization and Sport in Historical Context*, University of California, San Diego, March 2005. 1-11.

(Monthly Football), South Korea's first football magazine, which covers football affairs off the field in detail, unlike other Korean newspaper sources, at least until the 1980s. *Chugan Sports* (Weekly Sports) was also useful, and is particularly helpful in relation to the origins of professional football in South Korea.

As Henry Kissinger once observed in relation to the contradictions of North Korea, though it 'proclaims itself to be a Communist state, its actual authority is in the hands of a single family'.<sup>45</sup> Inevitably, considering the infamous absolute power exercised personally by Kim Il Sung and his son, football in North Korea largely been in their firm grip. Hence, it is important to grasp how far and in what sense North Korean supreme leaders developed their interest in football in response to changing conditions. The reorganization of North Korean men's football in the 1970s and the growth of North Korean women's football in the 1990s were indeed both closely bound up with Kim Jong Il's political strategy. Though North Korea is a very closed and secretive society it is possible to access contemporary sources which can help to explain the leader's changing attitude to football over the years. Along with formal pronouncements on football made by Kim Jong Il, periodicals such as *Chollima*, the only popular magazine in North Korea, *Nodong Shinmun*, the party organ, and *Chosun Shinbo*, the Japan-based pro-North Korean press, have been useful in this respect. Given the emphasis on women's football from the 1990s onwards and the regime's proximity to and dependence on China, studies of Chinese women's football are also important in throwing light indirectly on developments in North Korea.<sup>46</sup> In particular, these studies

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<sup>45</sup> H. Kissinger, *On China*, New York, 2011, 497.

<sup>46</sup> J. Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football*, Oxford, 2007, 83-100; Fan Hong and J. Mangan, 'Will the 'Iron Roses' Bloom Forever? Women's Football in China: Changes



also offer comparative insights between North Korean women's football developing under a rigid socialist system and its Chinese counterpart which has been more influenced by capitalist commercialism.<sup>47</sup>

Along with Kim's family, perhaps the only group whose power within the Party allowed them to intervene heavily in North Korean football was the Gabsan faction. This faction, who had encouraged football when engaging the armed struggle against the Japanese during the colonial era, seemed to have been especially critical in providing the framework that brought success in the 1966 World Cup. However, its members and those associated with them were later discredited and appear to have suffered a similar fate to that of the Starostin brothers, Moscow Spartak footballers of an earlier era, who were deported to the labour camps by Beria, the notorious chief of the security forces and honorary president of Spartak's main rival, Dinamo.<sup>48</sup> It has been reported that the Gabsan faction, along with some North Korean footballers, were purged in the whirlwind of power struggles in the North after the World Cup.<sup>49</sup> The origin of the faction's involvement in football is well described in *Football of Our Nation* and in a biography of a former North Korean party official which was published in 1961. The latter particularly emphasized the keen anti-Japanese sentiments amongst the northern labourers when a football tournament was held during the Japanese rule.<sup>50</sup> Edelman's research on how influential cadres at the highest levels of the Party exercised their

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and Challenges', in F. Hong and J. Mangan (eds.), *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation: Kicking-off a New Era*, London and Portland, 2004, 47-63.

<sup>47</sup> Hong and Mangan, *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation*, 50-2; Williams, *Beautiful Game*, 89.

<sup>48</sup> J. Riordan, 'The Strange Story of Nikolai Starostin, Football and Lavrentii Beria', in *Europe-Asia Studies*, 46 (4), 1994, 681-690.

<sup>49</sup> *North Korea*, Jul, 2006, 128-133; *Sankei Shimbun*, 4 Aug 2001.

<sup>50</sup> B. Kim et al., *Football of Our Nation*, 14-5; Dal Park, *A New Light*, Part 2, Pyongyang, 1961, 167-220.

political leverage on Soviet football in the era of high Stalinism is also instructive and provides insights which are useful when dealing with the role of the Gabsan faction in North Korea.<sup>51</sup>

The fourth and final major theme to be discussed in thesis relates to how Koreans, from both North and South, have played the game. Is it possible to discern a distinctive Korean national style and, if so, does that style cross the boundary separating the two ideologically opposed nation-states? When academics seek to define a distinctive national football style, they often find themselves deconstructing cultural and racial stereotypes.<sup>52</sup> Moreover the media in each nation has a tendency to reproduce particular images and aesthetics repeatedly and to see these reflected in the performance of their national football teams. In addition, the notion of a style of play is difficult to pin down, because it is often based on subjective rather than objective assessments and is closely linked with ideas of how a nation sees itself and is seen by others. *Football Europe and the Press* co-authored by Crolley and Hand was valuable in this respect. It demonstrates the role of the press in shaping and disseminating ideas about national football styles, which are often regarded as reflections of a national identity.<sup>53</sup> Ideas of national style, as John Marks has argued in his study of French football do not always correspond with reality. He has suggested that to associate 'champagne football' with the French team which won the World Cup in 1998 was by no means appropriate.<sup>54</sup> However, it is arguable that the style of football in a given

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<sup>51</sup> R. Edelman, *Serious Fun: A History of Spectator Sports in the USSR*, Oxford and New York, 1993, 81-95.

<sup>52</sup> R. Giulianotti, *Football: a Sociology of the Global Game*, Cambridge, 2000, 138.

<sup>53</sup> L. Crolley and D. Hand, *Football, Europe and the Press*, London, 2002.

<sup>54</sup> J. Marks, 'The French National Team and National Identity: 'Cette France d'un "bleu métis"', in H.

territory could represent the hidden metaphors or cultural values of that society. Also, in any international competition it becomes clear that there clearly are differences of football styles which add interest and excitement for global viewers. 'What does seem to be true', as Lanfranchi *et al* have argued, 'is that most of those who have discussed national styles over the years have certainly thought that they were talking about something real'.<sup>55</sup>

Moreover, there are particularly good reasons for analyzing styles of play in relation to North and South Korean football. Although teams from both countries made an impression on World Cup competitions in which they played, the characteristics of Korean football as it has been and is played have been little researched. Where research into this theme might have special significance is in relation to Cold War history where it is clear that contrasting football styles were often described ideologically with the assumption being made that individualism characterized teams from the capitalist West and collectivism characterized teams from the communist East. Analysis of the Korean style of playing, however, provides an opportunity to investigate the question of whether it provides a case study of a national football style transcending an ideological border. Thus assessing the extent to which North and South Korean approaches to the game have been and are similar is at the core of this theme.

There was a stereotype in the South that North Korean football was combative and unsophisticated. On the contrary, North Korea regarded their football as well-organized

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Dauncey and G. Hare (eds.), *France and the 1998 World Cup: The National Impact of a World Sporting Event*, London, 1999, 44-45.

<sup>55</sup> Lanfranchi et al, *100 Years of Football*, 152.

with no individualism. The mutual stigmatization of North and South Korean football was especially severe in the 1970s and 1980s, but has since been gradually eroded. These stereotypes derived from fierce hostility tended to culminate in the 'Korean Derby'. However, unfortunately, contemporary South Korean press coverage of these matches is insufficiently detailed to allow for systematic analysis and, in North Korea, there was little in newspaper match reports that would be helpful in identifying and analyzing contrasting styles, even when the North beat their southern neighbours. Thus, oral history has been used to help overcome this problem through interviews with former players from North and South.

Kowalski and Porter's research into Cold War football should be noted as an attempt to locate perceptions about how football is played in a wider cultural context. It analyses match reports and press comment relating to both the Moscow Dinamo team that toured Britain in 1945 and the outstanding Hungarian team that beat England 6-3 at Wembley in 1953 and 7-1 in Budapest in 1954 and shows how they were subject to an 'ideological filter'.<sup>56</sup> How West German football was regarded in the East and vice versa and, in particular, the West Germany-East Germany clash at the 1974 World Cup finals has also been the subject of some academic attention.<sup>57</sup> These studies have added to our knowledge regarding popular misconceptions about ideological adversaries on and off the Cold War football field and suggest ways of approaching the question of the characteristics that North Korean and South Korean football might have in common and

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<sup>56</sup> R. Kowalski and D. Porter, 'Cold War Football: British-European Encounters in the 1940s and 1950s', in S. Wagg and D.L. Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport And The Cold War*, Abingdon, 2007, 71.

<sup>57</sup> A. Tomlinson and C. Young (eds.), *German Football: History, Culture, Society*, London and New York, 2006, 43-44; U.H.Lichtenberger, *Tor ! The Story of German Football*, London, 2002, 241-243; See also, J. Spurling, *Death or Glory: the Dark History of the World Cup*, London, 2010, 146-161.

those which might make them different. In addition, some more general works on national style and football tactics generally have helped to shape discussion of this theme, notably the chapter on 'National Styles' in the the FIFA Centennial Book<sup>58</sup> and, more recently, Jonathan Wilson's *Inverting the Pyramid*, an exhaustive study of the historical development of football tactics.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that the style of play between the North and South has not been identical, a difference that had its origin before the division. However, it will be argued here that the difference has been largely derived from accounts found in the local media and that it may be misleading. In addition to using the recollections of those who played for North and South Korea at the highest level this thesis relies heavily on the foreign press in dealing with the football style of two Koreas. A variety of Asian newspapers in English – principally the *Straits Times* in Singapore, the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong and *The Times of India* - have been consulted for this purpose, along with some Japanese newspapers, particularly *Nikkan Sports*. The rationale for using these sources was, firstly, that most of the competitive football played by North and South Korea has been in Asia, and secondly, that coverage in the foreign and international media was less likely to be influenced by local pressures and preconceptions than coverage in the Korean press. The British press, particularly newspapers based in the north of England, where the North Korean team was based, is also used try to understand the playing style and tactics of the heroes of 1966. In this way, it is hoped to strike a balance between what the two Koreas wished others to see and what they actually saw.

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<sup>58</sup> Lanfranchi et. al., *100 Years of Football*, 152-68; see also P. Lanfranchi and M. Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, Oxford and New York, 2001, 191-211.

<sup>59</sup> J. Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid : A History of Football Tactics*, London, 2008.

#### **(4) Thesis structure**

The discussion in this thesis is organized chronologically rather than thematically. Firstly, this has an advantage when seeking to describe changes that have taken place over the whole period since 1910, and secondly, this arrangement is helpful when it is necessary to compare and contrast the experience of the two Koreas, as distinct regions in the Japanese colonial period and as separate nation-states in the period of the Cold War and beyond. However, the principal themes of the thesis are developed in separate sub-sections within each chapter.

Chapter one provides a broad overview of the origins and early diffusion of the modern game of football in Korea through to the 1940s and the regional differences and rivalries that shaped its development. It seeks to explain why and how football was taken up as a national game under Japanese rule while also outlining the importance of early international contacts through and how tours abroad and matches against foreign clubs helped to strengthen Korean football and raise playing standards.

Chapter two develops these themes further in the context of the 1950s and early 1960s as the two Koreas emerged from the trauma of civil war. It demonstrates how, with the encouragement of the state, North Korea strengthened its profile through football and became a significant force in international football especially through its participation in tournaments such as those organized in connection with GANEFO, the Games of the Newly Emerging Forces. This chapter also examines parallel developments in South Korea where the alliance between football and nationalism was cemented by their early

successes in Asia. One important common factor for both North and South Korea in this period was that in both countries the military was assigned a leading role in the development and promotion of football. The impact on football of Koreans from the north moving south, both before and after the war, is also discussed.

The North Korean 'miracle' in the World Cup finals of 1966 and its implications for football in both North and South Korea is the principal theme of chapter three. As to the former, the impression made by the North Koreans on their English hosts is closely scrutinized as well as the importance of their first appearance in the global football arena where they were the first Asian team to make a significant impact. Ironically, the greatest impact of the North Korean 'miracle' was on South Korea where the shock effect of their rival's success prompted a massive effort by the government assisted by big business to improve the quality of elite players and the national team. Equally ironically, North Korea failed to build on the foundation that had been established in 1966 and this is explained largely in relation to the internal politics of the regime.

Chapters four and five bring the story of football in the two Koreas through to 2002 when South Korea successfully co-hosted the World Cup finals with Japan, the first finals to be held outside Europe or North and South America. As football was globalized South Korea, with its expanding modern economy, was well placed to exploit the greater opportunities that were created by FIFA under Havelange to participate in the World Cup and other international competitions. This was also reflected in the emergence of professional football in South Korea after 1983. The collapse of the Soviet Union led to political rapprochement in this period and the chapter four traces the

political ramifications of some hard-fought matches between the two Koreas and the brief experiment with a unified Korea youth team. Chapter five is divided into two sections which consider, firstly, the success of South Korea in the 2002 World Cup and its political and social ramifications and then, secondly, the impact of the South's success on football in North Korea where men's football fell back in relation to the women's game which, the government believed, was more likely to bring success and international prestige to an increasingly isolated country.

The conclusion, while highlighting the dramatic twists and turns that have characterized the development of football in Korea, seeks to draw together the four key themes identified in this chapter. Most importantly, the idea of a Korean national football style that exemplifies the ethnic homogeneity of the two Koreas and transcends political and ideological boundaries, is discussed and evaluated.



## **The development of Korean football under Japanese rule, 1910-44**

Modern sports began to be introduced into Korea when it opened the door to Western countries from the final quarter of the nineteenth century. Despite resistance to foreign economic and cultural invasion, especially amongst local Confucian landlords who wished to maintain the hierarchy of feudal society, modern (i.e. Western) culture and technology came to be perceived as a useful mechanism to enlighten the public as well as strengthen the nation.<sup>60</sup> A full-scale reform of the education system was required to achieve this purpose. Various modern schools were soon set up by nationalists, missionaries and the government during the Korean Empire period (1897-1910). Gymnastic exercise was incorporated into the curriculum of these academic institutions. Most gymnastic programmes practiced at the schools until the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 were essentially paramilitary, because a number of retired army officers assumed the role of teaching gymnastics for 'modern boys' at these schools.<sup>61</sup> Football and tennis were played as an extra-curricular physical activity at the grounds of mission schools and baseball and basketball were taking root in Gyung-sung with the great help of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).<sup>62</sup>

The diffusion of modern sports in Korea was a gradual process. There were good reasons for this relatively slow diffusion. Enthusiasm for modern sports was for the most

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<sup>60</sup> Hak-rae Lee, *A Sports History of Modern Korea*, Seoul, 1990, 20-21.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, 51.

<sup>62</sup> Jae-woo Kim, *A Hundred-year Sports History of Seoul YMCA*, Seoul, 2009, 48-49, 53.

part restricted to a small number of the sons of the modernizing elites who attended academic institutions in the main urban centres. However, the vast majority of Koreans at this time lived in an agrarian society and their lives were still dominated by agriculture and traditional rural values. At the start of the twentieth century they were largely excluded from the modernization phenomenon. Moreover, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the level of industrialization and urbanization in Korea at this time was insufficiently advanced for the working classes to take up imported sports as a means of break from soulless urban life and the monotonous production line. Indeed, in the alleys of Gyung-sung, the capital city, according to a contemporary British geographer, mud-walled hovels provided only the most basic accommodation and commerce was limited to huckstering transactions.<sup>63</sup> Even during the first decade of the Japanese colonial eras after 1910, modern sports were the preserve of Japanese expatriates and of the schoolboy sons of Korea's social elite. Thus Korean society had yet to develop the characteristics which would allow modern sports to flourish. With the exceptions of those organized by schools or the YMCA, almost all sports tournaments - particularly baseball and tennis - were staged by the Japanese rulers.<sup>64</sup>

Even if the growth of modern sports in the late nineteenth century was slow and patchy, there is evidence that a variety of traditional Korean games rather were being widely practiced in rural regions and also in many cities. Kite-flying was a national institution and pitch-penny was a popular pastime for boys. On the fifteenth of the first month by the lunar calendar, tugs-of-war in the country villages was commonplace. When these festivals were held, it was the tradition that the village turned out en masse under the

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<sup>63</sup> I. Bishop, *Korea and Her Neighbors*, Seoul, 1970, 59-60; first published in 1898.

<sup>64</sup> H. Lee, *A 100-year History of Korean Sports*, 147-154.

full moon. Out of all traditional games, however, it was the stone-throwing fights between neighbouring villages that generally attracted the largest and most enthusiastic crowds. These contests occurred only in spring when the fields were bare, which meant that both ample space and spare time were available for the contest. The excitement of these battles was not confined to the provinces. The heaviest traffic on the electric tramway in Gyung-sung, as a foreign observer noted, was when the crowds went out of the city gates to watch these stone fights.<sup>65</sup>

Though the process was gradual, some change was apparent by the first decade of the twentieth century when, even if they did not participate themselves, the rise of athletic meets (Undonghoe) meant that workers had opportunities to watch the sons of the elite at play. Track and field athletics often became the focal point of sports days in which several schools participated. Since most of these interscholastic sporting events were held in communal places rather than schoolyards, members of the local communities were able to access them as spectators. School sports thus often supplied the occasion for a community festival, while at the same time providing an opportunity to express Korean national consciousness by hoisting a national flag and making patriotic speeches.<sup>66</sup> As we shall see later, it was the 1920s that peasants and proletarians began to get opportunities to play modern sports, especially football, with the foundation of many regional young men's clubs across the nation in response to growing patriotic fervour generated by the First of March Movement in 1919. This movement acted as a powerful social agent for the dissemination of modern sport. It not only promoted sports tournaments and tours but also held athletic meets which

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<sup>65</sup> H. Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, Seoul, 2000, 350-356; first published in 1906.

<sup>66</sup> H. Lee, *A 100-year History of Korean sports*, 66-70, 95-100.

attracted large crowds.<sup>67</sup> At this point, it could be argued, it first becomes possible to see the emergence of modern sports as a form of mass leisure in Korea.

In the period just before and after the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910 many Korean intellectuals were attracted to theories of social Darwinism then prevalent in Europe and the United States. Their overriding concern was that Korean culture was civilian rather than military and somehow effeminate, making Korea vulnerable in terms of competition between nations and 'the survival of the fittest'. In this climate it began to be recognized that physical culture was important. A population that was muscular and physically-fit was seen as an essential component of the modern nation-state and sporting events were increasingly viewed as providing an arena of competition in which competing nations could demonstrate their capacity to survive. The significance of these ideas for Koreans was encapsulated by a contemporary novelist when Son Kee Jung became the first Korean to win an Olympic gold medal, by triumphing in the marathon at the Berlin Olympics of 1936: 'I want to cry for all mankind! Do you still name us a frail race?'<sup>68</sup>

In view of the Japanese annexation and the prevalence of social Darwinist thought in early twentieth century Korea, it is not surprising that many modern sports were woven into the fabric of Korean nationalism from the outset. Winning over Japan on any sports field provided Koreans with an opportunity to relieve their pent-up frustrations and this was especially so with football. When a Korean football team defeated a visiting

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<sup>67</sup> H. Lee, *A Sports History of Modern Korea*, 146-153.

<sup>68</sup> Chosun Joongang Ilbo, 23 Aug 1936, cited in Jung-whan Chun, *A Syndrome Still Lingers On*, Seoul, 2005, 64.

Japanese team from Waseda University in 1927 there was much rejoicing and the event was treated as if it had been a full international match.<sup>69</sup> A useful comparison can be made with rugby in Wales or football in Scotland where 'any match against the "auld enemy" (England) was seen as an outright national competition'.<sup>70</sup>

However, Korean nationalism in this period was not the only factor in attracting people to football. The popularity of the game was also linked to regionalism and was especially manifested in a keen rivalry between Pyongyang and Gyung-sung (the old name of Seoul), which was later formalized in the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang Football Championship. The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the social and political context in which this rivalry was set and the different football cultures and styles that it embodied. The roles of YMCA, schools, individual patrons and newspapers, will also be assessed to keep this chapter in balance. It is also important to consider the international perspective as external influences had a vital role in introducing football to Korea and developing it further during the first half of the twentieth century.

### **(1) The arrival and diffusion of football in Korean schools**

Although it has been suggested that football was introduced by British sailors in 1882, its origins in Korea are not entirely clear. There is clear evidence, however, that football was being played at the English Language School in Gyung-sung during the late nineteenth century. As an editorial in *Dokrip Shinmun* observed in 1896:

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<sup>69</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 20 Sept 1927; Gyung-ho Park and Duk-gi Kim, *A Secret History of Korean Football*, Seoul, 2000, 147.

<sup>70</sup> M. Johnes, *Soccer and Society: South Wales 1900-1939*, Cardiff, 2002, 192.

*When students of the English Language School kick a ball on the school ground in the afternoon, their vigorous movements and combative spirit are one hundred times better than those of Japanese students and equal to those of American and English children.* <sup>71</sup>

At around the same time a French teacher, Martel, who had been educated in England, was known to teach football to the students of French Language School. Also the 'old boys' of the foreign language schools, most of whom worked as interpreters for the palace, were encouraged to continue playing football by their English teachers and formed *Deahan Cheyuk Gurakbu* (Korean Sports Club).<sup>72</sup> The Korean Sports Club played its first official football match against Hwangsung YMCA in 1906.<sup>73</sup>

It was not long before the students of private middle schools and various young men's clubs in Gyungsung began to follow in the footsteps of the old boys from the foreign language schools. Five schools took the initiative in introducing football to a wider public. One of them was Bosung, conveniently located in downtown Gyungsung, which attracted football enthusiasts and onlookers to its grounds in the afternoon.<sup>74</sup> The grounds of the Hwimoon and Baejae schools also hosted major football tournaments.<sup>75</sup> Baejae, the first mission school established in Korea, formed a football team as early as 1902 and predominated over middle school football until the mid 1920s.<sup>76</sup> It was on

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<sup>71</sup> *Dokrip Shinmun*, 3 Dec 1896.

<sup>72</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 138, 142.

<sup>73</sup> Hyun-sung Ra, *Sports History of Korea*, Seoul, 1958, 48-50.

<sup>74</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 152.

<sup>75</sup> Korean Sports Association (KSA), *The History of the Korean Sports Association*, Seoul, 1965, 96, 99.

<sup>76</sup> Baejae Middle and High School, *The History of Baejae*, Seoul, 1955, 220.

their playing field that goalposts were erected in Korea for the first time in 1914, prompting other football clubs and school teams to ask for friendly matches with Baejae.<sup>77</sup>

Eventually, in the 1920s, Baejae were overtaken by another mission school, Gyungshin, whose popularity was so great that they regularly attracted crowds of around 10,000 to their ground.<sup>78</sup> Their fame reached a peak with their 4-3 victory over Waseda University in 1929.<sup>79</sup> They had to play this match under the name of *Gyungshin Gurakbu* (Club) rather than Gyungshin Middle School since Waseda had refused to play against a school team but the Gyungshin team was made up entirely of the school's students.<sup>80</sup> It is a measure of their achievement that a Korean adult team lost to Waseda a day later. The immense public interest in these two games was vividly portrayed by a cartoon in the newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* which pictured a huge crowd, some of them watching the game while hanging onto trees or clutching the school walls.<sup>81</sup>

During the 1920s varsity football also began to thrive in Gyungshin. Yeonhee College, which had been founded in 1915 by a missionary, Horace Grant Underwood, British by birth but raised in the USA, soon established itself as the best college football team in the city.<sup>82</sup> They gained the ACFC under the auspices of the *Chosun Cheyukhoe* (Chosun

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<sup>77</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 150.

<sup>78</sup> The Gyungshin History Publication Committee, *The History of Gyungshin (1885-1991)*, Seoul, 1991, 484.

<sup>79</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 6 Sep 1929.

<sup>80</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 253-254.

<sup>81</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 8 Sep 1929.

<sup>82</sup> In-su Son, *A History of Modern Education in Korea*, Seoul, 1971, 21-2; Yonsei Football Old Boys

Sports Association) in four consecutive years from 1925.<sup>83</sup> In the late 1920s and early 1930s Yeonhee found itself struggling for supremacy with Bosung College and their intense rivalry generated great interest in inter-college football. Bosung was a relative newcomer to the sport but developed a marked preference for football while Yeonhee was noted for its enthusiasm for American sports, at least for the colonial period.<sup>84</sup> It was Bosung that inaugurated the All Chosun Middle School Football Championships from 1928 while Yeonhee inaugurated tennis, baseball and basketball tournaments for middle school students.<sup>85</sup> This did not mean that their rivalry on the football field was any less intense. 'Yeon-Bo' contests were renowned for keen competition and intermittent brawls. In 1931 a fight between two players was transformed into a battle involving the supporters of both sides. Yeonhee withdrew from this match after their centre-forward, who was on the ground at the time, had his left eyebrow lacerated by a kick. This disgraceful affair prompted harsh criticism in the newspaper *Donga Ilbo* of the excessive passions which football could arouse.<sup>86</sup>

## **(2) Religious organizations and regional young men's clubs**

Most modern sports, along with the concept of 'muscular Christianity' came to Korea via the YMCA in the early twentieth century.<sup>87</sup> Sport was seen as a way of ensuring that young men led healthy and virtuous lives. It was 'character-building' and brought them

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Association (YOBA), *70 Years of Yonsei Football*, Seoul, 1989, 131.

<sup>83</sup> YOBA, *70 Years of Yonsei Football*, 134-139.

<sup>84</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Moring*, 156-157.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 157.

<sup>86</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 Nov, 15 Nov 1931.

<sup>87</sup> J. Kim, *A Hundred-year Sports History of Seoul YMCA*, 44-53.



into contact with the influence of the church. Baseball and basketball, in particular, owed their inception and dissemination to the YMCA. In these two sports many friendly matches between Korean teams and dozens of games against foreign sides at home and abroad were arranged by the YMCA.<sup>88</sup> Admittedly, the YMCA was also involved in the development of Korean football. As indicated earlier, the Hwangsung YMCA had featured with the Korean Sports Club in the first official inter-club match in Korea and a further 56 matches took place between the two clubs in 1906 and 1907.<sup>89</sup> The influence of the YMCA was still evident in the 1920s. The Central YMCA hosted the Chosun Student Christian Young Men's Football Tournament in 1924. This tournament was designed to cement solidarity amongst Christians in Korea and only schools that had already joined the Chosun Student Christian Young Men's Association were permitted to enter the competition.<sup>90</sup> Of the all activities pertaining to football on the part of the YMCA, the inauguration of ACFC by the Pyongyang YMCA was the most important contribution. The championship, held in Pyongyang, rapidly developed into one of Korea's major football tournaments, instilling a local pride into the minds of the people of Pyongyang, as we shall see later in more detail.

Competition between different religions played a part in the development of Korean football. The YMCA's enthusiasm for football prompted the Buddhist Young Men's Association to follow in their footsteps and established what later would develop into the most formidable football club in Gyungsung. This Buddhist team was mainly composed of the students of Hwimoon Middle School where many disciples of monks

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 135-140.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 148.

were enrolled. Their training ground was Taego temple.<sup>91</sup> Buddhist temples with empty lots were frequently used for sporting activities. In the first decade of the twentieth century the French Language School, and the Hwangsung YMCA held athletic meets at such venues.<sup>92</sup> The Buddhist club was initially very successful, winning the ACFC at Gyung-sung in 1922, but folded in 1925 for financial reasons.<sup>93</sup>

The religion of Chundo ('the religion of the heavenly way'), closely associated with the rise of Korean nationalism, also established football clubs in this period.<sup>94</sup> The Chundo Football Club founded around 1920, went on a football tour to Pyongyang and the north in the same year.<sup>95</sup> Though it participated in the ACFC in 1921, it withdrew from the tournament in protest at the unsportsmanlike behaviour of opponents from Pyongyang who had vehemently contested a referee's decision.<sup>96</sup> It is interesting to note that the Chundo club did not participate in any major football championship after this affair. Thereafter, the religion of Chundo concentrated on encouraging Korean football generally rather than running its own football club. A Chundo magazine, *Gaebuyuk*, published the football newspaper for the ACFC at Gyung-sung in 1923.<sup>97</sup> In addition, some local branches of the Chundo religion sponsored various football tournaments in the 1920s and 1930s, and it is recorded that a Chundo football coach

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<sup>91</sup> Eui-jae Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, Seoul, 2009, 12-3; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 155.

<sup>92</sup> H. Ra, *Sports History of Korea*, 50.

<sup>93</sup> E. Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 14; YOBA, *70 Years of Yonsei Football*, 190-191; KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 99.

<sup>94</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 162, 167.

<sup>95</sup> *Gaebuyuk*, Nov, 1920, 107; *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Sep 1920.

<sup>96</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 22, May 1921.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Nov 1923.

gave instruction on the game to boys at Ulsan in 1925.<sup>98</sup>

These religious football clubs were not the only kind important to the diffusion of football in Korea. The foundation of religious clubs coincided with the emergence of regional young men's associations springing up like mushrooms. This phenomenon resulted from changes within the Korean independence movement as it adjusted to Japan's colonial policy.<sup>99</sup> After the First of March Movement in 1919, an independence demonstration on a vast scale in which 'more than two million Koreans directly participated', had been brutally suppressed, there was some relaxation in Japan's colonial policy ostensibly due in part to the pressure of world opinion.<sup>100</sup> Freedom of association and freedom of assembly were now permitted and the independence movement turned away from political radicalism and began to encourage Koreans to express their identity in other ways. In these new conditions allowed a variety of young men's clubs began to prosper.

In this social climate, a variety of young men's clubs began to prosper, and their active involvement in sports enabled the general public in the hinterland away from the big cities to play football.<sup>101</sup> Hitherto young men from the socially underprivileged classes had played by kicking an inflated pig's bladder and the like on rice paddies after the harvest. Now they were able to join clubs to play the modern version of the game. This

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<sup>98</sup> For sponsorship, *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Jun 1923; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 18 Jul 1933; for football lecture, *Donga Ilbo*, 24 Jun 1925.

<sup>99</sup> Ji-hoon Cho, *A History of Korea's Racial Movement: A Long-Range Project of Korean Cultural History*, vol.1, Seoul, 1964, 719-37, cited in Hak-rae Lee, *A Sports History of Modern Korea*, Seoul, 1990, 147.

<sup>100</sup> Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea*, Cambridge and London, 1984, 342-347.

<sup>101</sup> H. Lee, *A Sports History of Modern Korea*, 148.

development was helped in the early 1920s by the development of the railroad network which facilitated 'barnstorming' as clubs began to travel in search of friendly competition and to gain bragging rights over neighbouring villages and further afield.<sup>102</sup> Newspapers gave valuable publicity and sometimes financial support to encourage regional competitions.<sup>103</sup>

Some clubs were especially ambitious. In 1921 the Muo Football Club of Pyongyang made the long journey to Gyung-sung and the southernmost part of Korea, beating three local sides and thus maintaining 'Pyongyang's honor'.<sup>104</sup> These barnstorming matches were increasingly supplanted by numerous regional football tournaments on the model of the ACFC. South Chosun, West Chosun, North Chosun, and the All Gando Football Championships were initiated in 1923-24<sup>105</sup> A football championship was no longer an entertainment for Korean city dwellers only. As early as 1922, Jaeryung, a town in the north-west, had staged the first Hwanghae Province Football Championship, in which a town side was thrown out of the competition for bringing in six players hired from the Muo Club.<sup>106</sup> Five teams comprising peasants and labourers from various hamlets took part in a football tournament held at Hamheung in 1929. These teams attracted attention because their players wore straw sandals, a clear indication that football was becoming the game of the people throughout Korea.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 179.

<sup>103</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 4 Apr 1921; 11 Apr 1921.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, 26 Aug 1921.

<sup>105</sup> For South Chosun, *Ibid*, 1 Nov 1923; for West Chosun, 19 June 1923; for North Chosun, 3 Sept 1923; for Gando (a Chinese territory where many Korean immigrants resided), 29 May 1924.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 12 June 1922.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Aug 1929.

### (3) The rise and fall of Gyung-Pyong football

At this time it was the people of Pyongyang whose interest in football was unmatched by any other Koreans. Pyongyang itself was described as a 'football city' and clubs had been set up by enthusiasts in every village in the province. Young men who could not play the game were said to be very rare. These conditions encouraged the Pyongyang Football Association to inaugurate the All Pyongyang Village Football Championship in 1937.<sup>108</sup> Whenever the All Chosun Football Championship was staged in Pyongyang it was referred to as a festival of football and it was as if the city was on holiday.<sup>109</sup>

*There is a long queue of those seeking to buy tickets at the stadium gate and tramcars [to the stadium] are crammed solid with a throng of football fans to the delight of the West Chosun Electric Company. Why are spectators so abundant although today is not a Sunday but a Monday? Perhaps they have abandoned company business in order to enjoy the last day of the football festival .... [Even] the aged know about "corner kicks" and can speak of "penalty kicks"; and even snotty-nosed children who are aware of "offside" will try to dispute a referee's decision.* <sup>110</sup>

During the three days of the championship in 1932 a total of more than 90,000 of Pyongyang's football-mad spectators visited the stadium. Given that the population of Pyongyang was about 167,000 at the time, this represented it was an enormous attendance.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 11 Aug 1937; 14 Aug 1937.

<sup>109</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 13 May 1938.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 19 May 1939.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, 16 May 1932; 9 Mar 1932.

At this juncture, it needs to be asked why football had become so important to the people of Pyongyang and why it had become so embedded in the popular culture of the region. In part, it seems, this phenomenon was related to an intense eagerness for modernity of which football, in its modern codified form, was a signifier. Over the course of the later years of the Chosun dynasty (1392-1910) Pyongan province, including Pyongyang itself, had developed into a society predisposed towards modernization. The province's culture was shaped by a combination of its emergent mercantile middle-class and a relatively relaxed social hierarchy. Another important factor was that the Korean political system tended to discriminate against people from Pyongyang. This fed both the intense eagerness for modernity and a powerful antagonism towards the Giho region comprising the provinces of Gyung-sung, Gyunggi and Chungchung to the south.<sup>112</sup> There was also ardent aspiration for education in Pyongan. In 1908, the newspaper *Hwang-sung Shinmun* had extolled northern Pyongan as the province that 'had sold the most books, bought the most newspapers, and built the most schools'.<sup>113</sup> The foundation of social organizations including young men's associations, was more evident in Pyongan than elsewhere in Korea.<sup>114</sup> The province's intellectuals took pride in rapid modernization, boasting that Pyongan was the 'most advanced' region.<sup>115</sup> Pyongyang's rising middle-class was attracted by the idea of representative self-government and by the ideology of individualism: they eagerly subscribed to Christianity as an exemplar of modernity.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> S. Kim, 'When did Regional Antagonism Emerge?', 262-263.

<sup>113</sup> *Hwang-sung Shinmun*, 25 Feb 1908, cited in A. Schmid, *Korea between Empires 1895-1919*, New York, 2002, 48-49.

<sup>114</sup> Gyu-sik Chang, *Korean Christian Nationalism under Japanese Rule*, Seoul, 2001, 281.

<sup>115</sup> Schmid, *Korea between Empires 1895-1919*, 48.

<sup>116</sup> Kim, 'Regional Antagonism', 265; Young-hyun So, *The Heyday of Young Tramps: A Cultural Perspective of Modern Boys*, Seoul, 2008, 266.

In 1932, the Christian community in Pyongyang accounted for 38.5 per cent of all Christians in Korea.<sup>117</sup> At the time the population of Pyongyang constituted only 13.8 per cent of the total population. In the city of Pyongyang the shops closed on Sundays and it was often referred to as the 'Jerusalem of Chosun'.<sup>118</sup> There were so many churches that they were able to mark the opening of the ACFC in 1924 by ringing their bells in chorus.<sup>119</sup> In these circumstances, Christianity and particularly Presbyterianism and Methodism, the two major denominations, played a critical role in disseminating and developing football in Pyongyang. Soongduk and Gwangsung Elementary Schools, and Soongsil and Gwangsung Middle Schools, founded by Presbyterian and Methodist churches respectively, were noted as reservoirs of local footballing talent. In addition, many Sunday schools keenly encouraged young boys to play football by setting up football clubs.<sup>120</sup> Football constituted a litmus test of modernization for Pyongyang and its development in this region was accentuated by a sense of rivalry with Giho, particularly Gyungung. Football was played without goalposts until the news arrived that they had been erected at the Baejae ground, causing Pyongyang to follow this example.<sup>121</sup> The Muo Football Club of Pyongyang was established in 1918 but its establishment was hastened by a visit from Central YMCA who shocked local enthusiasts by their highly-developed skills and modernized football uniforms. This encouraged Pyongyang enthusiasts to adopt the same practices as their rivals from the

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<sup>117</sup> The Research Association of Korean Christianity History, *A History of Korean Christianity*, vol. 2, Seoul, 1990, 163, cited in Sang-tae Kim, 'Pyongan Province's Christian Forces and the Formation of Pro-American Elites', *Criticism on History*, (45), Winter 1998, 176.

<sup>118</sup> See Kim, 'Pyongyang Province's Christian Forces', 177.

<sup>119</sup> *Sidae Ilbo*, 9 May 1924.

<sup>120</sup> See *Wolgan Chukgu*, Jan 1973 40.

<sup>121</sup> YOBA, *70 years of Yonsei Football*, 203.

south.<sup>122</sup>

Inter-regional rivalry was very intense almost from the start. There were two national football tournaments in Korea during the colonial period. Unsurprisingly, one was held at Gyung-sung and the other at Pyong-yang. Both were established in the same year - 1921. On 12 February, the second day of the ACFC at Gyung-sung, the Soong-sil Club of Pyong-yang lodged a protest against an offside decision and this resulted in an outbreak of violence between Gyung-sung and Pyong-yang supporters. One of the fans from Pyong-yang was forced to hide himself in the house of an American missionary to avoid a beating from the Gyung-sung people who were pursuing him.<sup>123</sup> The President of the Chosun Sports Association, Ko Won Hoon, ascribed this incident to regionalism.<sup>124</sup> Later in 1921, after two teams from Gyung-sung absented themselves from the ACFC at Pyong-yang because they feared retribution, there was another brawl.<sup>125</sup> Yun Chi Ho, the president of Central YMCA, was highly critical of this disgraceful affair attributing it to intense regional rivalry.

*When the Pyong Yang team [All Soong-sil] saw that they were to be beaten, they and their friends, the Pyong Yang people, rushed at the referee Hyun, stopping him, throwing stones at him and shouting to kill the Seoul man. The police had to take out pistols to protect the referee and barely saved him from the infuriated mob ... During the five centuries of Yi [Chosun] Dynasty, the people of the North Western provinces were placed under political disqualifications and treated with humiliating discriminations. That the North-Westerners*

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<sup>122</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 10.

<sup>123</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 72-73.

<sup>124</sup> *Maeil Shinbo*, 16 Feb 1921.

<sup>125</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 73.



*had a just cause for hating the Southern Koreans — especially those of the ruling caste, goes without saying. But is this the time to nurture the spirit of an-eye-for-an-eye-and-a-tooth-for-a-tooth and seek revenge? If everybody wants to get even with his enemies in Korea when shall we ever become a united race?* <sup>126</sup>

Korean political circles at this time were divided on regional lines and the struggle between the Giho and the Northwestern faction was the most keenly contested. As the leader of the Giho faction, Rhee Syng Man, was in exile in the United States and his movement required domestic underpinnings. The Heungup Club was established in 1925 by Shin Heung Woo, Yun Chi Ho, and Yu Eok Gyeom and others for this reason.<sup>127</sup> Shin and You harboured acute resentment towards the northwestern people, as the following extract shows.

*Sometime ago, the girls of the Ewha College invited Yi Kwang Su, the well-known [North-Western] novelist, to deliver a lecture on some literary theme. The program was printed. Only a few hours before the appointed hour, Yu advised the American principal of College not to permit Yi to speak to the girls because he had divorced his former wife. What a slap that must have been to Yi! The Ewha College some days ago wanted to invite Chung Doo Hyun [a North-Western man of letter], the brother of my son-in-law, to teach some subject in the College. I hear Cynn [Shin] neatly turned that down with the suggestion that particular subject should be taught by a woman teacher and not by a man!* <sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Chi-ho Yun, *The Diary of Yun Chi Ho*, vol.8, Seoul, 1921, 263-264, entry for 4 June 1921. The Northwestern provinces were Pyongan, Hwanghae, and Hamgyung.

<sup>127</sup> Sang-tae. Kim, 'Dongwoohoe and Heungup Gurakbu in the period of 1920-1930', *Comment on Korean History*, 28 Dec 1992, 221-222.

<sup>128</sup> C. Yun, *Diary of Yun Chi Ho*, vol. 9, 353-354, entry for 19 Apr 1931.

This had implications for Korean sport and football in particular.

The Chosun Sports Association, which administered Korean football until the early 1930s, was presided over by Shin, Yu, and Yun who were all deeply involved with Central YMCA and hailed from Giho. As leading politicians from the north-west had played an important part in impeaching Rhee, the president of the Korean Provisional Government in 1925 it was not surprising that they soon became embroiled in arguments with representatives of the Giho people on other matters, some relating to sport.<sup>129</sup> When the American secretary of the Pyongyang YMCA was controversially recalled home, Kim Dong Won, the Association's president, and Cho Man Sik, the general secretary, blamed the behind-the-scenes machinations of Shin Heung Woo.<sup>130</sup> Interestingly, both Kim and Cho made important contributions to the development of the ACFC at Pyongyang; Kim worked as the president of the championship from 1922 to 1924 and Cho assumed the post in 1931.<sup>131</sup> The corresponding political organization of the Heungup Club, Dongwoohoe included four members who were directly involved in Pyongyang Football Club and the Gwanseo Sports Association that hosted the championships at Pyongyang after 1925.<sup>132</sup> The whirling vortex of the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang politics could not be disassociated from football.

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<sup>129</sup> Byung-ryul Ban, 'The Impeachment of Rhee Syng Man and Leaders of the Korean Provisional Government at Shanghai', in Young-ik Yu, *Rhee Syng Man and the Korean Provisional Government*, The Scholarly Series of Modern Korean Study, vol.13, Seoul, 2009, 113-116.

<sup>130</sup> S. Kim, 'When Did Regional Antagonism emerge?', 268; Gyung-bae Min, *A 100-year History of the YMCA Movement in Seoul (1903-2003)*, Seoul, 2004, 305.

<sup>131</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 24 Apr 1922, 4 May 1923, 10 Apr 1924, 10 Apr 1931.

<sup>132</sup> Kim, 'Dongwoohoe and Heungup Gurakbu in the period of 1920-1930', 226-7; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 176, 233; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 10 Jan 1934.

The Gyung-sung-Pyongyang Football Championship inaugurated in 1929 reflected this situation. The Pyongyang side was comprised mainly of footballers from Soongsil College and Muo Football Club; the Gyung-sung team was dominated by players from Yeonhee College, Gyungshin Middle School, and the Chosun Football Club.<sup>133</sup> In 1929-1930, the Gyung-sung team included some footballers who were originally from the North-West.<sup>134</sup> One of them was Kim Won Gyeom of Gyung-sung's Bosung College where Pyongyang footballers were prominent in the late 1920s, thus adding to the inter-regional tensions.<sup>135</sup> The Gyung-sung-Pyongyang championship was characterized by 'rough play' and 'excessive competitiveness' in this period.<sup>136</sup> Many players intentionally kicked and threw their opponents with the referee's connivance. They were encouraged by shouts from the fans to 'hit them', 'kick them', and 'kill them'.<sup>137</sup> Such wildness seems to have been a product of intense inter-regional rivalry, and the outcome was that many footballers suffered injuries. This was one of the main reasons behind the suspension of the championship from 1931 to 1932.<sup>138</sup> When it was resumed, however, violent incidents continued, reaching a crescendo at the Gyung-Pyong tournaments in April and September 1933. The Pyongyang team attempted to kick the Gyung-sung footballers' legs rather than ball during the match at Pyongyang in April. In September, the Gyung-sung players retaliated with ferocious tackling that resulted in a Pyongyang footballer requiring hospital treatment for a severely injured ankle.<sup>139</sup> The personal enmity between Kim Won Gyeom (northern man) and Lee Young

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<sup>133</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 7 Oct 1929.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, 11 Oct 1929; 3 Dec 1930.

<sup>135</sup> The Publication Committee of Korea University, *The 60-Year Journal*, Seoul, 1962, 469.

<sup>136</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 41.

<sup>137</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Nov 1928.

<sup>138</sup> See *Segye Ilbo*, 20 Sep 1990.

<sup>139</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 270-271.

Min (southern man) reflected these antagonistic sentiments.<sup>140</sup>

When the Pyongyang Football Club officially came into existence in January 1933, the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang Football Championship entered a new phase. Up to this point the two teams contesting the championship were representative sides with no permanent composition and players drawn from different clubs but this now was changing.<sup>141</sup> The Pyongyang Football Club, probably anxious to stage the tournament to raise funds required for their forthcoming Tianjin tour, wrote to Kim suggesting that the championship should be resumed and that he should lead Gyung-sung team.<sup>142</sup> At the same time Lee Young Min was working to establish the Gyung-sung Football Club in the south. When the championship did take place in April, Lee did not participate because the Gyung-sung team was organized by his old enemy Kim.<sup>143</sup> Instead, he continued his work to establish the Gyung-sung Football Club in association with his friends, Lee Yong Gyeom and Lee Young Sun, graduates from Severance Medical and Yeonhee Colleges respectively. The chief director of Gyung-sung Football Club was Yeo Woon Hyung and one of his fellow directors was Yu Eok Gyeom.<sup>144</sup> Yeo was relatively moderate politically in comparison with Yu. Nevertheless, it was he who later that year suggested that Yun Chi Ho should 'form a party composed of loyal Southerners to counteract the unscrupulous plots and plans of the N. W. [North-Western] party'.<sup>145</sup> In this political climate it was not surprising that football relations between Gyung-sung

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<sup>140</sup> *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 20 May 1928.

<sup>141</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 28 Jan 1933.

<sup>142</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 44-45.

<sup>143</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 1 Apr 1933.

<sup>144</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 13 May 1933.

<sup>145</sup> Yun, *Diary of Yun Chi Ho*, vol. 10, 166, entry 4 Oct 1933.

and Pyongyang were so difficult.

On September 1933, another Gyung-Pyong Football Championship took place at Gyung-sung. Both Kim Won Gyeom and Lee Young Min were selected but did not join their respective teams.<sup>146</sup> A month later, with both the Gyung-sung and Pyongyang clubs established and having agreed to meet on a regular basis, the real championship was contested between the two clubs for the first time.<sup>147</sup> As the manager of Gyung-sung Club, Lee Young Min showed a bias towards current and former Yeonhee and Severance College students in selecting players. During the three-game-series at least six players connected with these colleges were fielded in every game.<sup>148</sup> Meanwhile, Kim Won Gyeom sought to rebuild the Chosun Football Club for a tour of Japan and China. This created a problem for the Gyung-sung club. In 1934, with the Gyung-Pyong Championship imminent, it seemed that three key players would be absent for at least some of the time owing to Chosun Football Club's upcoming Tianjin tour. As it happened these players barely took part in the championship and they set off for Tianjin before the tournament drew to a close.<sup>149</sup> As a consequence Pyongyang gained an easy 4-0 victory over a weakened Gyung-sung team in the third game. By 1935, as a consequence of this series of controversies, Lee Young Min, by then a director of the Chosun Football Association, had consolidated his influence on Korean football while Kim Won Gyeom had been denounced as a criminal.<sup>150</sup> These events did not help

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<sup>146</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (Evening), 20 Sept 1933; *Chosun Ilbo* (Morning), 22 Sept 1933.

<sup>147</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 8 Oct 1933.

<sup>148</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 25 Oct 1933; *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 26, 27 Oct, 1933.

<sup>149</sup> See Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 69- 77; *Chosun Joogang Ilbo*, 10 Apr 1934.

<sup>150</sup> For Lee Young Min, *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 21 Sept 1933; for Kim Won Gyeom, *Chosun Joogang Ilbo* (Morning), 26 Sept 1935.

Gyung-sung-Pyongyang relations.

Thereafter the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship was suspended until 1946. This is partly explained by the Pyongyang club's decision to give priority to their Tianjin tour in 1936 rather than contest the championship with Gyung-sung.<sup>151</sup> This tour also coincided with the Inter-City Football Championship.<sup>152</sup> Yet, though there was no confrontation on the field, inter-regional rivalry continued to characterize Korean football politics. Pyongyang voiced their discontent over the selection of the Korean squad for Japan's elimination match for the Berlin Olympics. Of sixteen players chosen, only five were from the Pyongyang club.<sup>153</sup>

There were other difficulties that helped to sour relations between the two clubs. Whereas Gyung-sung sometimes included players, notably Kim Won Gyeom, who came from Pyongyang, their north-western counterpart was comparably pure-blooded. When the Gyung-sung Football Club had been founded, its chief director had asked Choi Il, executive director of the Pyongyang Club, for permission to conscript Pyongyang footballers who were attending academic institutions in Gyung-sung.<sup>154</sup> At this time the Gyung-sung had a pressing need for players with excellent skills such as Jung Yong Soo. In 1933, Kim Won Gyeom wrote to Choi Il explaining that Jung was desperately required to strengthen Gyung-sung's defence and a transfer was arranged.<sup>155</sup> However, the

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<sup>151</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 104; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo*, 29 Apr 1936.

<sup>152</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo*, 26 Apr 1936.

<sup>153</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 90; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 15 May 1935; *Donga Ilbo* (Evening) 18 May 1935.

<sup>154</sup> See *Wolgan Joongang*, No. 178, Nov 1990, 474.

<sup>155</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 58; *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 1 Apr 1933; 22 Sept 1933.

Gyung-sung Club's requests were not always granted. The two clubs vied with one another for the services of Kim Young Keun of Soongsil School, regarded as a key player by Pyongyang, who also played for Gyungshin in Gyung-sung. The dispute remained unresolved and Kim played for neither side in the 1935 tournament.<sup>156</sup>

Underlying these problems were more fundamental differences. A relatively high proportion of Pyongyang Football Club's players were engaged in commerce or the civil service; whereas the Gyung-sung players were mainly college students. The average age of players at Pyongyang was higher than at Gyung-sung.<sup>157</sup> Playing styles were also different. At Gyung-sung there was an emphasis on individual skills and tactics whereas Pyongyang was renowned for physical strength and will to win.<sup>158</sup> The Pyongyang style reflected the culture of the region in which the club was based. It is said that the people of Pyongyang are characterized by strength and determination: 'Those who drink from the Daedong River are never beaten'.<sup>159</sup>

The Pyongyang people's aggression and boldness is well illustrated by the enduring popularity there of the stone-fight, a Korean folk game. This stone-throwing game, a foreign observer had noted, took place between different parts of the same town or contiguous villages and was often accompanied by fights between men wielding clubs. Not surprisingly the result was 'bruised arms, broken heads and unlimited invective'.<sup>160</sup> One of the leaders in Pyongyang sports circles at this time, Cho Man Sik, had taken

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, *National Pastime*, 85; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 59.

<sup>157</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 28 Jan 1933; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Evening), 19 Apr 1935.

<sup>158</sup> See *Chosun Ilbo*, 11 Oct 1990.

<sup>159</sup> Ohshima, *The Legend of Kick-off*, 50.

<sup>160</sup> Hulbert, *The Passing of Korea*, 351-352.

part in this game in his youth and also possessed a talent for Nalparam, a martial art practiced at Pyongyang which was similar to Taikwondo.<sup>161</sup> The tradition of the stone-fighting lasted much longer in Pyongyang than in any other province and was still evident in the mid 1930s.<sup>162</sup> A contemporary newspaper noted that it was stone-fighting and Nalparam that had made the Pyongyang people strong.<sup>163</sup> This may help to explain why football and basketball – ball games involving frequent bodily contact – were taken up with such enthusiasm in Pyongyang. Indeed, the newspaper *Donga Ilbo* pointed out in 1936 that there was very little evidence of baseball and lawn tennis of Pyongyang, attributing inactivity in these sports to them being unsuitable for Pyongyang people who were more naturally disposed to sports requiring physical strength.<sup>164</sup>

There was also a marked distinction between the two All Chosun Football Championships held at Pyongsang and Gyungung respectively. After 1930, the Pyongyang tournament included a section for company teams. This was intended to encourage the interest of local factory workers in football and reflected the region's ascending industrial economy.<sup>165</sup> A sizeable number of factories were crowded on the left side of the Daedong River at Pyongyang where Korean-owned which the rubber and hosiery factories were prominent.<sup>166</sup> Between 1930 and 1936 the Byungwoo Club ('The Friend of Arsenal') and teams from three Korean - and one Japanese-owned

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<sup>161</sup> Geun-jo Han, *Godang Cho Man Sik*, Seoul, 1973, 42.

<sup>162</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Evening), 5 Aug 1936.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid*, 21 Jul 1935.

<sup>164</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 3 June 1936.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, 16 Apr 1930.

<sup>166</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 48; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 3 June 1936.



rubber companies dominated the company section of the championship.<sup>167</sup> In 1934, no less than thirteen company teams took part but thereafter company participation notably diminished and only six teams – all from Japanese companies - took part in 1939.<sup>168</sup> The absence of teams from Korean-owned factories was regarded with some apprehension in the press.<sup>169</sup> However a trend was established and from the late 1930s onwards the power balance of company football was tilting towards Japanese-owned factory teams. Japanese company teams won the Meiji Shrine Games at Tokyo in 1941 and 1942 but with teams were composed almost entirely of Korean players.<sup>170</sup>

Meanwhile, the involvement of company teams in the ACFC at Gyungung was insignificant, with the exception of Chuldoguk (Railway) and Daechang Shoe Store.<sup>171</sup> The lion's share of Gyungung football was taken by such college teams as Yeonhee, Bosung and Soongsil. Such was the dominance of these colleges between 1927 and 1931 that the Chosun Sports Association decided to move the goalposts by restoring a separate college section of the championship in 1932.<sup>172</sup> Henceforth, other adult teams were to compete with each other without having to meet the challenge of formidable college teams. An indication of the prowess of Gyungung college football was provided by the Bosung team which whitewashed all of the thirteen Japanese college teams at

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<sup>167</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 12 May 1940; Mi-il Oh, *The First Industrial Capitalists in Modern Korea*, Seoul, 2002, 139-140.

<sup>168</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 May 1934; *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 11 May 1939.

<sup>169</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 19 May 1939.

<sup>170</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 265-266; Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 109.

<sup>171</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 82, 104.

<sup>172</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 168-169.

the All Japan College Football Championship in 1939.<sup>173</sup>

The social complexion of the crowds who attended the championships in the rival cities was very different. According to Kim Wha Jip, who played in the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship in the 1930s, 'the youth accounted for the vast majority of fans at Gyung-sung, while women working for textile and rubber factories and children formed a major part at Pyongyang'.<sup>174</sup> In Gyung-sung football was an entertainment mainly enjoyed by the modernized elite class in which students and salary men were prominent.<sup>175</sup> The culture of Pyongyang football was more socially inclusive. According to one press report in 1936, it was a 'marvelous spectacle' to see 'young and old ladies and *Gisaengs* – the Korean equivalent of Japanese *Geisha* - rooting for the team 'at the top of their voices'.<sup>176</sup> The Pyongyang *Gisaeng* was a nationally famous entertainment; there was even a *Gisaeng* school.<sup>177</sup> Some traditional Pyongyang *Gisaengs*, like the singer Wang Soo Bok, had embraced modernity and achieved public prominence and there were links between this branch of the entertainment industry and football. In 1935 twenty-three *Gisaengs* staged a concert to raise funds to enable the Pyongyang Football Club to participate in the Meiji Shrine Games.<sup>178</sup> A year later a performance in aid of the Pyongyang Football Club's Tianjin tour was staged by Chungchoonjwa, a troupe of entertainers attached to the Dongyang theatre at Gyung-sung, and thereafter this was repeated whenever they visited Pyongyang. In return for this financial support,

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<sup>173</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 7 Jan 1939.

<sup>174</sup> See *Chosun Ilbo*, 11 Oct 1990.

<sup>175</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 26 Apr 1936.

<sup>176</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 3 June 1936.

<sup>177</sup> Hyun-gyu Shin, *A Tale of Giseang: Pop Star in the Colonial Period*, Paju, 2007, 37-9, 54-9.

<sup>178</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (evening edition), 12, Aug, 1935, cited in J. Kang, *Football is Korea: A 124-year History of Korean Football (1882-2006)*, Seoul, 2006, 41.

Pyongyang Football Club would use its influence to settle various problems between the troupe and the police.<sup>179</sup>

Pyongyang's football fans regarded the Gyung-Pyong Championship as being especially important. For them, their beloved football supplied a field on which they could demonstrate their resistance to the centralizing power of Gyung-sung, just as Korean football in general provided a way of challenging Japanese domination. This led to a confrontation with the authorities in April 1934 when news leaked out of a Football Control Decree drawn up by the education and management bureau of Japanese Government-General at Gyung-sung. If this decree had been implemented, it would have allowed only one ACFC to be played annually, effectively prohibiting the Pyongyang tournament.<sup>180</sup> Cho Man Sik, president of the Gwanseo Sports Association in Pyongyang, took the lead in opposing the decree and dispatched two officials to Gyung-sung to make their opposition clear.<sup>181</sup> He argued that the decree effectively disregarded the interests of an organization like the Gwanseo Sports Association which relied on the ACFC as a source of income. The Association successfully argued its case by pointing to the example of Japanese baseball. Although it had been subject to a Baseball Control Decree since 1932 an exception had been made for the two Middle School baseball tournaments sponsored by the *Asahi* and *Mainichi* newspapers.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning edition), 24 Apr 1936; see also *Wolgan Joongang*, Nov 1990, 477.

<sup>180</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 275.

<sup>181</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 15 Apr 1934.

<sup>182</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 86; T. Ariyama, *Koshien Baseball and the Japanese*, Tokyo, 1997, 164-7.

#### (4) Newspaper support for Korean football

During the colonial period, newspapers were the pre-eminent medium capable of instilling a sense of Korean national identity and nationalist sentiment in the population at large. At the same time they were also commercial enterprises engaged in a battle for circulation. Sports tournaments were very important for Korean newspapers; they helped them to achieve commercial viability and to pursue wider social and political aims. Primarily sports events were used to enhance a particular newspaper's image and enlarge its circulation. It is crucial, however, to understand that there was not a wide newspaper readership at the time in Korea.<sup>183</sup> Newspapers did not function as daily necessities for most Korean people.<sup>184</sup> The situation was not comparable to that of France where the French sporting paper, *L'Auto*, had increased its circulation and attracted subsidies from cycle manufacturers by exploiting the growing popularity of the *Tour de France* in the early twentieth century.<sup>185</sup> Although Korean newspapers made an important contribution to the growth of football, they were not able to profit in the same way.

Some important characteristics of the development of football coverage in Korean newspapers are clear. This link between newspapers and football was generally made as a result of the initiatives of journalists or other employees who were former sportsmen or had a close connection with sports. The establishment of the Chosun Sports

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<sup>183</sup> Jin-seok Jung, *The History of Korean Newspapers*, Seoul, 1990, 552-557.

<sup>184</sup> *Gaebyuk*, 1 Mar 1935, 17.

<sup>185</sup> See R. Holt, *Sport and Society in Modern France*, Basingstoke, 1981, 96-103; also D. Porter, 'Entrepreneurship', in S.W. Pope and J. Nauright (eds), *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, Abingdon, 2010, 209.

Association in 1920 owed much to Byun Bong Hyun, a journalist at *Donga Ilbo* and a former baseball player who had made the case for an all-embracing Korean sports organization in a series of articles. Of the ninety sponsors of the Chosun Sports Association, twelve were connected with *Donga Ilbo*. Almost all of the sporting events set up by the Chosun Sports Association, were assisted by *Donga Ilbo*, as in the case of the ACFC at Gyung-sung. Many regional branches of *Donga Ilbo* followed this lead in the early 1920s.<sup>186</sup> For example, the ACFC at Pyongyang was sponsored by the Pyongyang branch of *Donga Ilbo* from the outset.<sup>187</sup> In addition, there was a very intimate relationship between *Donga* and the Gwanseo Sports Association which underpinned this development. The Association was based at the Pyongyang branch of *Donga Ilbo* and Kim Sung Up, a key figure in the Association, worked for the paper.<sup>188</sup> Though other newspapers - *Chosun Ilbo*, *Sidae Ilbo*, and *Joongwoe Ilbo* - intermittently supported the championship - *Donga Ilbo* was the main sponsor. For the 1940 championship *Donga* installed fifteen news-boards at various locations in Pyongyang to display the latest scores.<sup>189</sup>

The Gyung-Pyong Football Championship in 1929 was the brainchild of Lee Won Yong and Choi Jung Mook.<sup>190</sup> Lee Won Yong was a sports writer for *Chosun Ilbo* and Choi Jung Mook, a lawyer, worked as the head of the paper's Pyongyang branch in the late 1920s.<sup>191</sup> Lee Won Yong, a former baseball player, had an enormous interest in sports

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<sup>186</sup> The Publication Committee for the History of *Donga Ilbo*, *The History of Donga Ilbo (1920-45)*, vol. 1, Seoul, 1975, 193-194.

<sup>187</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 173.

<sup>188</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Dec 1927; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 3 June 1936.

<sup>189</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 23 May 1940.

<sup>190</sup> See *Segye Ilbo*, 20 Sept 1990.

<sup>191</sup> Japanese Government-General at Gyung-sung, *The Biographical Dictionary of Members of*

business. He founded a sports shop at Gyung-sung and later published a sports magazine entitled *Chosun Cheyukgye*.<sup>192</sup> Newspapers were involved in 1922 when American professional baseball players competed with All Chosun team at Gyung-sung, a key moment in the development of sport as commercial entertainment in Korea. The game was promoted by Lee Won Yong and sponsored by *Chosun Ilbo*.<sup>193</sup> Personal connections were always important. During the late 1920s, the financially hard-pressed *Joongwoe Ilbo* had employed the son of Baik In Gi, a wealthy landowner as a means of soliciting Baik's investment.<sup>194</sup> Baik's son, Baik Myung Gon, who was employed part-time by *Joongwoe* while continuing as general manager of Chosun Football Club.<sup>195</sup> The link was strengthened when Ma Chun Sik, a Chosun footballer, became a *Joongwoe* sports journalist. When he was dispatched to Shanghai in the late 1920s, he became aware that leading figures in Chinese sport and also Koreans residing in China would welcome a visit from the Chosun club. When Chosun visited Shanghai in 1928 the tour was promoted by *Joongwoe Ilbo*.<sup>196</sup>

Almost all of *Chosun Joongwoe Ilbo's* sports coverage was inextricably related to its president, Yeo Woon Hyung. He was a sportsman himself, having played football at Pyongyang Christian School in the early 1910s and captained the YMCA Baseball

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*Parliament in Chosun*, Gyung-sung, 1931, 258.

<sup>192</sup> For sports shop, *Donga Ilbo*, 23 Oct 1921; for magazine, *Donga Ilbo* (Morning) 15 Apr 1933.

<sup>193</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 76-77.

<sup>194</sup> 'The Financing Plan of Joongwoe Ilbo', *Research Documents on Ideological Issues*, No.4, Gyungjonggyunggobi No. 6917, June, 1928, cited in Mi-il Oh, 'The Business Method of Korean Businessmen with Political Affiliation During the Japanese Colonial Period: The Capital Accumulation and Political-Social Activities of Baik Nam-Shin and Baik In-Ki', *History and the Boundaries*, 57, Dec 2005, 149.

<sup>195</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 190; *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 3 Aug 1928.

<sup>196</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 103; *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 12 Jan 1928.

Club.<sup>197</sup> When he was released from prison in 1932, Yeo became a cult hero, not only on account of his endeavours for the Korean independence movement but also because he cultivated his image as a sportsman thus provoking great enthusiasm amongst Korean youth.<sup>198</sup> He became president of the Gyung-sung Football Club in 1933 and of the Chosun Football Association in the following year.<sup>199</sup> Meanwhile he employed Lee Young Sun and Jung Yong Soo, both from the Gyung-sung Football Club, as sports journalists for his newspaper.<sup>200</sup> In the mid-1930s the *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* and the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship were inextricably linked.

It is possible to observe an interesting connection between the state of newspaper finances and football. Whenever new capital was injected into newspaper companies, they eagerly publicized football events, particularly international matches, as a means of engaging the attention of the public. When newspaper companies ran into financial difficulties, however, they tended to cut down or even scrap their football coverage. Thus, the expansion and contraction of football news may have provided an indication of the changing fortunes of Korean newspaper companies.

At least until 1935 *Donga Ilbo* was the most financially stable Korean newspaper and the one with the largest number of subscribers. This helps to explain why *Donga* was so influential in Korean sports circles.<sup>201</sup> The *Donga's* generous sports sponsorship was

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<sup>197</sup> E. Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 9; Jung-sik Lee, *Yeo Woon Hyung*, Seoul, 2008, 93.

<sup>198</sup> *Samchuli*, May 1934, 45.

<sup>199</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 13 May 1933; Dong-jin Ju and Hong-ryul Ko, Mongyang Yeo Woon Hyung's Sports and Cultural Activities, in Sports Society Philosophy Studies, *A history of Korean Sport Figures*, Seoul, 2004, 131.

<sup>200</sup> H. Jung, *Korean Sports Fantasy*, 50; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 24 June 1936.

<sup>201</sup> J. Jung, *History of Korean Newspapers*, Seoul, 1990, 408-409, 553.

certainly advantageous to sports enthusiasts but was also driven by self-interest. This was made clear in 1927 when *Donga Ilbo* postponed the Club Baseball Championship, which it sponsored, in order to make way for the Invitation Football Matches which Waseda University had agreed to play in Korea, which were also sponsored by *Donga Ilbo*. It was considered that an 'international' contest between Korean and Japanese teams was likely to be more significant and to attract more public interest than the baseball championship.<sup>202</sup> To underline its commitment *Donga Ilbo* arranged for pigeons to be released at the invitation matches, the first time this had been done in Korea.<sup>203</sup> *Donga* was financially stable; the situation at *Joongwoe* was less favourable. Having hosted the Invitation Football Matches involving Meiji University of Tokyo in May 1928, *Joongwoe* attempted to cash in on the popularity of football at Pyongyang by staging an ACFC in 1930.<sup>204</sup> However, it was unable to follow this up in 1931, because the company owning the paper went bankrupt.<sup>205</sup>

The Gyung-Pyong Championship had been made possible by donations from, among others, the head of the Jeonnam branch of *Chosun* and this paper sponsored other sporting events in 1929 including a further series of Invitation Football Matches involving Waseda University.<sup>206</sup> However, in the early 1930s, *Chosun Ilbo* found itself in dire financial straits being heavily in debt and forced to lay off staff. It seems likely that *Chosun Ilbo's* problems were one of the factors which led to the suspension of the

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<sup>202</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 17 Sept 1927.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid*, 27 Sept 1927.

<sup>204</sup> *Joongwoe Ilbo* (Morning), 9 Sept 1930; 4 Oct 1930.

<sup>205</sup> Jung, *History of Korean Newspapers*, 426.

<sup>206</sup> The Publication Committee for the History of Chosun Ilbo, *A 50-Year History of Chosun Ilbo*, Seoul, 1970, 131; *Donga Ilbo*, 7 Sept 1929.



Gyung-Pyong Championship.<sup>207</sup>

It was not until 1933, when it was taken over and rescued by a gold-mine tycoon from the North-West named Bang Ung Mo, that *Chosun Ilbo* got back on the right track.<sup>208</sup> Three years later, in 1936, it was much advantaged in its battle to achieve the highest circulation when its main rivals ran into difficulties. *Donga Ilbo* was suspended by the Japanese authorities for publishing a photograph from which the national flag of Japan on Son Kee Jung's shirt had been intentionally deleted. *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* who also carried a photograph with the flag being erased voluntarily suspended its publication in the wake of the *Donga Ilbo* affair. Only *Chosun Ilbo* cleverly avoided trouble by choosing a photograph which had been taken by a Japanese news photographer from an angle where the flag on his flannel shirt had been invisible so that there was no need to delete the flag.<sup>209</sup> As the Korean newspaper with the largest circulation after 1936, *Chosun Ilbo* was able to resume its relationship with sport, lending its resources to many sports events, including the All Chosun Inter-City Football Championship between 1938 and 1940.<sup>210</sup>

By then *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* had already launched what was up to that point the biggest football event ever staged in Korea: the Invitation Matches played by the Donghua Football Club of Shanghai. The elaborate arrangements included a music

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<sup>207</sup> Chosun Ilbo Research Centre for its Historical Materials, *The People of Chosun Ilbo: Japanese Colonial Period*, Seoul, 2004, 262-267.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid, 299-305.

<sup>209</sup> See *Chosun Ilbo*, 29 Jan 2010.

<sup>210</sup> The Publication Committee for the History of Chosun Ilbo, *A 50-year History of Chosun Ilbo*, 565-566.

concert to welcome the team. In addition an aeroplane carrying words of welcome dropped a ball and a bunch of flowers into the Gyung-sung stadium.<sup>211</sup> The price of an admission ticket for the match was more than three times that of the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship that was held in the same year. *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* also issued vouchers enabling their readers to watch the game at a 20 per cent reduced price.<sup>212</sup> This football event was so successfully promoted that almost 30,000 gathered at the Pyongyang Gilimli Stadium on the day.<sup>213</sup> When the All-Gyung-sung Team triumphed over Donghua an extra edition was published in order to make the result known as quickly as possible.<sup>214</sup> At this time, this was considered the most efficient medium for the prompt distributing of sports news as radio had only very small number of listeners.<sup>215</sup> There was an attempt to build on this success by increasing financial support for the All Chosun Inter-City Football Championship which was held under the auspices of *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* in 1936.<sup>216</sup> This championship proved very significant in attracting those who had not previously been interested in football. For example, local patriotism transformed Kim Won Ju, a female writer who had never watched a game before, into a fan of her hometown team, Jinnampo.<sup>217</sup> However, the relationship between *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* and the Inter-City Championship was short-lived as the newspaper was discontinued after 1937.<sup>218</sup> It seems likely that the relationship between football and the press in this era was probably more beneficial to

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<sup>211</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 16 Apr 1935; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Evening), 20 Apr 1935.

<sup>212</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 14, 16, 18 Apr 1935.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid*, 24 Apr 1935.

<sup>214</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Extra), 21 Apr 1935.

<sup>215</sup> Chun, *A Syndrome Still Lingered On*, 30-33.

<sup>216</sup> Jung, *History of Korean Newspapers*, 429.

<sup>217</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 27 Apr 1936.

<sup>218</sup> Jung, *History of Korean Newspapers*, 430.

football than it was to the press.

## **(5) Individual football patrons**

It is also important to detail the considerable impact of a few powerful individual patrons on the development of football in Korea. These patrons largely fall into two categories: they were either the heirs of a landowners or professional men. Bak Myung Gon and Bae Seok Whan were typical members of the leisure class who had benefited from inherited wealth. In 1925, when the Buddhist Young Men's Association faced financial difficulties, it was transformed into the Chosun Football Club by Baik Myung Gon and went on to become the most prestigious team in Korea.<sup>219</sup> So great was their patron's wealth that *Donga Ilbo* became concerned about the Chosun club's ability to monopolize the best Korean footballers.<sup>220</sup> In 1926 and 1928 the club went on tours to Japan and China by virtue of his benevolent assistance; the tour to Japan was the first ever made by Korean footballers.<sup>221</sup> Baik rented a house at Gyung Sung to accommodate the players for two months before the Japanese tour and financed this luxurious trip to the amount of 7,000 won.<sup>222</sup> Apart from Chosun Football Club, he financially backed a Korean Jazz Band and he was known as the most extravagant person in Korea.<sup>223</sup> Every Christmas, he held a party to which the footballers were

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<sup>219</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 189.

<sup>220</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Nov 1927.

<sup>221</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 189-191.

<sup>222</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 18 Aug 1926; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 24-25. 7,000 won could be converted into approximately two hundred million won in today's value.

<sup>223</sup> *Samchuli*, Nov 1935, 91, 93.

invited, the event gingered up by many a *Gisaeng* as well as the jazz band.<sup>224</sup> However, his chronic habit of wasting money along with a decrease in the price of rice from the mid-20s onwards eventually restrained his patronage.<sup>225</sup> In 1934, despite his financial problems, Baik backed another Chosun club football tour to Japan and China but stretched his resources too far. With the Chinese tour on the verge of cancellation, Lim Chang Bok donated 300 won for this journey. This new benefactor was associated with a petroleum company in Tianjin and he was also a famous tennis player.<sup>226</sup>

Gyung Sung Football Club was financed by Bae Seok Whan who had inherited several hundred won after legal proceedings against his half brother.<sup>227</sup> He also sponsored Bae Jong Ho, a footballer for the Chosun Football Club who was to become a key player in the Japanese national side in the late 1930s, so that he could study at Waseda University.<sup>228</sup> Bae Seok Whan's lifestyle was reminiscent of Baik's. He squandered his money on womanizing and purchasing expensive automobiles and motor-bikes. Having once been the king of Korean high society, he fell on hard times and degenerated into the owner of a grogshop after the Korean War.<sup>229</sup> Other patrons were less extravagant. In the mid 1920s, Hwimoon Middle School's football and baseball were financially supported by Jeon Hyeong Pil, later to become the most famous art collector in Korea. At the time he was a member of Hwimoon baseball team. He always made sure that the footballers and baseball players of Hwimoon Middle School were served a square meal

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<sup>224</sup> See *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 3 Feb 1978.

<sup>225</sup> Oh, 'Business Methods of Korean Businessmen', 147-149; Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 69-70.

<sup>226</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 73; *Donga Ilbo*, 7 Oct 1923.

<sup>227</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 13 May 1933; *Donga Ilbo*, 6 May 1928.

<sup>228</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 161; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 189.

<sup>229</sup> See *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 28 Oct 1959.

after matches and training sessions.<sup>230</sup> Another landowner and philanthropist, Jeon Young Joon donated his land to the general public of Jeju Island who had experienced difficulties in finding a space on which to play football. The land donated by him became a public stadium.<sup>231</sup>

Yet patronage of football was sometimes derived from other motives cloaked in the garb of benevolence. During the 1930s, with the introduction of the company section of the ACFC at Pyongyang, many factory teams were established by affluent entrepreneurs. It has been argued that companies effectively institutionalized their commitment to paternalistic capitalism by sponsoring such teams. However, it should be remembered that the newly-organized company section emerged at a time of labour unrest over the wage system, notably at rubber factories from the late 1920s onwards.<sup>232</sup> In these circumstances, the owners of rubber factories might have expected their company teams to improve the soured state of industrial relations. It is highly probable that such considerations help to explain Song Seok Chan's interest in the Gwanseo Sports Association after 1930.<sup>233</sup> Song Seok Chan, the director of the Association, was one of the principal shareholders of the Seogyung Commerce and Industry Company, mainly dealing with rubber. In April 1930 the workers at Seogyung went on strike. A month later the company's team was entered in the ACFC at Pyongyang.<sup>234</sup> It is important to

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<sup>230</sup> Wan-soo Choi, 'Kan Song Jeon Hyeong Pil', in Centre for the Study of Korean Arts, *Kan Song Mun Hwa*, 70, Seoul, 2006, 115-116.

<sup>231</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 Aug 1925; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 249.

<sup>232</sup> For strikes at rubber factories in Pyongyang see *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 13 Aug 1928; 8 Aug 1930; *Donga Ilbo*, 11 May 1929; 22 May 1931; *Joongwoe Ilbo* (Evening), 18 Apr 1930.

<sup>233</sup> See *Donga Ilbo*, 26 Mar 1931; *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 23 Jan 1928.

<sup>234</sup> M. Oh, *First Industrial Capitalists*, 140; *Joongwoe Ilbo* (Evening), 18 Apr 1930; *Joongwoe Ilbo* (Morning), 16 May 1930.

look at the active participation and relatively good results of rubber factory teams in the championship during the early 1930s in the context of the difficult industrial relations of the period.

Elsewhere local patriotism was boosted by local worthies who made Hamheung and Majang into new football strongholds. Hamheung, the central city of Hamgyung Province in the northernmost part of Korea, rapidly developed into a significant power in Korean football. By recruiting young players from the Pyongyang Club who were rarely fielded and ex-Yeonhee College footballers, Hamheung won the Meiji Shrine Games at Tokyo for two years in a row (1939-40).<sup>235</sup> The meteoric rise of Hamheung football was made possible by three enthusiastic supporters in the city. Kim Myung Hak, a surgeon, who went riding with high-ranking Japanese officials, orchestrated the foundation of the football club.<sup>236</sup> The other supporters were Moon Tae Soo and Lee Sung Joo. Moon employed in the financial department of South Hamgyung provincial office, had sufficient wealth to donate 20,000 won in order to establish the Hamheung Women's Normal High School.<sup>237</sup> Lee, who was involved in the theatre business, was also a director of the Chosun Football Association. They provided all the Hamheung footballers with employment, either in their own businesses or in Japanese companies, by using their social connections with Japanese entrepreneurs and civil servants to good effect.<sup>238</sup> The footballers were allowed to leave their work at two in the afternoon, which guaranteed enough time for training.<sup>239</sup> Preferential treatment of this kind was

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<sup>235</sup> Oh, *First Industrial Capitalists*, 235-236; Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 112.

<sup>236</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 111.

<sup>237</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 2 Mar 1935.

<sup>238</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 112,114; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 173.

<sup>239</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 104.

unprecedented and was clearly advantageous for Hamheung. Most Korean footballers were in jobs, where they had a hard time juggling their work and football commitments. In 1936, for example, one Pyongyang footballer-cum-clerk who had been selected for an overseas football tour was released by his employer only at the last minute.<sup>240</sup> At Majang the football Club was eagerly supported by Lim Heung Soon, a member of Gyung-sung municipal assembly as well as the general manager of Gyung-sung Football Club.<sup>241</sup> Lim, a key figure in the town, established the club in pursuit of enhancing local pride and fulfilling his political ambitions. Majang, though a small town and a suburb of Gyung-sung, took part in the Inter-City Football Championship in 1940 and 1941, beating the prestigious Gyung-sung Football Club.<sup>242</sup>

Other examples of sponsorship by entrepreneurs involve owners of shoe stores who may have had particular reasons for their commitment to football. The Daechang Shoe Store set up a football team, participating in the ACFC at Gyung-sung in 1929. The company was already linked with football as the offices of the Chosun Football Club were located at the shoe store.<sup>243</sup> Han Gyung Sun Shoe Store's football team participated in the All Chosun Games in 1936. Its owner had an eye for publicity and had promised Son Kee Jung, the marathon winner at the Berlin Olympics, that he would have free shoes for the rest of his life.<sup>244</sup> Significantly, both these shoe stores also traded in sporting goods, which was presumably a factor which drew them to

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<sup>240</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 23 Apr 1936.

<sup>241</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 235; *Donga Ilbo*, 16 Sep 1931.

<sup>242</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 126.

<sup>243</sup> KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 104. *Joongwoe Ilbo*, 20 Feb 1929.

<sup>244</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 222; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Evening), 13 Aug 1936.

football.<sup>245</sup> Daechang and Han Gyung Sun also provided ticket agency facilities for football championships. In addition, Daechang printed match programmes and supplied footballs for the first Inter-City Football Championship in 1936.<sup>246</sup>

## **(6) Overseas football tours and Korean footballers abroad**

In the period when it was under Japanese colonial rule, there was very limited sports interchange between Korea and the West. Korea's external football contacts were largely limited to Japan and China. Patriotic sentiments spilled over in the stadium whenever any football match against Japanese opposition took place. A significant historical moment pertaining to Korean football nationalism came when the Soongsil Middle School won the All-Japan Middle School Football Championship at the Koshien Stadium in 1928. The Soongsil coach had instructed his footballers to speak only in Korean during the game against their Japanese opponents, an instruction that stoked the flames of nationalism.<sup>247</sup> At a celebration party after the match one Korean exile in Japan was moved to say that 'you [Soongsil] came here to save us'.<sup>248</sup> When the Soongsil footballers arrived back in Pyongyang there was an unprecedented motorcade. They were welcomed with great enthusiasm; eighty wons and two automobiles were donated to the school.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 26 Apr 1936; KSA, *History of the Korean Sports Association*, 82.

<sup>246</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo*, 20 Sept 1933; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 26 Apr 1936.

<sup>247</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 Jan 1928.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, 17 Jan 1928.

<sup>249</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 14 Jan 1928.



At times, Japan's ethnic discrimination against Koreans caused much displeasure. Only two Korean footballers were chosen for the Berlin Games although the Gyung-sung club, representing Korea and strengthened by some players from Pyongyang, had won Japan's two major national championships that were regarded as try-outs for the Olympics as well.<sup>250</sup> The Gyung-sung club boycotted the Olympics in protest at the unfair selection process and the president of the Chosun Football Association, Yeo Woon Hyung, also took a militant stand.<sup>251</sup> On this occasion the Koreans were not alone in feeling that they had been unfairly treated. This biased selection also prompted the Kansai (West Japan) Football Association to protest. Of the twenty-five members of the squad called up just three were from Kansai and they boycotted the camp training. The Kansai Association thought of this as favouritism towards Ganto (East Japan) and explained it by pointing to Ganto's monopoly on the council of the Japan Football Association.<sup>252</sup> Admittedly, the Japanese head coach, an old boy of Waseda University, preferred the short-passing style to the kick and rush style practiced by Korean teams and teams from the Kansai district universities.<sup>253</sup> But, as far as Koreans were concerned, the composition of Japanese football team for the Berlin Games simply reflected the discriminatory treatment to they were routinely subjected by their Japanese rulers.<sup>254</sup> In the end, after many twists and turns, one Korean footballer, Kim Yong Sik, did play at the Berlin Games. He helped Japan upset Sweden 3-2.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 15, Dec, 1935; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 1, Mar 1936.

<sup>251</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 11 Mar 1936.

<sup>252</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 31 Mar 1936.

<sup>253</sup> See R. Light and Y. Watanabe, 'J League Football and the Rethinking of Regional Identity in Japan', *Sporting Traditions*, 18 (2), May 2002, 36.

<sup>254</sup> Ohsima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 74.

<sup>255</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 279.

After the Berlin Games, thirteen Korean footballers were conscripted into the Japanese national squad.<sup>256</sup> Tokyo was due to host the 1940 Olympics and with this very much in mind, the Japan Football Association was anxious to strengthen its team even if that meant selecting Korean footballers. There was also a political dimension because the idea of a national football team in which Japanese and Koreans would play together seemed a good way of demonstrating in practice the concept of *Naesun Ilche*, the idea that Japan and Korea were united in a single body, a prominent feature of the propaganda circulated by the Japanese colonial government based at Gyungung.<sup>257</sup> However, progress towards integration was not immediately apparent. In March 1938, during the course of a world tour, the Islington Corinthians arrived in Japan and suffered a 4-0 thrashing by a Japanese Olympic XI. Spectators, who had expected something better, were disappointed by a somewhat languid display by the English amateurs who were tired from their journey. Their diarist admitted: 'I am sure that had we not suffered from staleness... a different score would have resulted'. But Koreans who watched the match, like Lee Young Min, were also displeased because only one Korean player was included in the side.<sup>258</sup> By the time of the East Asian Games in 1942, however, this was no longer the case. With the Far Eastern Games discontinued following a dispute over the affiliation of Manjuguk (the Japanese puppet regime established in Manchuria in 1932) and the Tokyo Olympics abandoned, the Japanese government, much influenced by fascist ideology, required a new tournament in order to display its national strength. This climate led to the East Asian Games of 1942 in

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<sup>256</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, 1986, 270.

<sup>257</sup> Ohsima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 87.

<sup>258</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (Morning), 27 Mar, 13 Apr 1938; R. Alaway, *Football all Round the World: Islington Corinthians*, London, 1948, 122.

which Japan, China, Philippines, Mongo, and Manjuguk participated.<sup>259</sup> Japan's football team, now including Korean footballers, won easy victories by lopsided scores over China, Mongo, and Manjuguk.<sup>260</sup> In the Games, two Korean footballers also played for China.<sup>261</sup> A further indication of the strength of Korean football came after the tournament when a Japanese team comprising five Korean football talents was defeated by a Korean selection.<sup>262</sup>

In the 1930s, the visit of the Islington Corinthians aside, significant footballing contacts with teams from the West were few, though matches were often played against teams of foreign sailors visiting Korean ports, mainly weak sides.<sup>263</sup> It was when they toured China that Korean footballers had opportunities to face against quality Western teams. In Shanghai in 1928, the Chosun Football Club played against British Army teams such as the Coldstream Guards, Royal Corps of Signals, and the Northamptonshire Regiment. The Chosun players and officials also learned much about sportsmanship and sophisticated football skills through watching the intra-squad match of a foreigners club based in Shanghai. It was a good lesson for the Club whose play had been characterized by foul play and reckless long kicking. Chosun Football Club struggled to defend against the aerial attacks of their taller counterparts notably, in the match against the Coldstream Guards.<sup>264</sup> For exiles living in Shanghai - most of them were

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<sup>259</sup> A. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: a History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China*, Berkeley and London, 2004, 164-5; A. Guttmann and L. Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, Honolulu, 2001, 126-7; Ohsima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 84-86.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid, 85.

<sup>261</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 273.

<sup>262</sup> *Maeil Shinbo* (Morning), 17 Aug 1942.

<sup>263</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 273-274.

<sup>264</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 4, 9, 17, 10 Feb 1928.

badly off - the visit of Korean team was a great consolation. At the same time the Shanghai football tour brought the Korean footballers into contact with the nationalist movement. In 1936, at a banquet held by the Provisional Korean Government which was based in Shanghai, Yeonhee College's footballers were very touched to see the Korean national flag for the first time.<sup>265</sup>

The All Tianjin Foreigners Team was probably the strongest side faced by Korean teams in China. Though they played against them five times in 1936, the Pyongyang Football Club gained only one victory.<sup>266</sup> After this win, many Westerners - mainly military personnel and women who had read enthusiastic accounts of Pyongyang's talent in local newspapers - gathered at the stadium to watch the return match but on this occasion the Tianjin team, reinforced by fielding four key players, defeated Pyongyang.<sup>267</sup> Contact with the Tianjin team was especially important as it introduced Pyongyang to the 'W-M' formation that was then the normal practice in Europe but relatively unknown in Asia. It played an important part in Japan's victory over Sweden at Berlin.<sup>268</sup> A passing game honed by well-organized training was another legacy derived from contact with the Tianjin Team. Korean football being awash with individual dribbles and long kicks needed a more scientific approach to the game at this time. In 1938, a critic in *Donga Ilbo* pointed out the deficiencies of Korean football with a succinct summary of a game between Keio University and Gyungsung Football Club which had 'left an impression of a victory in terms of physical strength, but an utter defeat in

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<sup>265</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 6 Feb 1978; YOBA, *70 years of Yonsei Football*, 397.

<sup>266</sup> *Chosun Joongang Ilbo* (Morning), 5 May 1936.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid*, 10, 13 May 1936.

<sup>268</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 55, 83; Ohsima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 76-78; For 'W-M' see J. Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid: A History of Football Tactics*, 42-56.

terms of skill'.<sup>269</sup> Indeed, physical strength and endurance were the most characteristic features of Korean football, a tendency that Hamheung footballers typified by playing '180-minute training games' to strengthen their stamina.<sup>270</sup>

Korean students studying abroad were also important in bringing the modern game of football to Korea. Student teams from Tokyo and Shanghai visited their homeland from the early 1920s, a period when conventional football rules were still not widely implemented. These student teams played friendly matches against local teams helped modern football rules and skills to take root in every region of Korea.<sup>271</sup> The Hakwoohoe club for Korean students in Japan made frequent visits to Korea to play football matches up until 1939.<sup>272</sup> Hakwoohoe had participated in the Ganto Football Tournament hosted by the first Japanese football club at Tokyo in 1918 but had failed to win a match.<sup>273</sup> Over the next few years they worked hard to improve. Two tournaments for Korean footballers studying at Japanese academic institutions were staged by Hakwoohoe and the Chosun YMCA in Japan in 1924 and 1925. These were held in an attempt to prepare Korean students to take on and match any Japanese team.<sup>274</sup> This preparation bore fruit when Hakwoohoe defeated seven Japanese sides in 1928. The Kyobun Middle School team from Hiroshima – all Korean students - were another important influence. Having won the 1931 All Japan Middle School Football

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<sup>269</sup> *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 12 Aug 1938.

<sup>270</sup> Ohsima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 104.

<sup>271</sup> See *Chosun Ilbo*, 27 May 1973.

<sup>272</sup> See *Donga Ilbo* (Evening), 25 Jul 1939.

<sup>273</sup> *Hakjigwang*, Mar 1918, 82; Hwan Son, 'Sport Activities of Hakwoohoe in Japan, *Korean Journal for History of Physical Education, Sport and Dance*, vol. 13, 2004, 52.

<sup>274</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Dec, 1924; 21, Nov, 3 Dec 1925; *Hakjigwang*, Apr 1930, 90-91.

Championship, they visited Korea in 1933.<sup>275</sup> The Kyobun Middle School also helped the Korean student team in 1931 by providing accommodation and training facilities before their tour of the homeland. This tour had been arranged by Choi Il, who would later transform Pyongyang Football Club into a permanent side in 1933.<sup>276</sup>

Some Chinese-educated Korean footballers who took part in the Shanghai student team became major figures in the Korean football circles. Shin Ki Joon, an old boy of Shanghai's Jiao Tong University, visited Korea as the leader of the Shanghai Student Football team in 1922. He later became a professor at Yeonhee College where he strove to develop college football. In 1928 Shin was appointed president of what was the first national organization in Korean football, the Chosun Football Referees Association.<sup>277</sup> He also arranged Yeonhee College's football tour to China in 1936. Another member of the Shanghai Student Team, Hyun Jung Joo, was such a gifted footballer that he was selected to play for the Chinese national team in the early 1920s. He later coached Yoenhee College and was a director of both the Gyung Sung Football Club and the Chosun Football Association.<sup>278</sup>

It was in Gando, the north-east part of China, that the football fever of Korean immigrants was most evident. Gando, was transformed by a massive influx of Korean patriots and ordinary Koreans occurred in this period. By 1935 the number of Koreans immigrants had reached 460,000, accounting for approximately 75 per cent of Gando's

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<sup>275</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* (Evening), 3 Sept 1933.

<sup>276</sup> *Wolgan Joongang*, Nov 1990, 473-474, 478; *Donga Ilbo*, 16 Jun 1931.

<sup>277</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 8 Oct 1927; *Donga Ilbo*, 25 May 1928; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 182.

<sup>278</sup> YOBA, *70 Years of Yonsei Football*, 297.

population.<sup>279</sup> Gando football rapidly thrived on the initiative of the schools. From 1923, an inter-school football tournament was held in Gando but it was marked by frequent conflicts. In 1924, there was a riot at a match attended by more than 10,000 supporters of Dongheung Middle School, which had been established by Korean nationalists, and the referee was beaten severely on account of an allegedly biased decision in a match against a mission school. The incident continued into the next day with students throwing stones and wielding sticks, and the police only managed to bring the disturbance to an end by firing warning shots from guns.<sup>280</sup> The highly-competitive attitude amongst the Korean schools in Gando was exacerbated by the fact that some had been founded by Western missionaries or Korean Christians, while others were established by nationalist organizations. Sabbatarianism became an issue in these circumstances caused a problem. When Sunday fixtures were scheduled in 1925 the two mission schools who objected were disqualified and asked for financial compensation.<sup>281</sup>

Once Manjuguk was established all football activities in Gando came under Japanese administration and the Manjuguk Football Championship was set up. Teams from Gando dominated this competition on the base of the region's keenly contested schools football which drew much of its strength from Korean players. The 1942 East Asian Games saw thirteen Korean footballers playing for Manjuguk holding the second rank.<sup>282</sup> Some footballers from Gando would go on to make major contributions to the

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<sup>279</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 26 Feb 1936.

<sup>280</sup> Dong-sub Choi et al, *A Football History of Ethnic Koreans Living in Yanbien*, Yanbien, 1992, 29; *Donga Ilbo*, 29 May 1924.

<sup>281</sup> Choi et al, *Football History of Ethnic Koreans*, 15, 26-27, 30; *Donga Ilbo*, 19 May 1925.

<sup>282</sup> Choi et al, *Football History of Ethnic Koreans*, 65, 73.

development of football in North and South Korea. Lee Jong Gab, for example, participated in the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland and later became the vice president of the Korea Sports Association.<sup>283</sup> For the North Koreans, Heo Jook San came to exemplify the ideal communist footballer after he died as a hero in the Korean War. When he was sent to the front he took his football shoes. 'After defeating the Americans' he is supposed to have said, 'I will come to play football for the General, which is the reason why I put football shoes in my bag'.<sup>284</sup>

## **(7) Conclusion**

Under Japanese imperialism, the idea grew that the ideal modern Korean was a muscular *Gunja* (Confucian gentlemen) capable of playing a part in the movement for liberation.<sup>285</sup> It was believed that football was very much conducive to producing muscular *Gunja* and that playing football would help to rectify the disadvantage of Koreans' short legs.<sup>286</sup> Indeed, Korean footballers may have been the most successful group in embodying muscular Chosun with its fervent anti-Japanese sentiments. Victories over teams from Japan were greeted with widespread jubilation, which in turn helped to make football a national sport in colonized Korea. This footballing dominance over Japan boosted ethnic pride to a level where nationalism and football were identified with each other. There was a popular belief that 'football is Chosun'.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, 307; see also *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2 Dec 1978.

<sup>284</sup> D. Lee et al, *Football: Past and Present*, 125-127.

<sup>285</sup> No-ja Park, *Making Courageous Men*, Seoul, 2009, 175.

<sup>286</sup> *Gaebyuk*, Nov 1920, 105-106.

<sup>287</sup> Yun and Choi, *National Pastime*, 176.



In explaining the rapid penetration of football among ordinary Koreans it should be remembered that the game had certain advantages: it was easily understood, it was relatively cheap pastime for both players and spectators, and it took up little time. However, the importance of many social agencies in disseminating and popularizing football in Korea should not be forgotten. The YMCA was one of the most important. Although it focused on developing basketball and baseball it proved to be the West's most active agent for introducing football in Korea, especially in the 1910s and 1920s. Mission schools were especially important in nurturing elite footballers and, more significantly, ensuring that many more were bitten by the football bug. Baejae, Gyungshin, Soongsil Middle School, and Yeonhee College, in particular, took the lead in this process. The influence of the mission schools was clearly evidenced by Sabbatarianism impinging on the scheduling of the ACFC at Gyungshin. Pyongyang, the most Christian city in Korea also sought to respect the Sabbath when arranging the schedule for the championship.<sup>288</sup>

Korean newspapers were not only important as a way of publicizing football; they also promoted or sponsored a number of football tournaments. However, it seems that this active involvement did not lead directly to an increase in circulation. As one newspaper executive has explained newspapers hoped by this strategy to build a close relationship with Korea's working class.<sup>289</sup> The twin aims of enhancing a newspaper's popularity and inspiring patriotism explains the boom of football sponsorship by Korean newspapers. Newspaper companies in the colonial period often saw themselves not as enterprises in

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<sup>288</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 8 Nov 1926; *Donga Ilbo* (Morning), 24 Oct 1933, 20 Apr 1938; the finals of 1938 ACFC at Pyongyang took place on a Sunday, which was an exception to the general rule.

<sup>289</sup> Yong-man Cho, *Night Tales at Gyungshin*, Seoul, 1992, 388.

search of profit but a means of advancing the independence movement.<sup>290</sup> Similarly, individual patrons who invested in football were mainly interested in prestige rather than profit. Tapping into the growing enthusiasm for football and local pride were the main factors that seem to have motivated them, with the possible exception of the owners of Pyongyang's rubber factories, as I have shown earlier.

Top Korean footballers could play in international matches for Japan especially after 1936 when the Japanese football authorities were anxious to strengthen the national team in advance of the proposed Tokyo Olympics of 1940. Chinese tours including matches against some Western select teams exposed Korean footballers to higher levels of skill and gave them new tactics to emulate, such as the 'W-M' formation and sophisticated passing game. These excursions, at times, seem to have provided a rare opportunity for Korean footballers to get information on European football. Kim Yong Sik, a member of Chosun Football Club on the 1934 Tianjin Tour, bought football magazines and a book written by Kenneth Hunt, a famous half-back for Wolverhampton Wanderers and England. He was touched by Hunt's advocacy of fair play on reading the book and began to modify his own game accordingly.<sup>291</sup> Also he designed the jerseys worn by Bosung College in emulation of Sunderland whose team had been pictured in a foreign football magazine.<sup>292</sup>

It is often said of Korea that the North is dominated by football and the South by baseball. In as far as this is true it is due to an accident of geography. The North of

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<sup>290</sup> Lee, *Yeo Woon Hyung*, 423.

<sup>291</sup> For Hunt's ideas on football see D. Porter, 'The Reverend K.R.G. Hunt: Muscular Christian and Famous Footballer', in D. Day (ed), *Sporting Lives*, Crewe, 2011, 40-54.

<sup>292</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 262, 265.

Korea was comparably far from Japan which was submerged by a wave of baseball fever that swept across the country in the 1930s to such an extent that a German visitor in 1938 thought that baseball was more popular in Japan than in the United States.<sup>293</sup> Japanese influence was relatively weak in the North. That was the reason why Gyung-sung Textile Company had an emphasis on developing the northern market where Japanese goods did not permeate as deeply as in the South.<sup>294</sup>

Baseball as a social phenomenon in Korea at the time of colonial rule, was largely confined to the South, particularly Gyung-sung. Company and middle school baseball teams at Gyung-sung predominated over Korean baseball.<sup>295</sup> Enterprises founded by the Japanese particularly encouraged the establishment of company baseball teams. These teams encouraged a few important Korean baseball talents, Lee Young Min for instance.<sup>296</sup> In addition it is argued that baseball was more suitable to the propertied class who had sufficient leisure time and capital to enjoy the game. Some contemporary Korean critics argued that baseball was 'too expensive to be universally adopted to this land'.<sup>297</sup> Moreover, the nationalist movement did not see baseball as a sport that they could recommend to their countrymen. Yeo Woon Hyung argued: 'We cannot win over Japanese through baseball due to lack of money, and football requires just shoes and a uniform, so only in football – which costs less money – are Koreans able to beat the

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<sup>293</sup> A. Grix, *Japan's Sport*, Berlin and Limpert, 1938, 63, cited in Guttmann and Thompson, *Japanese Sports*, 89.

<sup>294</sup> Ik-jong Joo, *Scout of a Large Army: the Gyung-sung Textile Company under Japanese Rule and Kim Sung Soo and Kim Yeon Soo*, Seoul, 2008, 202.

<sup>295</sup> Hong-rak Yu, Il-pyong Chun, and Jong-nam Lee, *A History of Korean Baseball*, Seoul, 1999, 266; Hong-rak Yu and Jong-nam Lee, *From Gillete to Lee Young Min*, Seoul, 1997, 186.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*, 193-195.

<sup>297</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 5 Nov 1924.

Japanese'.<sup>298</sup>

Through this combination of factors football was able to seep into every corner of Korean society and achieve unrivalled popularity in the era of Japanese administration. It was football's popularity which persuaded the Gyung-sung Broadcasting Company to broadcast Gyung-Pyong Football Championship via radio in 1933. This was the first Korean-language radio broadcast of any outdoor sports event.<sup>299</sup> The way in which football developed in Korea was also linked to regional identity and inter-regional rivalry. Football was perceived by the people in the north of the country as one of the arenas in which they could demonstrate their successful modernization and to challenge Gyung-sung's centralism. For them, the success of Pyongyang and Hamheung Football Club was significant in this sense. In a same vein, football certainly put the north on the map, which was reflective of the northern people's growing confidence during the colonial period. Football may well have been the epitome of Korean modernization.

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<sup>298</sup> *Wolgan Joongang*, Nov 1990, 474.

<sup>299</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Sep 1933; *Chosun Joongang Ilbo*, 13 Jun 1933; 20 Sep 1933.

### **Korean football in turbulent times, 1945-65**

When the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang football championship was resumed after liberation from Japanese rule in 1945, the Korean people could not sense that it would be the last. However, intense conflict between left and right in association with American and Soviet intervention in Korean politics led to the outbreak of a tragic civil war in 1950 which lasted until 1953. From then onwards, in football terms, regional rivalry between the north and south was transformed into a competition between rival nation-states, a process that was shaped by the impact of Cold War politics on football in the two Koreas. In this unusual situation, football became increasingly important, not least because its pre-existing widespread popularity made it useful to North and South Korean politicians seeking to rebuild their respective nations after the war while also gaining international recognition.

It was the South that took the lead in this contest by participating in the London Olympics in 1948 and the World Cup finals in 1954, though these expeditions brought only one victory. The South was more successful in regional competitions winning the Asian Cup in 1956 and 1960 and emerging with the reputation of being Asia's football powerhouse. In assessing this achievement, it is important to note the important role of the South Korean military, the source of many players in the national team, and also the critical contribution of some northern footballers who had crossed the border before and during the Korean War. Also in this period Korean-Japanese football rivalry

approached its high-water mark coinciding with diplomatic conflict between the two countries. For Koreans, for whom life as a Japanese colony was a recent memory, both animosity and national pride were projected onto the matches against Japan in the 1954 World Cup preliminaries as evidenced by the Korean manager's pre-match pledge: 'If we do not win over Japan, we are going to plunge into the Straits of Korea'.<sup>300</sup>

In the meantime, football in the North was unable to make a corresponding impression on a world audience, since international fixtures were largely confined to the Communist bloc. It was not until the 1960s that the emergence of competition between the Third World nonaligned nations provided more frequent and more diversified opposition. The first GANEFO in 1963 offered an arena in which North Korean football could gain confidence and experience. Encouraged by their footballers' runners-up finish in this competition, the North Korean regime began to take a serious interest. It sanctioned the publication of a book which praised 'the brilliant record of our footballers in the First GANEFO', and attributed this success and the growth of football generally to 'the Party's profound consideration and adequate instruction'.<sup>301</sup> The preface has also explained that the book was intended to propagate North Korean football skills and tactics with alacrity.<sup>302</sup> With the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations in the early 1960s, North Korean *Juche*, literally self-reliance and independence, was increasingly required as it became necessary to find a position that was independent of both Moscow and Beijing.<sup>303</sup> This idea of *Juche* began to prevail over all cultural and sports practices in North Korea and this facilitated the birth of a distinctive football

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<sup>300</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 306.

<sup>301</sup> B. Kim et al., *Football of Our Nation*, 1.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, 1-2.

<sup>303</sup> B. Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun: a Modern History*, New York, 2005, 413.

style. It was this relentlessly attacking style based on speed and agility that eventually shook the world in 1966.

This chapter will indicate the extent to which anti-communist and anti-Japanese sentiments were bound up with the South Korean football in the period 1945-65. At the same time, the contribution of North Korean footballers to the development of football in South Korea and the leverage of the military on football will be analyzed. As for North Korean football, here are two main questions to be answered: firstly, how was its distinctive national style formulated and developed in this period; and secondly, to what extent could it be differentiated from football in the South?

### **(1) The last Gyung-Pyong Championship and the first Olympics**

Although the 38th Parallel effectively divided Korea after its liberation, the border was still porous until the autumn of 1947 owing to the relatively loose border control practiced by the Soviet army stationed in the north.<sup>304</sup> Indeed, three northern footballers crossed the border before the match at Seoul between Bosung and Yeonhee College Old Boys took place in 1945.<sup>305</sup> However, significant sporting contacts between Seoul and Pyongyang were revived in earnest from early 1946, at a time when a joint USA-USSR Commission was meeting to discuss the process of establishing a provisional government for Korea. In January, a Seoul-Pyongyang ice hockey match was played outdoors in Seoul with Pyongyang winning 3-0, though this did not attract much

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<sup>304</sup> J. Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Modern History 1940s (2)*, Seoul, 2004, 62-63.

<sup>305</sup> E. Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 109.

attention as ice-hockey was not a major sport and the weather was cold.<sup>306</sup> It served, however, as a curtain-raiser for the revival of traditional football rivalry dating back to the Japanese colonial period. The Gyung-Pyong Football Championship - along with basketball games between the two rival centres - was staged in Seoul in March. The sponsor of this event, *Jayu Shinmun*, explained the importance of this event and why it should be held. At a time when the USA-USSR Commission was meeting and the 38th Parallel was a matter of primary concern, reviving a championship which meant so much in Korean sports circles would testify to national unity.

This revival of this popular football event which had been discontinued since 1935 served to entertain the people of Seoul, attracting over 40,000 spectators to the first match.<sup>307</sup> Public interest in Seoul was heightened by the fact that the Pyongyang side arrived with a fine record against Soviet military teams, against whom they had played five matches – winning three times, drawing once and losing only once.<sup>308</sup> The Soviet army, having at first underrated the ability of Korean footballers, had been forced to call on all available Russian football talent in the North after a series of defeats.<sup>309</sup> Colonel-General T. F. Shtykov, one of the USSR's representatives on the Commission, took a keen interest and attended these matches.<sup>310</sup> He was the 'real supreme ruler of North Korea' during 1945-48 and the key liaison between the Soviet military in Pyongyang and Stalin in Moscow.<sup>311</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 30 Jan 1946.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid*, 26 Mar 1946.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid*, 22, 25, 28 March 1946.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid*, 8 Feb 1946.

<sup>310</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 Feb 1946.

<sup>311</sup> A. Lankov, *From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea, 1945-1960*, New Brunswick, 2002, 2-3.



Before the tournament began, Kim Yong Sik, captain of the Seoul team, predicted Pyongyang's predominance due to the reputation established by their performances against the Russians, but Seoul managed to gain a 2-1 win in the first game.<sup>312</sup> Pyongyang revenged this loss in the second game with a score of 3-1, making good use of their greater stature to establish supremacy by cutting off Seoul's aerial passes.<sup>313</sup> However, it was the biased decisions of the referee, Kang Gi Soon who had arrived in Seoul as the manager of the Pyongyang team – that made the greatest impression on the home supporters. He appeared to turn a blind eye to Pyongyang's rough fouls to the fury of the Seoul crowd and his performance prompted the Seoul manager to criticize him in a newspaper column.<sup>314</sup> Thus the hostile atmosphere which had characterized Gyung-Pyong Championships during the Japanese colonial era immediately reappeared, though in the new circumstances this was no longer simply a manifestation of regionalism.

When the Pyongyang team returned home, a party was staged to celebrate their victory, even though the overall result of the two matches was a tie. The highly controversial referee of that day declared Pyongyang as the winners on the basis of the 4-3 aggregate score. Some Pyongyang footballers wished to stay in Seoul where they had relatives but Lee In Won, the leader of the Pyongyang team and a staunch communist, would not permit this to happen, insisting that all the players should go back north.<sup>315</sup> Pyongyang's participation in this Championship had been authorized by an interim

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<sup>312</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 25, 26 Mar 1946.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, 29 Mar 1946.

<sup>314</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 214; Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 273; *Jayu Shinmun*, 29 Mar 1946.

<sup>315</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 214.

'People's Committee' headed by Kim Il Sung. While the Pyongyang team was in Seoul this committee constituted the first central government in February 1946 and began the process of land reform a month later.<sup>316</sup> As negotiations at the USA-USSR Commission broke down, moderates in the south who wished to negotiate unification with the communists increasingly lost their influence while the right-wing led by Rhee Syng Man moved rapidly forward with a plan for a separate government.<sup>317</sup> The establishment of the two republics in Korea came in 1948. Thus football matches between Seoul and Pyongyang now entered a new phase where international rivalry replaced inter-regional rivalry.

Under the US Military Government during 1945-48, football in the south was largely promoted by a newspaper, *Seoul Shinmun*, which was the second most circulated daily in 1947.<sup>318</sup> In this period the Chosun Football Association was reconstituted in *Seoul Shinmun's* conference room and various football tournaments were held under the newspaper's sponsorship at the urgent request of Lee You Hyung whose Spartan training methods had made his Hamheung team famous in the late colonial period.<sup>319</sup> Lee You Hyung had an important connection with Ha Gyung Duk, the newspaper's president, who had been his senior at Soongsil Middle School in Pyongyang where he probably played football. Ha Gyung Duk later assumed the presidency of the KFA.<sup>320</sup> Though, as indicated earlier, *Jayu Shinmun* had also contributed to Korean football by

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<sup>316</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 227.

<sup>317</sup> G. Henderson, *Korea: the Politics of Vortex*, Cambridge, 1968, 134.

<sup>318</sup> Joon Choi, *A History of Korean Newspapers*, Seoul, 1990, 347.

<sup>319</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 283, 286; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 105-109.

<sup>320</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 282; Korean Newspaper Research Institution, *A Journal of Korean Journalists*, Seoul, 1981, 372.

sponsoring the last Gyung-Pyong Championship, it now turned its attention to baseball. It began to sponsor virtually all the major baseball tournaments. This initiative was masterminded by the editor-in-chief, Lee Jung Soon, a baseball enthusiast since his days at Baejae Middle School and Yeonhee College.<sup>321</sup> Along with his school alumnus, Lee Young Min, he was the driving force behind the foundation of the Chosun Baseball Association in 1946.<sup>322</sup> It is safe to say that the school background of key individuals were highly significant in dictating newspaper support for particular sports in this era.

Club football in the south between the liberation and the Korean War was dominated by teams whom the public utilities patronized. Of the teams the Chosun Jeonup (Electricity Company) was regarded as the strongest side. This club provided accommodation and a US military vehicle for its footballers and these very favourable conditions helped to lure many football talents from other clubs allowing Chosun Jeonup to win a domestic tournament just four months after its foundation in 1947.<sup>323</sup> Their closest rival was the Choil Yangjo, a team subsidised by a private brewing company by virtue of its sports-loving president, Kim Young Gi, who also founded a basketball club.<sup>324</sup> It followed that the South Korean national football team being due to participate in the 1948 London Olympics, was mainly comprised of footballers from the two big clubs with the exception of one college goalkeeper.<sup>325</sup> Yet the selection of this team was embroiled in controversy due to the inclusion in the squad of Lee You

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<sup>321</sup> Heung-joo Guk, *The Fateful Bottom of the Ninth Inning*, Seoul, 1975, 106; The Korean Journalists Association, *A History of Korean Journalists: the Pre Liberation Era*, vol. 2, Seoul, 1992, 437.

<sup>322</sup> Guk, *Fateful Bottom of the Ninth Inning*, 99, 105

<sup>323</sup> Ki-won Suh, *A Certain Life: Biography of the Legend of South Korean Football*, Kim Yong Sik, Seoul, 2000, 138.

<sup>324</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 184.

<sup>325</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 291.

Hyung and Bae Jong Ho, two veterans employed by the Chosun Football Association who were brought out of retirement. Kim Yong Sik, player-cum-coach of Chosun Jeonup vehemently criticized their inclusion. Though Kim's criticism might also have been grounded in personal antagonism towards Lee, the controversy led to a damaging split so that the squad never had a joint training session before setting off for London.<sup>326</sup>

There were other problems lurking in the background. The dispute over selecting footballers was also a consequence of the Chosun Sports Association's financial difficulties which were so severe that it could not afford to send sufficient players and coaches to London. The mysterious last minute exclusion of the national football coach may have reflected these circumstances.<sup>327</sup> Despite these problems and against all the odds the Korean football team won its first match in London beating Mexico 5-3; according to a recent history of the 1948 Olympics, 'everyone was amazed when they beat Mexico'.<sup>328</sup> Their next opponents, Sweden were wary of Korea because they had been unexpectedly beaten at Berlin in 1936 by a Japanese team which had included Kim Yong Sik, one of the veterans in the Korean side.<sup>329</sup> But Korea in 1948 was no match for Sweden, the eventual winners of the Olympic tournament. Sweden inflicted a 12-0 drubbing and the Korean players were said to be so shocked by Sweden's scientifically-planned attacking game that they lost track of the number of goals they conceded. Even a contemporary Korean newspaper provided an incorrect scoreline.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 186-187.

<sup>327</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 22 Jun 1948.

<sup>328</sup> J. Hampton, *The Austerity Olympics: When the Games Came to London in 1948*, London, 2008, 290.

<sup>329</sup> KSA, *A 70-Year History of the Korea Sports Association*, Seoul, 1990, 246.

<sup>330</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 8, 21 Aug 1948.

This result did nothing to resolve the internal divisions that had arisen in Korean football as a result of the original squad selection. Ten young college footballers defected to the north in response to the alleged favouritism of the selectors towards veteran players in their thirties, a development that was even more shocking than the 12-0 defeat by Sweden.<sup>331</sup> These college footballers, being dissatisfied with their exclusion from the Olympic squad, had been persuaded by the Hyun Hyo Sub, the former treasurer of the Chosun Football Association, acting as an agent for the north.<sup>332</sup> According to the account of one contemporary footballer, Hyun told the college footballers that they were being invited to compete in a tournament which teams from Seoul had competed in on previous occasions. Such tournaments had been played since the colonial period so it was unlikely that this invitation would have aroused suspicion. Yet the college footballers from Seoul would soon become the north's propaganda tools. Radio broadcasts from Pyongyang described them as taking part in a sports championship commemorating the establishment of the North Korean regime.<sup>333</sup> Later, after the outbreak of the Korean War, some important football figures in the South were abducted by North Korea, but their contribution to North Korean football was small in comparison with that of northern footballers coming south, as we shall see in next section.

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<sup>331</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 291-292.

<sup>332</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football vol. 1*, 100.

<sup>333</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 220-221.

## (2) Northern footballers' contribution to the South

For the years of the colonial period, a host of northern footballers came south, most of whom played football at Bosung and Yeonhee College in Seoul. Kim Yong Sik, Lee You Hyung, Park Gyu Jung, Chung Guk Jin, all of whom played at the London Olympics, fell into this category. The goalkeeper in the Olympic team, Hong Duk Young, had also come south in 1946, joining the general exodus of landowners and disaffected intellectuals dismayed by the institutions that were emerging under the new regime in Pyongyang.<sup>334</sup> Three Pyongyang footballers who had played in the last Gyung-Pyong Championship, had been eliminated at the last stage of the selection process for the London Olympics and the controversy that ensued reflected the importance of the northern contribution to football in the south, even before the Korean War.<sup>335</sup> Their assistance may well have been as vital for football as the supply of electric power from the north was for industry in the south during the period of US Military Government. When the North cut off their electric power supply in May 1948, South Korea suffered from a severe electric power shortage.<sup>336</sup>

However, it was during the Korean War that the northerners who would become the core actors in South Korean football crossed the border. A vast majority of northern footballers, it seemed, came over to the south around the end of 1950 at a time when the allied forces retreated southward due to China's abrupt entry into the war along

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<sup>334</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, Seoul, 2009, 110.

<sup>335</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 291.

<sup>336</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 16, May, 1948; Kang, *Exploration of Korean Modern history 1940s' (2)*, 136-137.

with hundreds of thousands of refugees did.<sup>337</sup> Park Il Gab and Choi Jung Min arrived in the south at this time. Park had participated in the last Gyung-Pyong Championship and had led the North Korean football team which won at the tournament held at the World Festival of Youth and Students at Prague in 1947.<sup>338</sup> A future South Korean football icon, Choi was first spotted and trained as a centre-forward by Kim Yong Sik who was then coach at a military academy in Gyungju.<sup>339</sup> However, when the military academy closed, Choi was sent to play for a team in Daegu, military officers having decided that it was in 'our nation's interests' that he should continue to play football rather than serve in the army.<sup>340</sup>

At the Chosun Bangjik textile mill in Deagu Choi met other northern footballers who had moved south during the war and Chosun Bangjik rapidly assembled a team composed of excellent players from Pyongyang which became noted for its energetic attacking game.<sup>341</sup> However, the position of northerners in the south was precarious. When Chosun Bangjik won a tournament for the first time in 1951 it was seen as particularly significant for those players from the north regarded suspiciously by the South Korean regime as displaced persons.<sup>342</sup> They had found that their footballing skills did not make them exempt from irritating investigations as the police routinely interrogated northern refugees in their efforts to hunt down communist infiltrators.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Gwi-ok Kim, *The Identity and Experience of the Brethren who Came from the North: Research on North Korean Refugees*, Seoul, 1999, 68.

<sup>338</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 174.

<sup>339</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 46-47.

<sup>340</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, 72.

<sup>341</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 6 Oct, 16 Nov 1951.

<sup>342</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 177.

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid*, 184.

Most northern players who had come south were in need of some kind of protection and some, including Choi and Park, were favoured by being channeled into the CIC (Counter Intelligence Corps) from 1952 onwards. This was a military intelligence agency headed by Kim Chang Ryong, one of the president's henchmen, notorious for his political manoeuvring. Once they had been transferred to the CIC, Choi and Park were sheltered from anti-red hysteria and protected from police intervention.<sup>344</sup>

Now that their status in South Korea had been stabilized, Choi and Park were used to inject much-needed new blood into the veteran-dominated South Korean team. Choi, in particular, became a household name as nationalist sentiment began to attach itself to the South Korean team at the time of the first official international matches between South Korea and Japan in 1954. After creating two decisive goals in the first leg of this World Cup qualifier Choi was identified as the prime target and a Japanese newspaper stressed the urgency of finding a young centre-forward with the same physical attributes.<sup>345</sup> Along with Choi, Park and Hong Duk Young also made critical contributions in helping South Korea edge out Japan over these historic two games. The coach of the Japanese national team was especially impressed with the speed Choi and Park and the remarkable power of their kicking.<sup>346</sup> Their speed dovetailed nicely with the South Korean kick and rush tactics, particularly in the first leg which was played on a heavy pitch that rendered the Japanese passing style was ineffective<sup>347</sup> Goalkeeper Hong, another northerner, was also reckoned by a Japanese commentator to have been one of the most impressive Korean players. The exploits of these three northern

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<sup>344</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant Traces*, 180.

<sup>345</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 289; *Nikkan Sports*, 16 Mar 1954.

<sup>346</sup> *Nikkan Sports*, 8 Mar 1954.

<sup>347</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 264, 274-275.



footballers in 1954 was an early example of the success of what became known as the '38 Ddaraji' a term widely used in South Korea to describe displaced people from the north who had to endure their discrimination and relatively harsh living conditions after crossing the 38th Parallel.<sup>348</sup> In the years that followed quite a few '38 Ddaraji', people noted for their frugal lifestyle and their enthusiasm for education, would be successfully assimilated into the mainstream of South Korean society.<sup>349</sup>

The first South Korea-Japan football match in 1954 was a significant event for a war-torn country and a dejected people faced with an enormous task of reconstruction. In Seoul crowds flocked to tearooms and gathered in front of news agencies to listen to the radio broadcasts, 'clapping their hands whenever a goal was scored for Korea' in a 5-1 first leg win over Japan.<sup>350</sup> Buoyed by this overwhelming first leg victory, the South Korean government took the extraordinary step of providing electricity so that every household could receive the live transmission of the second-leg match (which was also played in Tokyo) despite the chronic shortages of electric power.<sup>351</sup> As they returned to Seoul after a 2-2 draw in the second leg with their place in the World Cup finals assured the South Korean team was greeted by an overjoyed population who crowded into all the train stations on their route.<sup>352</sup>

The reason behind the South Koreans' fervent response to their footballers was not so much advancement to the World Cup finals as the defeat of their former colonial

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<sup>348</sup> Asahi Sports, 20 Mar, 1954, cited in Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 297.

<sup>349</sup> *Kukmin Ilbo*, 22 Dec 2005.

<sup>350</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 9 Mar 1954.

<sup>351</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 Mar 1954.

<sup>352</sup> Song-a Ryu, Hong Duk Young in KFA, *Korea Football Hall of Fame*, Seoul, 2005, 90.

oppressor. 'At the time, the popularity of World Cup [in Korea] was not as high as it is now and even Korean footballers did not know much about it', Hong later recalled.<sup>353</sup> South Korea's mood was succinctly encapsulated by *Donga Ilbo*: 'The Japanese wailed with their feet raised and the Koreans smiled with their hands up'.<sup>354</sup> The captain of the Korean team, who came from Pyongyang, explained the victory in a way that appealed to national pride, arguing that it had been made possible by a combination of typical Korean tenacity and their physical strength: 'Japanese [footballers] must fall down when struck by our [Korean] bodies'.<sup>355</sup>

What made this response especially remarkable was the fact that these matches almost did not take place. The mood of national euphoria in South Korea was especially intense because the match had been played at a time when diplomatic friction between the two nations was reaching its peak. There was an acute dispute over a fishery zone and the disputed ownership of an island (Takeshima/Dodko) lying between the two countries, a situation that had been exacerbated by a Japanese bureaucrat's insensitive remark with regard to the colonization of Korea in the late of 1953.<sup>356</sup> Growing antipathy towards Japan in South Korea was in line with President Rhee Syng Man's hard line anti-Japanese position.

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<sup>353</sup> Ibid, (followed by same page number).

<sup>354</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Mar 1954.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid, 28 Mar 1954.

<sup>356</sup> Eun-ju Chang, 'The Mutual Understanding of Korea and Japan in the years following 1945', in Publication Committee of the Collection of Dissertations on the History of Korea-Japan relations, *Issues and Views of Korea-Japan relations in the Post-Liberation period*, Seoul, 2005, 52-54.

In ensuring that the matches were played the efforts of the Sports Association of Korean Residents in Japan were especially important. This organization helped to prepare the way for the World Cup preliminaries by sending a squad to the National Sports Championship held in Seoul in 1953.<sup>357</sup> After this visit, they began to discuss the matter of forthcoming matches against Japan with the Korean Sports Association. Their main intention was to use football to improve the image of Koreans in Japanese society. At the same time the Association was seeking to secure a dominant position over the pro-North Korean organization in Japan. With the vast majority of Koreans in Japan retaining their former Korean (Chosun) identity rather than opting for South Korean citizenship and thus making themselves literally stateless, this ideological competition was unavoidable.<sup>358</sup> This initiative was orchestrated by Shin Hee, the vice president of the Sports Association of Korean Residents in Japan. He was a champion of anti-communism having been crippled by a communist shooting attack in North Korea before settling in Japan.<sup>359</sup> When he met Rhee Syng Man, Shin Hee guaranteed to cover the South Korean team's expenses in Japan, a significant sweetener in view of the nation's dire financial position at the time. The expenses would be underwritten by many Korean entrepreneurs and celebrities in Japan including a famous professional wrestler, Rikki Dozan.<sup>360</sup> However, despite these guarantees, Rhee still would not allow the Japanese team to enter South Korea. This meant both qualifying matches would have to be played in Japan in violation of FIFA's home and away rule. Thus the Korean Football Association had to request that all the games be staged in Japan using

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<sup>357</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 217-218.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid, 222.

<sup>359</sup> Ibid, 218-219.

<sup>360</sup> The Sports Association of Korean Residents in Japan, *The History of the Sports Association of Korean Residents in Japan*, Tokyo, 1992, 71-72.

inclement weather conditions in Korea as a pretext.<sup>361</sup> It was only in 1960 that Japanese footballers were permitted to enter South Korea to play in Seoul for the first time since the colonial era. Even then the match was surrounded with controversy regarding whether to play the Japanese national anthem and hoist the Japanese flag before kick-off. A South Korean military helicopter was on call to deal with any disturbances that might arise on match day.<sup>362</sup>

By this time most of the old '38 Ddaraji' footballers had retired. The most famous of them, Choi Jung Min, finally hung up his boots at the age thirty-four in 1962 and the performances of the South Korean national team went into something of a slump after his retirement.<sup>363</sup> Although his absence was not the only factor contributing to this lack of success, the fact that no adequate replacement was found helps to explain why the 1960s has been dubbed as the 'South Korean football's dark ages'.<sup>364</sup> South Korean football had relied heavily on his scoring ability and other Korean footballers could hardly match Choi in this respect. Indeed, he scored more than seventy goals in twenty-four overseas football tours.<sup>365</sup> When, in 1969, *Donga Ilbo* reviewed the history of South Korean football over the previous decade football, Choi was selected as the most important player. At the start of the 1960s, before decline had set in, it was recalled, 'South Korean football dominated Asia'; Choi Jung Min had been its star player, widely referred to as 'golden leg', not just in South Korea but throughout Asia.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 26 Jan 1954.

<sup>362</sup> *Ibid*, 4, 6 Nov 1960; Goto, *A History of Japanese Soccer*, 121.

<sup>363</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 13 Feb 1962.

<sup>364</sup> Sung-won Kim, *A History of the Development of Korean Football*, Seoul, 2004, 34.

<sup>365</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant Traces*, 195; *Donga Ilbo*, 8 Dec 1983.

<sup>366</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 13 Dec 1969.

### (3) Football and the military in South Korea

It was during the Korean War that football became strongly associated with the military, signified by the first annual football match between the army and navy played in 1947.<sup>367</sup> The military, as illustrated by the case of Choi Jung Min, began to give special consideration to footballers. The Korean Infantry School set an example by assigning talented footballers amongst its cadets, to the least dangerous battle positions in the rear. Thus the lives of many elite footballers were saved.<sup>368</sup> To the Korean army, football was an effective medium to boost their soldiers' morale. Many army divisions founded their own football teams and tournaments in which military teams participated were held.<sup>369</sup> During the Korean War the Infantry school helped to stage an international football tournament in the winter of 1951 for the purpose of cultivating friendship amongst the allied forces. Soldiers from Britain, Sweden, Denmark and Colombia played against with two military and two company teams from Korea took part in this tournament.<sup>370</sup>

In the years following the Korean War, Korean sports in general and football in particular was immensely patronized by the military, a trend continuing up until the early 1960s. Indeed, the South Korea teams defeated by Hungary and Turkey in the 1954 World Cup finals in Switzerland were 'football soldiers' who had experienced the recent tragedy of fratricidal war. Given the severe economic hardship in South Korea in

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<sup>367</sup> Ibid, 3 Oct 1947.

<sup>368</sup> Won-jae Chang, 'Kim Wha Jib Whom I Met', in KFA, *Korea Football Hall of Fame*; 234-235; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 77.

<sup>369</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 171-173.

<sup>370</sup> *Jayu Shinmun*, 7 Dec 1951.

the immediate post-war years there were few companies with the resources necessary to subsidize football. Under these circumstances an inordinate number of football talents were sucked into various military teams. The CIC was a typical military football team in this respect, producing over forty Korean internationals between 1952 and 1965. The success of the CIC club, as we have briefly seen in the preceding section, was initially based on the recruitment of talented players who had come from the north, such as Choi Jung Min. The CIC football team had been founded by a military officer of northern descent, Kim Chang Ryong and northern footballers were scouted for the club by a Pyongyang footballer, Park Jae Seung, who then served in the CIC.<sup>371</sup> The heavy reliance of on this source of playing talent underlines how much South Korean football was influenced by northerners, particularly in the 1950s.

It is worth looking at Kim Chang Ryong in more detail. In this era he was a prominent symbol of Korean McCarthyism as well as being the most influential patron in South Korean football. Kim Chang Ryong, who had served in the Japanese colonial police, had fled south after being arrested for his pro-Japanese sympathies and was a fervent anti-communist. He joined the army on arriving in the south and played a critical part in seeking out communists in the aftermath of the Yosu Rebellion led by leftist elements in 1948 and this brought him to Rhee Syng Man's attention.<sup>372</sup> Under the Rhee regime Kim wielded great power and was entrusted with the task of rooting out corruption and conspiracy among high-ranking generals.<sup>373</sup> He was a perfect fit for the South Korean

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<sup>371</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant Traces*, 198-199.

<sup>372</sup> Hye-jin Kim, 'Kim Chang Ryong: From Japanese Military Police to the Head of CIC, in Institute for Research in Collaborationist Activities, *A History that has not been eradicated: Pro-Japanese Faction who Controlled Korean Modern History*, vol. 1, Seoul, 1994, 188-190,

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid*, 193.

anti-communist system, but his red-hunting went to extremes and he was likely to accuse anyone whom he disliked of being a communist.<sup>374</sup> The foundation of the CIC team was also, to a certain extent, related to his staunch anti-communism. He was anxious to establish a strong team in the south to prepare for any future football match against the communist north; football was one way in which the south could demonstrate ideological supremacy.<sup>375</sup>

Kim Chang Ryong's interest in football patronage also has to be set in the context of South Korean military politics in the 1950s. At this time the army was divided by factional strife derived from the rivalry of three generals and this situation was aggravated by President Rhee who did not want any one general to possess supreme power.<sup>376</sup> Rhee made the CIC and the Provost Marshal Headquarters (PMH) function as a presidential body in order to control military units more effectively.<sup>377</sup> These two military institutions were thus in competition, though the CIC tended to dominate.<sup>378</sup> Kim's intense desire to win ensured that the CIC-PMH rivalry spilled over onto the football field. In 1955 a national championship semi-final match between CIC and PMH was interrupted with PMH a goal ahead after CIC demanded a change of referee following a disputed decision.<sup>379</sup> The KFA ordered that the match should be replayed but PMH refused. Eventually, the championship was suspended without a winner being

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<sup>374</sup> Ibid, 186-187.

<sup>375</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant Traces*, 198.

<sup>376</sup> Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Modern history 1950s (3)*, Seoul, 2004, 17.

<sup>377</sup> Sae-joong Kim, 'The Development and Consequence of a Nexus between Civilians and the Military in the 1950s: A Change in the Military, 4.19 and 5.16 Revolutions', in Jung-in Moon and Sae-joong Kim (eds.), *The Interpretation of Modern Korean History in the 1950s*, Seoul, 2004, 63-64.

<sup>378</sup> Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Modern History 1950s (3)*, 63-64

<sup>379</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 22 Sep 1955

declared and both the president of the KFA and the referee resigned.<sup>380</sup>

Rivalry between the military teams caused referees much trouble in this era. One referee later recalled:

*The de facto power or authority of such [military] teams as the PMH, CIC, Army Service Corps, Headquarters Intelligence Department and Marine Corps and so forth, were more or less on the same level. So it was hard to distinguish superiority between them and referees usually got in trouble with the teams if they made a wrong decision .... Referees did not want to officiate some matches, particularly those between the CIC and PMH. Football matches were often interrupted by the boorish and rough behaviour of the footballers and ... referees desperately sought to avoid criticism in any way and to proceed with the games as quickly as possible.<sup>381</sup>*

The CIC was notorious for rough play and referees feared intimidation. In 1952, a referee called off a game because of fading light with the CIC in the lead. Kim Chang Ryong had ordered that all the military vehicles around the ground should turn on their headlights to continue the game, but that was not enough to illuminate the whole pitch. After the match had been abandoned the referee was beaten up by CIC soldiers acting on Kim's orders.<sup>382</sup> In 1953, when CIC was defeated by Chosun Bangjick after drawing lots, the winners celebrated by cheering and banging a drum. Miffed at this scene, Kim Chang Ryong directed the men under his command to arrest the whole squad and its officials, including Berlin Olympics' marathon winner and national hero

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<sup>380</sup> Ibid, 23, 25 Sep 1955; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, 77.

<sup>381</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 Dec 1976.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 27 Nov 1976.



Son Kee Jung, who was taken off by force.<sup>383</sup> Chosun Bangjik, the biggest government-vested company in the south, was run by Kang Il Mae who was bestriding Korean football as vice-president of the KFA at the time.<sup>384</sup> It seems likely that Kim's actions on this occasion were motivated by personal antagonism as well as football rivalry.

Kim also intervened personally in selecting the South Korean squad for the 1954 World Cup finals, using his political muscle to secure the inclusion of his own players.<sup>385</sup> His blind devotion to the CIC football team and his excessive will to win is reminiscent of Lavrenti Beria, head of the secret police during the Stalin era. Beria was a fanatical supporter of Moscow Dinamo and he often used his power on behalf of his beloved team by 'interfering in the work of coaches, players, and officials'.<sup>386</sup> He even attempted to eliminate his main football rivals, Moscow Spartak, by consigning their star players, the Starostin brothers, to a labour camp.<sup>387</sup>

The preponderance of military football in South Korea could be easily discerned by the high proportion of military personnel selected for the national team from the war years through until 1962.<sup>388</sup> Not surprisingly CIC players were especially prominent. They comprised seven of the party of seventeen which played in and won the 1960 Asian Cup competition at Seoul.<sup>389</sup> However, by the early 1960s, the golden age of South

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<sup>383</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 27 Feb 1976.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid, 8 Dec 1977; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 117; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 303.

<sup>385</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, 53.

<sup>386</sup> Edelman, *Serious Fun*, 62, 64.

<sup>387</sup> Riordan, 'The Strange Story of Nikolai Starostin, Football and Lavrentii Beria', 684-685.

<sup>388</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 306, 320, 323.

<sup>389</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 16 Jul 1960.

Korean military football was rapidly passing away with the rise of company teams as the economy began to boom. In 1963, four CIC footballers were lured away by newly-founded Cheil Mojik, a woolen fabric manufacturer. Faced with a shortage of players the CIC had to field its coach.<sup>390</sup> Two years later, the CIC team was disbanded due to the shortage of footballers.<sup>391</sup> Along with Cheil Mojik, Geumsung Bangjik (representing another textile manufacturer) quickly rose to prominence and military teams were downgraded to second-class club status.<sup>392</sup> The typical composition of South Korean international teams also changed reflecting the new balance of power within domestic football. It was hard to find 'football soldiers' in the South Korean representative teams by the mid-1960s.<sup>393</sup>

The emergence of company football clubs reflected a change in South Korean politics and in the economy. After the military coup in May 1961, it was important for the regime to cultivate powerful industrialists and the foundation of the Geumsung Bangjik Football Club in 1961 was encouraged by the new government. Later the owner of Geumsung devoted himself to politics as a member of the ruling party.<sup>394</sup> From an economic perspective, the foundation of the Geumsung Bangjik and Cheil Mojik clubs could not be disassociated from the rise of textile industry in this period. The former was famous for having the nation's best training facilities including a well-manicured lawn pitch. The latter was notorious for using its financial muscle to poach talented footballers from other clubs. In 1963, this prompted another other company club,

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<sup>390</sup> Ibid, 18 Sep 1963; *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Dec 1963.

<sup>391</sup> *Hanguk Ilbo*, 10 Jun 1965.

<sup>392</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Nov 1964.

<sup>393</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 343; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 29 Mar 1965.

<sup>394</sup> Suh, *A Certain Life*, 207, *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Dec 1963.

Daehan Jungseok (a tungsten mining company), to complain about Cheil Mojik's ruthless recruitment of its footballers.<sup>395</sup> However, there was a degree of instability in company sponsorship. Geumsung Bangjik was disbanded in 1969 as bank-sponsored teams came to the fore and Cheil Mojik dissolved in 1971 due to a slump in the textile industry.<sup>396</sup>

#### **(4) The birth of the North Korean football Style**

North Korean sports were transformed in the aftermath of the Korean War. The government followed, as in Eastern European nations, the Soviet socialist sports system which was very effective in identifying promising individuals at early ages in every corner of society and nurturing their sporting talents. The government decreed in 1958 that all factories with more than a thousand employees should have a full-time sports trainer; also youth sports schools and the Pyongyang Sports University would be founded. Along with this, agricultural cooperatives, universities, and factories were to set up multi-sports clubs by April 1959.<sup>397</sup> Three hundred youth sports schools had been established by 1960, a major achievement.<sup>398</sup>

Football, the most popular sport in the North, with its glorious tradition inherited from the colonial period, was quick to benefit from such a radical overhaul of the North Korean sports system. Various football championships for workers, young students, and

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<sup>395</sup> Ibid, 3, Apr, 1965; 20, Mar, 1963.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid, 7, Jan, 1972; Suh, *A Certain Life*, 228.

<sup>397</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 26 Mar 1958.

<sup>398</sup> Ibid, 27 Feb 1959.

peasants were inaugurated in 1959.<sup>399</sup> A year later, a team from a steelworks and Pyongyang Sports University were permitted to join the major football league in which only top-class teams, funded by the people's army or other government-affiliated organizations had hitherto participated.<sup>400</sup> Under this well-designed framework, the central football authorities were able to identify and direct promising young players more easily than before. Ensuring that talent was channeled into the top-class clubs was already a well established procedure. Arguably the most important transfer in North Korean football history occurred in 1957 when Park Du Ik, who worked at a print factory and played for its team, was moved to the Pyongyang Club.<sup>401</sup>

This massive restructuring in North Korean sports was attributable to the importance that was attached to raising the profile of the country by competing internationally. South Korea had joined the IOC (International Olympic Committee) and FIFA in 1947; North Korea followed in 1957 and 1958 respectively. With the assistance of IOC members from other communist nations, the North Korean National Olympic Committee was aiming to participate in the Olympics with full recognition of its separate status rather than the existing provisional recognition. This proved difficult to achieve. In 1959, IOC president Avery Brundage proposed a meeting of the National Olympic Committees of North and South Korea in the hope that they would agree to a joint Korean team participating in the Rome Olympics of 1960.<sup>402</sup> North Korea had to

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<sup>399</sup> Ibid, 16 Apr, 22 May, 20 Jul 1959.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 21 Mar, 1, Aug, 1960.

<sup>401</sup> *The Game of their Lives: the Greatest Shock in World Cup History: the Book of the Film*, London, 2002, 19.

<sup>402</sup> B. Bridges, 'Reluctant Mediator: Hong Kong, the Two Koreas and the Tokyo Olympics', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24 (3), 2007, 377; see also Extract of the minutes of the 55th session of the International Olympic Committee in Munich (Haus des Sportes), May 25th to May 28th 1959, 75.

take a positive view of this suggestion, since the IOC would only agree to its participation if its athletes were part of a joint team.<sup>403</sup> South Korea, however, having already participated in the Olympics under the name of Korea opposed the idea of a unified Korean team and only their athletes took part in the Olympics.<sup>404</sup> Thus the only 'miracle' achieved by Brundage in time for the Rome 1960 was the appearance of a combined East and West German team marching behind the same flag; South Korean intransigence precluded a similar compromise arrangement for the two Koreas.

In these circumstances competition with South Korea was more likely than cooperation and North Korea poured their financial resources into the sports improvement scheme with the aim of achieving success in any future sporting hostilities with the South. By this time North Korea had developed the economic capabilities required to carry out this audacious programme. With unprecedented large amounts of aid from the Soviet bloc and rapid reconstruction of major industries, North Korean economy developed at 'world-beating growth-rates in the 1950s and 1960s', albeit from a low base, which it has been claimed 'far outdistanced the South's'.<sup>405</sup> The *Chollima* movement whereby the state compelled many North Koreans to undertake hard labour in order to complete strategically important projects with alarming speed cannot be ignored as a major cause of their economic success. A multitude of students for example, were mobilized

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Available from:

<http://www.la84foundation.org/OlympicInformationCenter/OlympicReview/1959/BDCE67/BDCE67zb.pdf>

[Accessed 23 Apr 2011].

<sup>403</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 13 Aug 1959; Bridges, 'Reluctant Mediator: Hong Kong, the Two Koreas and the Tokyo Olympics', 378.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid*, 3 May 1959; see also A. Guttmann, *The Olympics: a History of the Modern Games*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Urbana and Chicago, 2002, 110.

<sup>405</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 433-434.

for construction or extension works of stadiums in Pyongyang during the First Five Year Plan and, following the Soviet model, students who exceeded the scheduled amount of work would be treated as national heroes.<sup>406</sup>

North Korean sport was faced with new challenges in the wake of the Moscow World Festival of Youth and Students in 1957, an event that was widely regarded in the capitalist world as simply a socialist propaganda exercise. In the football tournament the North Korean team suffered three humiliating defeats by Albania, Egypt and Czechoslovakia forcing them to begin to devise tactics which would offset physical disadvantages of height and weight.<sup>407</sup> In 1958, the Worker's Party decreed that the *Juche* – the idea that Marxist-Leninism could creatively and independently be adapted to the actualities of North Korea's situation – should be applied to sports.<sup>408</sup> *Juche*, which was becoming increasingly popular among North Korean intellectuals, had first emerged in 1955 as a rejection of 'flunkeyism' and the blind imitation of foreign methods. It was gradually seeping into all North Korean cultural practices and in sport it became associated with the development of training methods and tactics designed specifically to their players' distinctive attributes and characteristics.<sup>409</sup> In practice, *Juche* was seen as a uniquely North Korean movement designed to underpin the country's political, economic, and military independence. It is interesting to note that the coming together of the *Juche* idea and football coincided with the worsening of Sino-Soviet relations after 1956, in which Chinese dogmatism and Soviet revisionism were

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<sup>406</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 9 May 1957, 28 Jul 1959; 15 Mar, 26 May 1960.

<sup>407</sup> *Ibid*, 3, 4, 25, Aug 1957.

<sup>408</sup> See Jong-seok Lee, *A History of North Korea, vol 2: The Juche Ideology and Solipsism in North Korean System 1960-1994*, Seoul, 2011, 41-43; Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 20.

<sup>409</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 413-414.

increasingly in conflict. In this tricky situation, Kim Il Sung needed to develop a more independent stance and to isolate North Korea from external influences more than ever before. He followed his own line but neither 'in defiance of the Soviet Union' nor 'arousing the ire of the Chinese'.<sup>410</sup>

Thus the changing international political situation seems to have provided a space in which what came to be seen as North Korea's unique football style could come into existence and flourish. This style could be characterized by swift running and long passing and a collective commitment to an aggressive attacking game. North Korean football pundits took a dim view of the frequent use of the short pass because it did not play to the principal strength of North Korean footballers – their sheer speed. A fast attacking style, they argued, would counteract the current trend towards defensive tactics in international football.<sup>411</sup> Indeed, with the Hungarian attacking 'Magic Magyars' gone, world football was increasingly paralyzed by the rise of Italian *Cattenaccio*, a notoriously defensive system, originating in 'the right of the weak' and quickly becoming mainstream.<sup>412</sup>

However, for North Korea to be able to mount an effective challenge to such well-organized defensive systems through a game based on speed and relentless running it was necessary to improve endurance and stamina. To achieve this, the North Korean football authorities revived the Spartan training methods used by the successful Hamheung Football Club in the 1930s featuring, among other elements, mountain

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<sup>410</sup> Dae-sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: the North Korean Leader*, New York, 1988, 178.

<sup>411</sup> Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 20-22.

<sup>412</sup> Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 173-194

climbing and running in sand.<sup>413</sup> The main aim was develop fitness so there was relatively little training with the ball. The programme featured road running for distances ranging from four to sixteen kilometers with a two-kilogram sand bag attached to footballer's legs.<sup>414</sup> Strengthening legs in this way was considered essential. Park Seung Jin, who 'had especially strong legs', would go on to score two goals in the 1966 World Cup finals. Such was his dedication that he tied strong elastic around his legs and then stretched them. 'He did this every day' and 'a thousand times for each leg'.<sup>415</sup>

The organization of football in North Korea, as in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, was highly centralized and designed primarily to maximize the national squad. Almost all of the first class clubs in North Korea were located in Pyongyang; regional clubs, with rare exceptions, only played in the lower divisions.<sup>416</sup> Thus it could be argued that North Korean regional clubs were not so much rivals to the clubs in Pyongyang as providers. Club football in North Korea was completely subservient to the national team as was often the case in communist nations, but in a more intense manner. Before going into the international test arena of football success, the North Korean squad honed their skills and teamwork in domestic league matches and in friendly games against teams from the Soviet bloc and Third World. For example, there were many matches against visiting teams from the Soviet Union and North Korean teams were invited to tour in return from the late 1950s to early 1960s.<sup>417</sup> After the Korean War the

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<sup>413</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 1, 105; Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 31, 35.

<sup>414</sup> Lee and Kim, *The Sports of North Korea*, 196; Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 35-36.

<sup>415</sup> *The Game of their lives*, 35.

<sup>416</sup> For regional clubs, *Nodong Shinmun*, 18, 25 Nov 1958; for Pyoungyang clubs, *Ibid*, 1 Aug 1960.

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid*, 1 Nov 1957, 29, Aug, 1958, 12 Jul, 1959, 7 Nov 1960, 24 Sep 1961.



best footballers in North Korea – those likely to be selected for the national team - normally played in the top domestic league for Joongang Cheyuk Gangseubso (Central Sports School), known as Moranbong after about 1965.<sup>418</sup> The inclusion of this super club in the premier league provided an opportunity to build up teamwork and mutual understanding virtually all year long. Sometimes the North Korean national side wore the jersey of the Pyongyang Football Club in an attempt to deceive foreign clubs. In 1961, when the Pyongyang Club beat Spartak in Moscow, the team was in fact the North Korean national side playing under an assumed name, a deception that was common practice in Soviet football.<sup>419</sup>

As North Korean football was establishing its distinctive style in the early 1960s, a great opportunity to participate in international competition was provided by GANEFO, set up by Indonesia's President Sukarno in 1963. This development was based on the co-operation established at the first conference of the non-aligned nations held at Bandung in 1955, which had recognized that even 'communism was a new form of colonialism'.<sup>420</sup> This development was very fortunate for North Korea. As North Korea lurched closer to China, relations with the Soviet Union worsened and economic aid was cut off. It was an indication of North Korea's aspirations for autonomy that it was prepared to offend the Soviet Union, who responded by condemning the cult of personality around Kim Il Sung the and cutting off economic aid.<sup>421</sup> Football contacts

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<sup>418</sup> Ibid, 25 Mar 1957; 1 Aug 1960, 14 Jun 1965.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid, 24 Sep 1961; Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 92; for the Soviet case see Edelman, *Serious Fun*, 130.

<sup>420</sup> I. Adams, 'Pancasila: Sport and the Building of Indonesia: Ambitions and Obstacles', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19 (2), Jun-Sep, 2002, 302.

<sup>421</sup> Suh, *Kim Il Sung*, 180-2; Lee, *History of North Korea*, 28-32.

with the Soviet Union were temporarily suspended.

In these circumstances GANEFO – as a sporting festival based on Third World solidarity - provided an ideal arena in which North Korea could demonstrate its independence of the Soviet Union. The North Korean football team was remarkably successful in Indonesia, scoring twenty-six goals and conceding only two in the tournament and losing out in the final to the United Arab Republic (UAR) only when lots were drawn after extra time had been played. The Indonesian press extolled the physical and mental strength of the North Korean footballers in this hotly contested drawn match.<sup>422</sup> Full of confidence after this performance the North Korea was granted the right to participate in the qualifiers for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. It was an indication of mounting national interest that the Moranbong stadium in Pyongyang, which had recently been refurbished to accommodate around 71,000 spectators, could not accommodate the crowd for the preliminary game against Burma, and many people had to watch the match from the foot of a mountain overlooking the stadium.<sup>423</sup>

Given the progress that had been made it was unfortunate that the failure to resolve the problematic relationship that existed between the IOC and GANEFO meant that North Korea withdrew its athletes from the Tokyo games at a late stage. Athletes who had competed at GANEFO in 1963 were banned from participating in the Olympics<sup>424</sup> North Koreans were particularly enraged at the ban imposed by International

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<sup>422</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24 Nov, 19 Dec 1963. The Football Federation of UAR (United Arab Republic) was a joint association between Egypt and Syria over the period 1960-66.

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Mar 1964.

<sup>424</sup> Lee and Kim, *Sports of North Korea*, 216; Adams, 'Pancasila: Sport and the Building of Indonesia', 304.

Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) on Sin Geum Dan who had set the two world records in the women's 400 and 800 metres in the GANEFO.<sup>425</sup> However, the North Korean footballers visit to Tokyo was not entirely wasted as they were able to socialize with compatriots belonging to a pro-North Korean club in Japan and introduce them to their unique training methods.<sup>426</sup>

Although the enforced withdrawal of North Korea from the 1964 Olympic Games was a disappointment it did not hinder their preparation for the qualifying matches against South Korea and Australia for the 1966 World Cup. North Korea was able to use the 1965 GANEFO football tournament, which it hosted, for this purpose while also cementing its relations with other Third World countries.<sup>427</sup> Played in a friendly atmosphere, the participating nations included China, Indonesia and North Vietnam and a total attendance of around 700,000 spectators testified to the popularity of football in North Korea, whose team emerged victorious without conceding a goal.<sup>428</sup> Interest in the game was reaching a peak just as North Korea was about to make its full debut on the world football stage when overwhelming Australia by a 9-2 aggregate score in the World Cup qualifying matches in December 1965.<sup>429</sup> It was at this point that North Korean football, with players who 'galloped like arrows', began to make an impression in the West mainly because the speed at which they played the game was so remarkable. Certainly the chief coach of the Australian national side had never anticipated that they

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<sup>425</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24 Nov 1963, 3 Sep 1964; for this episode see Guttman, *The Olympics*, 109-110.

<sup>426</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 12 Aug 1960, 9 Jan 1965.

<sup>427</sup> *Ibid*, 5 Aug 1965.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid*, 11, 12 Aug 1965.

<sup>429</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 2 Dec 1965.

would move so quickly.<sup>430</sup>

## **(5) Comparative strength of South and North Korean Football**

For the South Koreans, anti-Japanese and anti-communist sentiments became the two basic tenets in the years following independence in 1945. South Korean football naturally went hand in hand with this political tide. When drawn against Japan in the qualifying round for the 1954 World Cup, they had to give up their home game on account of their government's refusal to allow the Japanese footballers entry into South Korea. However, in the end, this did not prove such a great handicap as they were not exposed to a culture shock of any kind. The South Korean team could speak Japanese fluently and were quite familiar with Japanese culture. Indeed they had been educated in an era when the Japanese colonial rulers were seeking to impose a strict Japanization policy on Korea and some of them had even been selected to play for the Japanese national team.<sup>431</sup> Thus they were familiar with Japan but, at the same time, they harboured very strong anti-Japanese feelings and this made them especially determined that 'there would be no way to lose to Japan at football'.<sup>432</sup>

The historic victory against Japan in 1954 would have been impossible without the contribution of northern footballers who had crossed the border during the Korean War. As we have seen, it was the northerner Choi Jung Min, with his formidable power and speed, who rose to become South Korean's greatest football celebrity after this victory.

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<sup>430</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 8 Dec 1965.

<sup>431</sup> Ohshima, *Legend of Kick-off*, 258-259, 268.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid*, 244, 257.

At this time, immediately after the civil war, refugees from the north experienced difficult conditions in the South where the police treated them as suspected communists.<sup>433</sup> Star players like Choi were valuable assets, however, and were protected by the fervent anti-communist Kim Chang Ryong who recruited them to play for the CIC and built a successful team in an era when football in South Korea was dominated by the military. In the mid 1950s, the CIC was always full of South Korean internationals, many of them from the north. After Kim Chang Ryong was assassinated in 1956 - a consequence of factional rivalry in the military - six football soldiers in the national team paid a visit to the grave of their senior officer. Five of them were from the north.<sup>434</sup> He had been a tyrant and a bully but they owed him much.

South Korean football nationalism was on a steep upward curve during the 1950s and early 1960s by virtue of their achievements in Asia. In October 1960, South Korea hosted the Asian Cup, the most prestigious international football won by their team. Yet this success was accompanied by an incident in which thousands of discontented ticket-holders – people who had bought tickets but had been refused admission to the stadium - suddenly broke down a gate causing thirty-one spectators to be injured in the ensuing stampede.<sup>435</sup> The match (between South Korea and Israel) was interrupted three times by unruly crowds attempting to invade the pitch. 'Prime Minister, John Chang [Chang Myon] who attended [that match]', it was reported, 'walked out during

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<sup>433</sup> G. Kim, *Identity and Experience of the Brethren who came from the North*, 276.

<sup>434</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 4 Mar 1956; For Kim's assassination see Kang, *Exploration of Korean Modern History 1950s (3)*, Seoul, 2004, 18-23; Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, 32; Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant Traces*, 195.

<sup>435</sup> *Donga Ilbo (evening edition)*, 18 Oct 1960.

the first half...because the crowd made it impossible for him to see the play'.<sup>436</sup> The immediate cause of this mayhem was the over-issue of tickets and scores of spectators who got into the stadium without paying.<sup>437</sup> However, this incident reflected a wider experience of social unrest in South Korea at this time.

In April 1960, the Rhee Syng Man's autocracy had ended amidst intense student demonstrations triggered by the ruling party's ballot rigging. The sensational success of these demonstrations 'induced all with dissatisfactions to express them as the students had [done]'.<sup>438</sup> The political instability gave rise to a military coup led by Park Chung Hee in 1961. Thus, for South Korea, the decade of the 1960s began in turbulence and this meant that football was given little encouragement by a regime that had other priorities. The retirement of Choi Jung Min also contributed to a period of football 'stagnation' during which South Korean football was fiercely criticized. This peaked after South Korea's humiliating 10-0 defeat by the UAR at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics.<sup>439</sup> In the wake of this defeat, there was widespread condemnation of the national team's lethargic performance which some critics judged as having been 'inferior to high school football'.<sup>440</sup>

While South Korean football was becoming mired in these difficulties, North Korea was formulating its unique football style based on the underlying idea of *Juche*. The relentless swift movement which characterized the North Korean style required

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<sup>436</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun (morning edition)*, 18 Oct 1960; for quotation, *Jerusalem Post*, 18 Oct 1960.

<sup>437</sup> *Donga Ilbo (evening edition)*, 19 Oct 1960.

<sup>438</sup> Henderson, *Korea: Politics of the Vortex*, 179.

<sup>439</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 315.

<sup>440</sup> *Donga Ilbo (extra edition)*, 17 Oct 1964.

physically fit footballers and a training system based on running that was designed to enhance both speed and endurance. The Kim Il Sung regime clearly recognized the value of football, by far the most popular sport in the North, as a means to achieve his political ends, and much effort went into creating a centralized system that would help to nurture football talent and ensure the success of the national team. 'Over 7,000 football clubs with a total membership of 240,000 are run at our factories, enterprises, rural communities and residential quarters', the *Pyongyang Times* boasted. They are a reliable reserve constantly reinforcing the ranks of our footballers'.<sup>441</sup> The infrastructure was improved in other ways. Moranbong, the national stadium, was renovated in 1960 and there were no less than a hundred other stadiums accommodating up to 30,000 across the country. A further 3,000 football pitches were provided in those years. The commitment of the regime to football in North Korea was such that all government departments stopped work for important international matches, such as the Olympic qualifier against Burma at Pyongyang in 1964.<sup>442</sup>

The North Koreans sought to test the football system they had developed by taking on foreign opposition. During the early 1960s, their most important opponents were the Soviet and China. The defeats inflicted on Moscow Spartak in 1961 and the Chinese national team in 1962 gave confidence to North Korean football. The official view was that victory over the resurgent Spartak, recovering after a slump from 1958 and the third-ranked team in the Soviet Union, was due to following the Party's instruction that they should 'sweat more in training'.<sup>443</sup> It was encouraging that the Chinese, after their

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<sup>441</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 12 Aug 1965.

<sup>442</sup> *Sakka Magazine*, Aug 1966, 70.

<sup>443</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 27 Sep 1961. For Moscow Spartak see R. Edelman, *Spartak Moscow: A History of*

defeat in 1962, extolled the impressive agility and stamina of the North Koreans.<sup>444</sup> However, after the problems arising from the Sino-Soviet split, it was at GANEFO in 1963 and at the Asian Football GANEFO in 1965 that the North Koreans were able to test themselves and their system in serious international competition.

Kim Yong Sik, who watched the match between North Korea and Burma in 1963, confidently predicted that “South Korea [could] beat North Korea easily.”<sup>445</sup> Yet, North Korean footballers were much more disciplined and valued by Kim Il Sung and his cadres than their Southern counterparts were by their rulers at the time. The South Korean military regime which seized power in 1961 was in no position to afford a full-scale ideological competition against the North in football, as we shall see later. The incumbent President, Park Chung Hee, did not even approve, of playing the 1962 World Cup qualifying matches against Yugoslavia, a communist nation, although he changed his mind later after seeking advice from the USA.<sup>446</sup> Park Chung Hee probably feared that giving his approval to this game without first seeking American approval would raise awkward questions about his past; he had participated alongside communists in the Yosu Rebellion of 1948.<sup>447</sup> While North Korea’s footballers rushed forward confidently to the 1966 World Cup, their southern counterparts came to a standstill with little motivation.

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*the People's Team in the Workers' State*, Ithaca, 2009, 245.

<sup>444</sup> Kim et al, *Football of Our Nation*, 23.

<sup>445</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 25 Apr 1963.

<sup>446</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 328.

<sup>447</sup> Kang, *Football is Korea*, 100; See also, B. Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War*, vol. II, *The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950*, Princeton, 1990, 266.



## **North Korea's impact on world football and South Korea's football revolution, 1966-73**

Historically, European and South American nations have dominated the FIFA World Cup both on and off the field. In contrast, Asian and African countries have played only supporting – and generally subordinate – roles at least until 1966 when two significant events took place. Firstly, all the African associations boycotted the 1966 World Cup in protest against FIFA's allocation of just one place in the finals for Africa, Asia, and Oceania.<sup>448</sup> Secondly, a team representing an Asian nation, North Korea, reached the quarter-finals of the 1966 tournament in England, beating Italy, generally considered one of the most powerful footballing nations along the way. It could be argued that the North Koreans' sensational 'giant-killing' exploits, in association with the African boycott, marked the beginning of an Asian and African challenge to the established order in world football and began the process of making the World Cup a truly global event.<sup>449</sup>

The African boycott was basically grounded in FIFA's belief that football in the 'Third World' was not capable of competing successfully with the game's established powers. North Korea's surprising performance in 1966 challenged this view and was witnessed by a global audience via television and under these circumstances was difficult to

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<sup>448</sup> H. Mayes, *The Football Association World Cup Report 1966*, London, 1967, 35.

<sup>449</sup> Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 51.

ignore. However, the North Korean experience of this momentous series of events remains largely unknown, much as the release in 2002 of *The Game of Their Lives*, a documentary film on the 1966 North Korean football squad, satisfied one's curiosity to a certain degree. Accordingly, this chapter will seek firstly to use accounts drawn from both North Korean and English newspapers to reconstruct North Korea's road to England and its meteoric rise as a world football power during the final stages of the 1966 tournament. The most significant feature of what happened in 1966 from a world football perspective was that North Korea, an Asian nation previously outside the circle of established football powers, began to have a wider impact. Much emphasis will be placed on the reasons why the North Korean footballers touched a chord with their English hosts. The North Korean impact on football in Italy, the victims of the upset, will also be discussed.

Secondly, however, it has to be recognized that the legacy of 1966 had its most profound impact back home in North Korea and also in the South. In this respect, North Korea's brief but crucial hibernation after 1966 needs to be explained. It also has to be recognized that the success of the North Koreans in England prompted a response in the South which embarked on a football revolution from the late 1960s. The combined effect of this dramatic series of events would greatly change the course of football history in the two Koreas.

## (1) North Korea's road to the 1966 World Cup

North Korea secured a 1966 berth rather easily with just two games against Australia by virtue of the withdrawal of fifteen African and one Asian nation.<sup>450</sup> Contrary to what some studies have suggested, not all of these sixteen withdrawals boycotted the regional qualifying competition on account of FIFA's discriminatory approach.<sup>451</sup> South Korea withdrew because it feared any possible defeat at the hands of North Korea, its principal ideological enemy.<sup>452</sup> The Australian Soccer Federation (ASF) may have misjudged the situation after early reports that there was 'a strong chance that North Korea will withdraw from the series rather than play against South Korea'.<sup>453</sup> When it was decided that the North Korea-Australia play-off matches would take place at a neutral venue the Australians had nominated Great Britain and were somewhat shocked when Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, was chosen. The ASF vice-president, Jim Bayutti expressed anxiety over FIFA's decision, fearing that 'Australia may be facing Soccer [*sic*] matches, before excitable crowds, in very hostile territory'.<sup>454</sup> Phnom Penh was one of the cities that had been nominated by the North Koreans.<sup>455</sup>

Despite this anxiety, Australia was so confident about the outcome of the forthcoming matches against North Korea that two hundred ties featuring an Australian crest and with the words "World Cup 1966" incorporated in the design' were ordered in

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<sup>450</sup> Mayes, *FA World Cup Report 1966*, 258.

<sup>451</sup> Murray, *Football: A History of the World Game*, 203; Polley, 'The Diplomatic Background to the 1966 Football World Cup', 3.

<sup>452</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 257-258; Kang, *Football is Korea*, 104.

<sup>453</sup> *The Australian*, 16 April 1965.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, 23 April 1965.

<sup>455</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 Mar 1965.

advance.<sup>456</sup> However, for the Australians, the match against the more athletic footballers from North Korea would prove to be an uphill battle; they were to be outfought and outpaced. Moreover, just as Bayutti had feared, Phnom Penh was far from amicable to the Australians. FIFA had initially suggested Hong Kong for the matches, but the problem of obtaining visas for the North Koreans seemingly thwarted the plan.<sup>457</sup> Before the game, a Cambodian daily reported that 'football fans in Pnom [sic] Penh [favoured] the Korean team, for they [wished] to see an Asian team winning the match. The Australian players [were] worried on account of some 30,000-40,000 spectators supporting the Korean team'.<sup>458</sup> Indeed, at the time, Cambodia had a friendly relationship with North Korea. A Cambodian delegation visited Pyongyang two months before the elimination tie to arrange an official visit of Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian head of state, to North Korea.<sup>459</sup> There was much satisfaction in Cambodia when North Korea thrashed Australia in the two elimination matches by an aggregate score of 9-2.

Apart from Australia, both South Korea and Britain were aghast at the news of the North Korea's victory. Prompted by the imperatives of Cold War politics the South Korean government was anxious to prevent North Korean participation and the advantage of propaganda opportunities that it presented. The South Korean Ambassador in London, General Lee, demanded that the British Foreign Office should debar the North Koreans. However, for the British government the issue was complicated. At first the British government did consider refusing visas to the North

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<sup>456</sup> *The Australian*, 13 Nov 1965.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Feb 1965.

<sup>458</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 2 Dec 1965.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, 5 Aug 1965.

Koreans. However, it soon became clear that this was likely to prove counterproductive in that that 'FIFA might remove the competition from England if the government barred a duly-qualified team'.<sup>460</sup> Thus, the British government rejected the South Korean government's request to intervene directly pointing out that in Britain 'the sporting bodies were not under government control'.<sup>461</sup> However, dealing with a team from North Korea, a state which the British government did not recognize, continued to pose tricky problems.

Henceforth the government sought to engineer a 'typical British compromise' whereby North Korean flags would be flown but the North Korean anthem would not be played except for the opening match and the final. Moreover the team would be referred to as North Korea rather than the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).<sup>462</sup> The British government did not want to jeopardize its relations with Seoul, and explained that allowing North Korea's flag to be flown did not mean 'a change in British diplomatic policy' but simply that, in the unusual circumstances, the government had decided to turn a 'blind eye to the flag'. South Korean sensitivity on this issue was addressed to some extent, however, by changing the design of the official World Cup postage stamp so that it did not include the North Korean flag.<sup>463</sup> These efforts to placate South Korea were not always successful. At a luncheon to welcome the World Cup football contestants, the ambassador of South Korea was invited by mistake. Undeterred by this diplomatic *faux pas*, he improvised a speech which reminded the audience that 'according to the resolution of the United Nations, the Republic of Korea

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<sup>460</sup> Polley, 'Diplomatic Background to the 1966 Football World Cup', 12.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>462</sup> Foot, *Calcio*, 490.

<sup>463</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 12 July 1966; Mayes, *FA World Cup Report 1966*, 79.

represents the whole of Korea'.<sup>464</sup>

The North Korean Football Association remained in a state of high anxiety about whether their team would go England while these diplomatic issues were resolved. On February 12 1966, they sent a telegram to the Organizing Committee of the 1966 World Cup pointing out that they had received no notification of 'the results of the draw of the championship and of the forthcoming February 28 meeting'.<sup>465</sup> Eventually, however, a North Korean delegation was dispatched to London to make arrangements for their team's participation in the World Cup finals. Their visit was successful in that it resulted in the Organizing Committee pledging that it would resolve satisfactorily the various outstanding issues including the entrance into the Britain of the North Korean footballers, journalists and accompanying tourists.<sup>466</sup> With these obstacles cleared, North Korea was sufficiently confident to seek a pre-tournament friendly match with South Korea, a match that would have reminded all Koreans of the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang Football Championship which had been established during the colonial period. <sup>467</sup> However, on this occasion, Cold War politics stood in the way and the match did not take place.

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<sup>464</sup> *South China Morning Post*, 9 July 1966.

<sup>465</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 17 February 1966.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid*, 24 March 1966.

<sup>467</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 18 May 1966.

## (2) The cult of the underdog and North Korea's attacking football

From the outset, the North Koreans, the first of the visiting sides to make their headquarters in England, provoked curiosity due partly to the secretive nature of their country. English people knew very little about North Korea and even less about North Korean football. The mysterious character of the exotic North Koreans helped to boost ticket sales in Middlesbrough where they would play their matches. As one English newspaper reported in typical tabloid style:

*The big boom in sales has been sparked off by the arrival of the North Koreans... Nobody knows anything about Han Bong Jin and his team-mates and they are not exactly enlightening the public. They are keeping their tactical plans locked away. They refuse to predict the outcome of the matches, and their two imported chefs are even keeping the menu firmly under their hats. The only thing the traditionally soccer-hungry North Easterners have got out of the North Koreans is a new slogan: "Go to work on a beansprout."*<sup>468</sup>

Tidbits of gossip about the North Koreans in the regional dailies seem to have amplified Middlesbrough's interest in them. When the North Korean players were not able to eat their meal because of their lateness for the supper at the St. George Hotel, they threatened to walk out of the hotel in protest.<sup>469</sup> They finally located their practice pitch after being rebuffed four times like 'a woman at a hat sale'.<sup>470</sup> It was also reported that the Chileans, drawn in the same group, had banned North Korean officials with a

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<sup>468</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 2 July 1966.

<sup>469</sup> *Newcastle Journal*, 8, July, 1966

<sup>470</sup> *Northern Echo*, 8 July 1966; for quotation see *Sunday Times*, 10 July 1966.

movie camera from 'spying on their training'.<sup>471</sup>

But this initial curiosity over the North Koreans could hardly explain how it was that North Korea should become Middlesbrough's 'adopted' side. An important reason for the immense enthusiasm for North Korean football that developed lay in the cult of underdog, a firmly entrenched feature of English football culture owing to annual excitement caused by giant-killing in the FA Cup when clubs from the lower divisions gained unexpected victories against elite opposition. Later, an English journalist aptly compared the North Korean phenomenon with the attraction of the FA Cup after North Korea's victory over fancied Italy.

*It is good for the game the little fellows come up now and again and shake everyone, for that's what makes our own F.A. Cup such a great tournament.* <sup>472</sup>

The North Korean players' average height was approximately five feet six inches; this helped journalists seeking to portray them as 'underdogs' and potential 'giant-killers'.<sup>473</sup> Their two biggest players could just about 'make Middlesbrough police cadets for height'.<sup>474</sup> Indeed, they were football 'minnows', 100-1 outsiders for the World Cup.<sup>475</sup> In view of this type of coverage it was not surprising that Middlesbrough fans were highly sympathetic to North Korea. As a steward of Middlesbrough FC's social club

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<sup>471</sup> *Daily Mail (Northern Edition)*, 11 July 1966; *Donga Ilbo*, 28 July 1966.

<sup>472</sup> *Liverpool Echo and Evening Express*, 22 July 1966.

<sup>473</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 16 June 1966.

<sup>474</sup> *Daily Mail (Northern Edition)*, 16 July 1966.

<sup>475</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 12 June 1966.



confirmed: 'Most fans say they'll be shouting for the Koreans against Russia tonight.'<sup>476</sup>

In their first group-stage match at Ayresome Park the rough play of the Soviet Union side helped to confirm this feeling of sympathy towards the North Koreans. The Russians committed no less than twenty-seven fouls, stifling North Korea by their bullying tactics in which the most notorious villain was Khurtsilava, who was particularly 'adept at the use of body-checking'.<sup>477</sup> J.L. Manning, chief sports writer for the right-wing *Daily Mail*, lampooned this Soviet team as middle or heavyweight boxers under the headline 'Ringside view of Russians', prompting an angry reaction from the head of Russian delegation at a press conference.<sup>478</sup> His criticism could not be entirely disassociated from the fact that he was very much a 'Cold Warrior', as were many British journalists at the time. However, it is important to recognize that Manning's comments may have been justified. The only South Korean journalist on the spot, Chang Heng Hoon, interviewed in 2008, recalled that he was so incensed by the over-physical approach of the Soviet players that he cried out: 'Russian sons of bitches'.<sup>479</sup> After the game he criticized the Soviet team as the 'masters of wild play'.<sup>480</sup> Spectators at the match, although they did not have any ethnic relations with the North Koreans like Chang, began to adopt the tiny Orientals as their local team. When Koreans earned a throw-in, a local fan shouted 'Borough ball' to the referee, as if he was watching Middlesbrough FC play at home.<sup>481</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> *Daily Mail (Northern Edition)*, 12 July 1966.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid*, 13 July 1966; for quotation, *The Times*, 13 July 1966.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid*, 14, 16 July 1966.

<sup>479</sup> Interview with Chang Heng Hoon, Seoul, 6 March 2008.

<sup>480</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 July 1966.

<sup>481</sup> *Evening Gazette* (Middlesbrough), 13 July 1966.

At this juncture, it is instructive to look into how unfashionable Ayresome Park came to be chosen as a World Cup venue. St. James Park, Newcastle, had originally been selected to stage some World Cup matches, but this plan was thwarted by a row between Newcastle United and Newcastle City Council in 1964 over the ground improvements that would be required. Middlesbrough was chosen instead and Ayresome Park was refurbished at a cost of approximately £125,000.<sup>482</sup> As their city was often considered to be the 'poor relation' in the North-East of England – especially in relation to Newcastle – this unexpected switch of venues became a source of civic pride. Significantly, at this time, there were plans to develop Middlesbrough as the centre of a vast new city to be called 'Teesside', which it was claimed would become the third largest in Britain by the 1970s.<sup>483</sup> Being selected as a venue for World Cup matches, therefore, became part of a campaign to put Middlesbrough on the map. John Boothby, the Mayor of Middlesbrough, seized the opportunity to make the relevant connection: 'Some people say it was an accident that Middlesbrough was chosen as a ground for the games ... I think it was an act of God. The people of Middlesbrough feel that they are now part of the country.'<sup>484</sup>

However, to put this in perspective, the 'least remunerative games' were allotted to Middlesbrough. In comparison with the other World Cup cities 'Middlesbrough had the lowest total attendance of all the grounds which had more than one match'.<sup>485</sup> Of all the North Korean games played at Ayresome Park, the opening match against USSR attracted the largest crowd (22,568). After North Korea's unexpected victory over Italy,

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<sup>482</sup> *Nothern Echo*, 1, July 1966.

<sup>483</sup> *Daily Sketch*, 12 July 1966.

<sup>484</sup> *Evening Gazette*, 13 July 1966.

<sup>485</sup> Mayes, *FA World Cup Report 1966*, 249.

their quarter-final match against Portugal contested at Goodison Park, Liverpool, attracted an audience of 51,780, including many who travelled from Middlesbrough to support them.<sup>486</sup> Middlesbrough FC was also a football minnow, having just being relegated to the English Third Division in 1966.<sup>487</sup> The football public of Middlesbrough had previously had no opportunity to watch international football at Ayresome Park so there was also an element of novelty.

The local context is important in explaining the popularity of the North Korean team. For the excited crowds who came to support them at Ayresome Park the heroic exploits of their exotic visitors may have helped to compensate for the disappointing performances of their own team. The *Guardian* commented:

*The Middlesbrough crowd roared on their new heroes, "KO-RE-A, KO-RE-A," drowned the fading cries of "IT-AL-IA, IT-AL-IA," and when the game ended, one would have thought that Middlesbrough had won the FA Cup.* <sup>488</sup>

The North Korean footballers were quoted as saying that playing at Ayresome Park was like 'having a game at the Moranbong Stadium in Pyongyang'.<sup>489</sup> In a letter to the citizens of Middlesbrough written in 2002, the footballers acknowledged Middlesbrough's warm welcome and enthusiastic support while recollecting that it had given them 'great strength to win against the Italian team'.<sup>490</sup> They were surprised by

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<sup>486</sup> Ibid, 267.

<sup>487</sup> *Daily Mail* (Northern edition), 2 July 1966.

<sup>488</sup> *Guardian*, 20 July 1966.

<sup>489</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 11 August 1966.

<sup>490</sup> *The Game of Their Lives: Book of the Film*, 2.

the reaction of the British public - a British sailor's rushing onto the field to salute the North Korean footballers after the match against Chile; the throng of English autograph seekers with North Korean flags; a local daily carrying an article on the brief history of North Korea written by a North Korean journalist.<sup>491</sup> The friendly atmosphere was a stark contrast to what the North Koreans had expected about before making their trip to a stronghold of Western capitalism.<sup>492</sup>

However, it was also the style of play displayed by the North Koreans that led the English crowds to cheer them. The most salient feature of the 1966 World Cup was the excessive use of defensive tactics. 'Looking for [real] football in the 1966 World Cup was very like seeking water in the Sahara', as *World Soccer* observed at the time. The 1966 World Cup was marked by a win-at-any-cost approach employing reinforced defenses of preferably eight men who used 'late tackles or getting-stuck-in to injure and to intimidate' the opposition.<sup>493</sup> An elderly Newcastle supporter quoted by the *Daily Mail* attacked the defensive or cautious football on display. 'If this had been the style of football when I was a youngster', he said, 'I would never have become a fan'.<sup>494</sup> Three of the four teams in North Korea's group were noted for their negative footballing style. The Soviet Union sought to imitate the ultra-defensive tactics associated with Helenio Herrera allied to pure physical strength.<sup>495</sup> Chile's approach was so negative that they even played defensively when they were a goal down to Italy. Yet, at the time, the criticism of football followers in the North-East of England was directed mainly at the

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<sup>491</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 5 Aug 1966; *Evening Gazette*, 20 July 1966.

<sup>492</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 4 Aug 1966.

<sup>493</sup> 'It was such a crying shame !', *World Soccer*, September, 1966, 6-7.

<sup>494</sup> *Daily Mail* (Northern edition), 1 July 1966.

<sup>495</sup> Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 161.

Italians. Before the tournament Edmundo Fabbri, manager of the Italian squad, had promised to give 'British football enthusiasts value for their money with some good attacking soccer'.<sup>496</sup> Yet, once the competition began, Italy concentrated on their notorious defensive game at the expense of their flair. This prompted Brian Clough of Hartlepoons United, at the time the youngest manager in the Football League, to rebuke Italian football:

*All we have learned is what NOT to do, I'm sure Hartlepoons fans would not keep turning up at the Victoria ground for a whole season to see football like that which, say, Italy have been playing. They couldn't stand it even if we were winning every match.*<sup>497</sup>

After North Korea had beaten Italy, the manager of Newcastle United, Joe Harvey, praised their fast attacking football made possible by their hard training and doubted whether the Italians had the heart for this kind of commitment. He wrote that he would like his players to climb a mountain and have a rice diet like the North Koreans. The North Koreans' victory also convinced Middlesbrough's manager of the significance of 'running and hard work'.<sup>498</sup>

Herrera's defensive tactics leading to frequent 1-0 victories was characterized as 'the Italian game'.<sup>499</sup> In the 1960s Internazionale of Milan were its prime exponents, having employed *catenaccio* as they scaled the peaks of European club football, frustrating English opponents along the way. English teams, according to Jonathan Wilson, relied

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<sup>496</sup> *Evening Gazette*, 8 July 2006.

<sup>497</sup> *Daily Mail* (Northern Edition), 20 July 1966.

<sup>498</sup> *Newcastle Journal*, 20 July 1966; *Daily Mail* (Northern Edition), 21 July 1966.

<sup>499</sup> Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, 199-200.

on 'thoughtless physicality - keep battling, keep running, keep trying' and resented 'the Italian game'.<sup>500</sup> It was easy for English football fans to relate to the relentless attacking style of the North Koreans which was in many ways closer to the English tradition.

*As the Koreans ran and chased with boyish enthusiasm in the early minutes of their first match in the World Cup finals, even ex-international players in the Press box said: "They'll never keep this up." Remarkably, they did.*<sup>501</sup>

In a tournament dominated by defensive football, the North Korean attacking style was refreshing while their commitment and levels of physical fitness were seen as phenomenal. For a *Guardian* reporter, this was symbolized when a North Korean winger chased a loose ball and 'collided with the corner flag, breaking it in two'.<sup>502</sup> The tiny Koreans' jumping ability was also remarkable; they often out-jumped the Italians and even the Portuguese giant Torres who was almost six feet four inches in height.<sup>503</sup>

The great reservoir of the North Koreans' fitness was their highly regimented Spartan training. Stan Ackerley who had played for Australia in the qualifying series against North Korea, recalled 'looking out of his hotel bed room at six in the morning, seeing them running in what seemed like a frenzy in the nearby hills'.<sup>504</sup> More surprising was that after the first qualifying match had finished at midnight, the North Koreans rested

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<sup>500</sup> Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 168, 296.

<sup>501</sup> 'Group IV: Russia 3 North Korea 0', *World Soccer*, September 1966, 19.

<sup>502</sup> *Guardian*, 20 July 1966; A Japanese newspaper later claimed that a majority of North Korean footballers in the 1966 squad could run 100 metres in 11 seconds, though this seems unlikely; see *Nihon Geijai Shimbun*, 28 Jan 2005.

<sup>503</sup> H. McIlvanney, (ed.), *World Cup '66*, London, 1966, 105; *Guardian* 25 July 1966.

<sup>504</sup> B. Charlton, *Sir Bobby Charlton: The Autobiography: My England Years*, London, 2008, 257-258.

for less than six hours.<sup>505</sup> This extreme diligence was a microcosmic reflection in North Korean society during the 1960s when, as one defector has recalled, most North Koreans worked almost all day long under the banner of the *Chollima* movement.<sup>506</sup> *Chollima*, a mythical winged-horse capable of running 1,000 *li* (approximately 400 kilometers) without a halt, was for Koreans the epitome of endurance. The North Korean footballers, by demonstrating their stamina and tenacity, exemplified this movement in North Korean society and it gave them confidence. As their anthem proclaimed: 'We are the glorious *Chollima* team. We can beat anyone, even the strongest team'.<sup>507</sup>

North Korea's 'never-say-die' approach based upon their high work-rate was instrumental in capturing the imagination of the English crowd. The North Koreans 'fought like lions for an equalizer from the restart' of their match against Chile.<sup>508</sup> This North Koreans' spirit seems to have prompted loud enthusiasm in the crowd at Ayresome Park. When Park Seung Jin's last-minute equalizer arrived the celebrations brought down some electric strip lightning in the press refreshment room up in the stand.<sup>509</sup> Meanwhile, the freshness of North Koreans' approach allowed their quarter-final match against Portugal to be described as the rebirth of attacking football. The North Koreans, comparative strangers to modern football style as played in Europe and South America, continued to attack even when leading Portugal 3-0. Their tactical naivety helped to make this match distinctive and memorable albeit though they conceded their lead and finally lost 5-3. 'All those who stayed at home to watch

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<sup>505</sup> *Daily Express*, 11 January 1966.

<sup>506</sup> Hye-rang Sung, *A Wisteria Vine-Roofed House*, Seoul, 2001, 276.

<sup>507</sup> *The Game of their Lives: Book of the Film*, 23.

<sup>508</sup> *Northern Echo*, 16 July 1966.

<sup>509</sup> *Evening Gazette*, 16 July 1966.

England on television missed the match of a lifetime', wrote the *Sunday Mirror*.<sup>510</sup> The North Koreans were also naïve off the field. When their dividend was paid out by the organizers they had prepared sacks in order to receive 'bundles of cash or nuggets of gold'. But they received only a cheque!<sup>511</sup>

### **(3) North Korea's view and mixed responses from abroad**

What did the success of their national team mean to North Koreans? What use did their government make of this success? While in England, for example, the comprehensive television coverage of the 1966 World Cup turned housewives into football fans and an estimated forty million people watched the World Cup final, North Koreans, alone among the competing nations in 1966, had no access to the first 'televised World Cup'.<sup>512</sup> However, radio coverage was sufficient to bring North Koreans together for the occasion. Having either listened to the live broadcast or heard the good news from their neighbours, North Koreans poured on to the streets to celebrate the unexpected victory over Italy.<sup>513</sup> It was not the faces of football heroes in 1966 but their names that were strongly imprinted on the minds of North Koreans. When Park Du Ik, famous for his goal against Italy, violated traffic regulations, the traffic warden let him go straight away after seeing his name on his identity card.<sup>514</sup> From an economic standpoint, the 1960s was the successful decade for North Korea, but the lives of the

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<sup>510</sup> *Sunday Mirror*, 24 July 1966.

<sup>511</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Aug 1966.

<sup>512</sup> Lanfranchi et al, *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, 265; Mason, 'When Was The First Real World Cup?', 7; Mayes, 'FA World Cup Report 1966', 37.

<sup>513</sup> *Kukmin Ilbo*, 19 Jun 2002.

<sup>514</sup> *The Game of their Lives: Book of the Film*, 81.



people, forced to work long hours to achieve the economic growth rate targeted by the Party, were tough.<sup>515</sup> It was said that North Korean workers were working even harder than usual to encourage their footballers in their intensive training. Thus *Chollima* provided a link between the people and the national team.<sup>516</sup> Even when propaganda is discounted it is clear that North Koreans empathized with their football heroes and enjoyed a euphoric moment after hearing the good news from Middlesbrough.

As far as the regime in North Korea was concerned, however, any success achieved by the national team was useful for propaganda purposes as a testament to the superiority of socialist system. The Party argued that the success of their footballers demonstrated the power of people's sports in North Korea in contrast to sports under capitalism where money ruled.<sup>517</sup> Official sources credited the success of the North Korean team to *Chollima* game and the all-out defensive and offensive play they had adopted since the early 1960s.<sup>518</sup> Meanwhile, North Korean newspapers targeted Italian football in particular as a way of exposing the problem of professionalism in capitalist sports. The *Pyongyang Times* cited the opinion of numerous Italian newspapers which claimed that the North Koreans had 'ridiculed our [Italian] millionaire footballers'.<sup>519</sup>

Indeed, the state of Italian football at this time was such that it could easily be exploited by North Korean propagandists eager to make a point about the failings of the capitalist system more generally. Italian clubs had embarked on a wild spending

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<sup>515</sup> H. Sung, *Wisteria Vine-Roofed House*, 276.

<sup>516</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 5 Jun 1966; *The Game of their Lives: Book of the Film*, 13.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid*, 2 Aug 1966.

<sup>518</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 11 Aug 1966,

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Jul 1966.

spree in the 1960s in order to attract the world's best footballers; indeed, Luis Suarez, the Spanish inside-forward bought by Internazionale from Barcelona for 250 million Italian *lire* (£142,000) in 1961, was the world's most expensive footballer. *World Soccer* reported that most of Italy's major clubs were in the red after the season 1963-64, when the financial difficulties stemming from expensive transfers were much exacerbated by a more general economic crisis.<sup>520</sup> The crisis was so serious that a ban had been imposed on the signing of foreign players, a measure that prevented the clubs from paying heavy transfer fees but was also aimed at protecting domestic talent.<sup>521</sup> Moreover, 'the decadence of Italian football', as *La Nazione* pointed out, was 'but one aspect of the more sweeping decadence of our entire country'.<sup>522</sup> Italian society, in this period was also bedeviled by a corrupt relationship between political and business circles.<sup>523</sup> Under these circumstances, the nation-wide protest prompted by Italy's humiliating defeat by North Korea had to be taken seriously and the argument for greater control over transfer fees in Italian football was widely accepted by all the parties from ultra-right to communist.<sup>524</sup> This response owed much to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and communism, Italy's two great ideological forces; both were 'against the modern world of consumerism' and 'its commodity fetishism'.<sup>525</sup> What was seen as the fiasco of 1966 rubbed salt into the already open wound of Italian football where club rather than national interests had been the overriding concern after 1945.

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<sup>520</sup> 'For Italy: Millionaires-urgently required !', *World Soccer*, Oct 1964, 32-33.

<sup>521</sup> 'Italy will keep foreign ban', *Charles Buchan's Football Monthly*, Feb 1966, 11.

<sup>522</sup> *The Guardian*, 22 Jul 1966.

<sup>523</sup> P. Ginsborg, *A History of Contemporary Italy: Society and Politics, 1943-1988*, London, 1990, 284; S. Martin, *Sport Italia: the Italian Love Affair with Sport*, London, 2011, 142-145.

<sup>524</sup> *The Times*, 21 July 1966.

<sup>525</sup> P. Ginsborg, *Italy and its Discontents: Family, Civil Society, State*, London, 2003, 102-103.

The 1966 World Cup was the first in which the Third World football countries demonstrated their potential. Some critics argued that 'third-class teams', including North Korea, had taken places that should have been occupied by Scotland, Czechoslovakia and so forth.<sup>526</sup> However, the validity of these Eurocentric views was undermined after North Korea had beaten Italy and scored three times against Portugal. The North Korea's party organ, *Nodong Shinmun* pointed out that some European football pundits had predicted that North Korea would not score a single goal in the competition and had been proved wrong.<sup>527</sup> A North Korean journalist introduced an interesting anecdote as a way of representing how the people of Asia were similarly prejudiced against the West. Apparently, some Burmese soccer fans had asked a British journalist from *World Soccer* to keep his promise that he would eat his manuscripts if North Korea would win a single game.<sup>528</sup>

The North Korean government sought to identify the success of their World Cup team as a victory achieved on behalf of the Third World as a whole and Pyongyang newspapers cited favourable comments from other Asian and African nations. Indonesian Sports Minister Maladi, chairman of GANEFO, saw the victory over Italy as one which belonged in the first instance to North Korea but also to 'the new emerging forces of the world'.<sup>529</sup> Algeria, famed for the role that football had played in its anti-colonial struggle, congratulated the North Koreans on their achievement. *Nodong Shinmun* cited an article from an Algerian weekly which praised the disciplined North Korean footballers who had overcome physically stronger opponents through their

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<sup>526</sup> *The Scotsman* (Edinburgh), 18 July 1966; *Daily Express*, 16 July 1966.

<sup>527</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 2 August 1966.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid*, 9 August 1966; *South China Sunday Post Herald*, 23 July 1966.

<sup>529</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 28 July 1966.

tenacity and willpower.<sup>530</sup> The Egyptian media, with their staunch Arab nationalism, alleged that North Korea had only lost to Portugal in the quarter-final because the Israeli referee had been bribed. Another version of this story had been circulating in North Korea on account of the two penalty kicks awarded to Portugal. The referee's decisions, it was said, could be explained by Israel's hostile relations with North Korea.<sup>531</sup> In relation to the impact made by the Third World in 1966 it was noted that North Korea was defeated largely through the individual exploits of Eusebio from Mozambique, a Third World country struggling for its independence from Portugal. The presence of four Mozambicans in the Portuguese team suggested the ascent of African football.<sup>532</sup> More generally, the impact made by Asian and African footballers in 1966 could not be denied. Even the *Daily Express*, the London newspaper most closely associated with the old imperialism, was forced to acknowledge the changing dynamics of world football: 'It could be that the semi-finalists of the 1974 World Cup will be Ghana, China, Mozambique and, of course, North Korea'.<sup>533</sup>

The success of the national team at the World Cup assisted the Party's efforts, via its routine propaganda campaign, to persuade North Koreans that the North was superior to the South, where life was much harder. *Nodong Shinmun*, the Party organ reproduced an article from a South Korean daily, praising North Korea's feat while contrasting the golden age of North Korean football with the slump of football in the South.<sup>534</sup> This was followed by an ideologically correct article in *Nodong Shinmun*

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<sup>530</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 27 July 1966.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid*, 8, 9 Aug 1966. See also Y. Ham, *Comets*, vol 1, 361.

<sup>532</sup> *Daily Mail* (Northern Edition), 23 July 1966; *South China Morning Post*, 25 July 1966.

<sup>533</sup> *Daily Express*, 25 July 1966.

<sup>534</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 9 Aug 1966.

which reported that 'most South Koreans were pleased with North Korea's victory over Italy'. It was claimed that this was a quote from a South Korean newspaper on 21 July, but there was no such line in any newspapers in the South on that day.<sup>535</sup> South Korean dailies, on the contrary, speculated that fifty of the seventy-five strong North Korean World Cup contingent were agents employed primarily to spy on their opponents.<sup>536</sup> A story had appeared in a Middlesbrough newspaper that they had spent £3000 on camera equipment and bought hundreds of pounds worth of film while in the North-East of England.<sup>537</sup>

It is important, however, to try to see clearly through the mist of propaganda and there is evidence that South Koreans followed the progress of the North Korean team in 1966. According to the South Korean journalist Chang, the people in the South showed keen interest in the North Korean football at that time, even though they never actually saw North Korea play.<sup>538</sup> Even though some 1966 World Cup matches were televised in South Korea, the games played by the North Koreans were not covered.<sup>539</sup> As news of North Korea's progress spread it seems likely that it generated complex feelings in the minds of South Koreans: antagonism and envy possibly, but along with the hope that 'Asian football could become a world beater'.<sup>540</sup> These mixed feelings were demonstrated by an editorial in *Kyunghyang Shinmun* which claimed that the North Korean squad had been 'forcibly trained' to fulfill its 'propaganda purpose', but

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<sup>535</sup> Ibid, 30, Jul, 1966.

<sup>536</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 22, 24 July 1966.

<sup>537</sup> *Evening Gazette*, 19, Jul, 1966.

<sup>538</sup> Interview with Chang Heng Hoon, Seoul, 6 March 2008; see also *Los Angeles Times*, 22 June 2002.

<sup>539</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 20 May, 9 Aug 1970.

<sup>540</sup> *Shina Ilbo*, 2 Aug 1966.

acknowledged that they had 'made a breakthrough' in the World Cup and conceded that there seemed to be a 'huge gap between the national team of South Korea and the North'. Perhaps fearing that it had gone too far, an editorial in the same newspaper a day reminded its readers that the North was a 'closed and dictatorial society' whereas the South was a 'free and open society'. Whereas South Korean newspapers had reported on North Korea's football success in 1966, newspapers in the North had ignored the achievements of South Korean sports stars, such as Kim Gi Su, who had won the world junior-middleweight boxing championship earlier in the summer of 1966.<sup>541</sup>

#### **(4) Football revolution in South Korea**

In government circles in South Korea, North Korea's performances in England set alarm bells ringing, especially as the South was desperately striving at the time to match the high rate of economic growth being achieved in the North. For President Park, ideological competition between North and South was increasingly a matter of which system was most effective in feeding its people and delivering prosperity.<sup>542</sup> While this was going on, national achievement in sport was one relatively easy way of demonstrating ideological superiority. In these circumstances it was clear that the President saw advantages in associating himself and his government with sporting success, especially because of the way in which the South Korean public was devoted to their sporting heroes. This was evident when boxer Kim Gi Su beat the Italian

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<sup>541</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25, 26 July 1966

<sup>542</sup> Myung-lim Park, Park Jung Hee and Kim Il Sung, the editorial board of Review on History, *The Rivals Shaping North and South Korea: A Modern History of the Key Figures in North and South Korea*, Seoul, 2008, 38-39.

champion to win the world title in Seoul on 25 June 1966 and became an instant home-grown sporting hero.<sup>543</sup> Kim was moved to tears after being declared the winner and the President, who had watched the bout from the start, embraced him with joy as he helped the first South Korean world boxing champion to put on his glorious champion's belt.<sup>544</sup> It was no coincidence that Park began to take such a close interest when South Koreans won trophies or medals in any field of sport.

Against this political backdrop, the rise of North Korean football created a problem for the Park regime and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), which had a particular responsibility to monitor what was happening in North Korea, was set to work. At this time KCIA was very concerned with gaining access to the secrets of North Korean football success. A small group of KCIA agents had been dispatched to England at the time of the World Cup. One of them, posing as a journalist, had asked Chang Heng Hoon, a South Korean football writer, to help him access information about the North Korean team.<sup>545</sup> Later, two South Korean football officials, who had watched North Korea's World Cup matches, were interviewed by the KCIA and advised that it was necessary to establish a strong national side comprising excellent young footballers. With this aim in view, Yangji, a club which operated under the auspices of KCIA and cultivated young talent, was established in 1967.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Joongang Ilbo, *Ah! Korea*, Seoul, 2005, 334-335.

<sup>544</sup> *Shina Ilbo*, 27 Jun 1966.

<sup>545</sup> Interview with Chang Heng Hoon, Seoul, 6 March 2008.

<sup>546</sup> S. Kim, *A History of Korean Football's Development*, 34.

The coaching staff of Yangji was composed of the two former famous footballers from north, Choi Jung Min and Park Il Gab.<sup>547</sup> Yangji's players were all in the army but these soldiers were paid salaries equal to those paid to players for company teams. Moreover, they followed a highly regimented training schedule and were subject to KCIA imposed discipline, being allowed time away from the club only on Sundays.<sup>548</sup> It is an irony that the shock generated by the success North Korean football should have ignited a 'football revolution' in South Korea which so strongly resembled a communist system of state-sponsored 'amateurs'. Yangji went on a tour of Europe in 1969 but found it difficult to find a top professional team to play them in a practice game. Significantly, FC Metz of France finally agreed to play them only after a South Korean embassy official in Paris had joked that Yangji were on a par with the North Korean national team.<sup>549</sup> In Yangji's short history North Korea was always the guiding example. However, the club was very much subject to the internal politics of the regime and was abruptly disbanded in 1970 following the resignation of the head of the KCIA who had taken the initiative when the club had been formed only three years earlier.<sup>550</sup> The head of the KCIA, Kim Hyung Wook had been the President's faithful, but had lost his position amid an internal power struggle.

As it transpired, the dissolution of Yangji did not disadvantage South Korean football because the club's quality players moved on to a handful of newly-founded football clubs sponsored by banks, though the government was still involved. The growth of bank-sponsored football teams could have not come without Chang Duk Jin, the

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<sup>547</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 29 March 1967

<sup>548</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 267.

<sup>549</sup> Yun and Choi, *Football and its Bright Morning*, 318-319.

<sup>550</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 277.



ambitious director of the financial bureau at the Ministry of Finance who had been organizing intra-bureau football matches on Saturday since 1968. His enthusiasm for football – along with his status as the first lady's nephew - was sufficient to persuade commercial banks closely connected with the financial bureau to found their own clubs.<sup>551</sup> The movement grew rapidly and eleven bank teams had been established by 1970.<sup>552</sup> This trend also corresponded with the sports promotion policy developed by the Park administration. From the mid 1960s any company with over 100 employees had to set up a sports club.<sup>553</sup> It should be noted that South Korean banks had been actively involved in running baseball and basketball teams from the early 1960s.<sup>554</sup> In this respect, it was natural for football to follow this pattern. The popularity of bank-sponsored women's basketball in the 1960s, in particular, may have provided encouraged the banks to move into football. Women's basketball matches between rival banks had proved very popular and it was believed that a successful team could help to attract new depositors.<sup>555</sup>

For talented South Korean players of the 1970s, the clubs run by banks were an attractive option as they offered the prospect of a career after football. Significantly, the growth of bank clubs meant that more high school and college footballers would continue to play after their graduation.<sup>556</sup> Many bank footballers went on to take up

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<sup>551</sup> *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 19 Oct 1968; *Donga Ilbo*, 28 April 1981;

<sup>552</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1970, 73.

<sup>553</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Nov 1967.

<sup>554</sup> You, Chun and Lee, *A History of Korean Baseball*, Seoul, 1999, 583; Korean Basketball Association, *100 Years of Korean Basketball: 1907-2007*, Seoul, 2008, 134-135.

<sup>555</sup> Dong-pyo Cho and Young-chae Kwon, *A Dunk-Shot in 96 years: A 100-year History of Korean Women's Basketball*, Seoul, 2006, 131-134.

<sup>556</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 26 Sept 1968.

steady jobs as a bank clerks; some, like Kim 'Beanpole' Jae Han, famous for his headers, eventually became bank managers.<sup>557</sup> The vast majority of those who had no football-related employment lined up after their retirement from the game were faced with the problems of starting small businesses in order to make a living, often with little money and experience. The banks helped South Korean football to fill the gap left by the dissolution of the Yangji club.

Even before Yangji folded, the regime had taken steps to ensure that the revolution in South Korean football would continue. Two months before Yangji's dissolution, Chang Duk Jin had assumed the presidency of the KFA; he was appointed because he was seen as the person most likely to provide effective leadership in the impending football war against North Korea and he made it clear in his inaugural speech that he understood that this was his main task.<sup>558</sup> He moved quickly to invite world-class foreign teams and inaugurate international competition in order to begin to enhance the quality of South Korean football. It seems likely that he used his considerable political influence to bring Benfica to Seoul in September 1970 even though they required a match fee of \$45,000, an enormous sum considering the economic situation in South Korea at that time.<sup>559</sup> When the South Koreans drew 1-1 against a side that included Eusebio and other members of the Portuguese team that had beaten North Korea in England in 1966 it seemed that this money had been well spent. It was a result that gave a much-needed boost to South Korea's confidence.<sup>560</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid, 12 May 1995.

<sup>558</sup> Ibid, 19 Mar 1970; *Wolgan Chukgu*, April 1970, 25.

<sup>559</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 30 July 1970.

<sup>560</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 7 Sept 1970.

A more important strategic development, however, was the inauguration in 1971 of Park's Cup. Chang Duk Jin prepared meticulously for this competition which was designed to ensure that South Korea would become the focal point of Asian football.<sup>561</sup> At the time, the centre of power in Asian football was Malaysia where the game had prospered under the guidance of its football-loving leader, Abdul Tunku Rahman. He was the president of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and had established the Merdeka Football Tournament in 1958 to commemorate its Malaysian independence and the Asian youth football competition (the Rahman Trophy) in 1959 to 'bind Asian countries closer together'.<sup>562</sup> It was not long before other Asian nations established their own international football tournaments to emulate the Merdeka. South Korea, a relative latecomer in this respect sought to make the Park's cup more prestigious than any other Asian tournaments and was not discouraged when only seven teams entered in 1971. As a South Korean football official pointed out, the Merdeka tournament had attracted only five teams when it was first contested.<sup>563</sup>

These developments required a great deal of commitment, not least financial backing, from the South Korean government if they were to be successful.<sup>564</sup> What the regime particularly took care of was sports diplomacy. From the late 1960s South Korea began to cultivate friendly relations with Israel, mainly because North Korea was aligning itself increasingly with the Arab states.<sup>565</sup> The Israeli national team made its first visit to Seoul since 1960 in May 1973; later there were Olympics and World Cup qualifying matches

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<sup>561</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1971, 28.

<sup>562</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 318-319; *Malay Mail*, 20 April 1959.

<sup>563</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1971, 32-33.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid*, May 1971, 28-29; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 17 May 1971.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid*, May 1971, 32; *Donga Ilbo*, 6 Aug 1966.

between the two countries in 1976 and 1977.<sup>566</sup> The necessities of Cold War politics dictated a change of stance towards Cambodia. Before 1970 Communist Cambodia had a close relationship with North Korea; it had been chosen by the North Koreans as the 'neutral' venue for their 1966 play-off matches against Australia. After the *coup d'état* of 1970, however, these conditions no longer applied and South Korea was free to invite Cambodia to send its national team to Seoul.<sup>567</sup> The first Park's Cup competition also saw an invitation extended to South Vietnam whose team was very popular among South Koreans, many of whom had served in South Vietnam as soldiers or labourers since the outbreak of war in 1965.<sup>568</sup> South Vietnam was also an important export market for goods from South Korea, especially military equipment and supplies, so it was important to cultivate good sporting relations.<sup>569</sup> It was also important to develop good sporting relations with Burma joint-winners with South Korea of the Asian Games football competition in 1970 and joint-winners with South Korea of the first Park's Cup competition a year later. It was the fierce rivalry between South Korea and Burma that ensured that the first Park's Cup was a commercial success, attracting around 150,000 spectators despite inclement weather at the start of the tournament.<sup>570</sup>

These diplomatic initiatives helped to raise the profile of South Korean football, especially in Asia, while exposing its top players to rigorous international competition. They also helped to ensure that football, and the Park's Cup competition in particular,

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<sup>566</sup> G. Oliver, *The Guinness Book of World Soccer, The History of the Game in over 150 Countries* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), London, 1995, 382-383.

<sup>567</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 17 May 1971; *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1971, 33.

<sup>568</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, June 1971, 50.

<sup>569</sup> Hee-yeon Cho, *Park Jung Hee and an Era of Developmental Dictatorship*, Seoul, 2007, 82-86.

<sup>570</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 377, 379; *Wolgan Chukgu*, June 1971 36-37, 55.

was part of the military regime's 'national modernization project'.<sup>571</sup> When the Park's Cup started, indeed South Korean society was consumed with a government-driven movement that sought to transform 'thatched roofs' into 'tiled roofs' in rural areas. However, the so-called Saemaeul (New Community) Movement was not limited to the beautification of the countryside. President Park envisaged an era of rapid economic growth based on the efforts of hard-working people. With its call to diligence, self-help and cooperation, it was also designed to encourage South Koreans to develop the qualities required for successful modernization.<sup>572</sup> The New Community Movement embraced sport and helped to generate a football boom; over 16,000 new football clubs were planned and the KFA inaugurated the 'New Town' competition for them in 1972.<sup>573</sup> 'Morning football clubs' thrived as part of this movement with individual members numbering over 52,000 by 1979. So well-organized were these clubs in every corner of the nation that by the end of the 1970s no-one who ran for the National Assembly could afford to ignore them.<sup>574</sup> Chang Duk Jin was probably the first politician to cash in on the morning football phenomenon when seeking election in 1971. He had nominated Youngdeungpo as exemplary in its efforts to promote football at grass-roots level in 1970 and this town became his constituency a year later.<sup>575</sup>

All this raised expectations regarding the South Korean national team. With the regime's full backing, Chang ensured that South Korea hosted the 1972 Olympic and

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<sup>571</sup> Dong-yeon Lee, 'The Birth of Sports Events in the Periphery and the Nation's Narcissism: a Football Tournaments as a Symbol of Modernization in Asia during the 1970s', in East Asia Research Centre of Sungkonghoe University (ed.), *The Cultural Landscape of Cold War Asia: 1960s-70s*, Seoul, 2009, 481.

<sup>572</sup> Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Modern History, 1970s* (1), Seoul, 2002, 264-266.

<sup>573</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Feb 1972.

<sup>574</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 9 Dec 1978, 23 July 1979.

<sup>575</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, April 1970, 40; June 1970, 57; Sept 1970, 31 Dec 1971, 58.

1974 World Cup Asian qualifying rounds.<sup>576</sup> Unfortunately, the team was unable to match the public's raised expectations and was surprisingly defeated by unfancied Malaysia in the Olympic qualifier held in 1971, a result which enraged the South Korean public. It was later reported that the hotel where the national squad stayed had been besieged with calls from infuriated fans.<sup>577</sup> Something was needed to distract attention from this disappointing defeat and this was provided by resuming the annual 'goodwill' match with Japan, also beaten by Malaysia in the qualifying round. The Japanese football authorities had previously rejected South Korea's offer to renew the traditional rivalry between the two nations, but now they accepted. At this juncture both national teams needed the excitement that would be generated by a match against their old enemy as a way of sustaining public interest.<sup>578</sup>

It was a sign of progress, therefore, when South Korea won the 1974 World Cup Asian preliminary round at Seoul, defeating Israel, the Asian representative at the previous World Cup, in the final.<sup>579</sup> This left South Korea requiring a win over Australia in the qualifying matches order to secure a place in the final stages in Germany. After drawing away from home, however, South Korea disappointed their fans by drawing 2-2 in Seoul after having taken a two goal lead. As they left the stadium some South Korean fans roared with anger, 'our team is so weak'.<sup>580</sup> The question that needed to be answered, however, was why had South Korea been defeated? It had not helped that

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<sup>576</sup> Ibid, Dec 1970, 34; July 1972, 78.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid, Nov, 1971, 73.

<sup>578</sup> Ibid, July 1972, 42-43.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid, Jun/Jul, 1973, 28-29.

<sup>580</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 11 Nov 1973.

two key footballers had fallen out with the coach before the match.<sup>581</sup> It later transpired that there had been much dissension within the squad with the players resenting the rigid discipline and long, hard days at the training camp.<sup>582</sup> South Korea's World Cup hopes were shattered in the decisive replay played on neutral territory in Hong Kong. At this point South Korea apparently had little to show for all the investment made in football by the Park regime while the victorious 'Socceroos' returned home to be embraced by the Australian media that began to 'treat soccer as a serious game' for the first time.<sup>583</sup>

However, it is important to keep the broader picture in view. Despite these disappointments, football in South Korea was being transformed in the early 1970s with the help of the media, particularly television. This meant that it was no longer just a mass participation sport but also very much part of popular culture. The number of TV sets in use was rocketing at one million in 1973, which was more than a four hundred per cent increase from 1969 and some daily melodramas on TV enjoyed a phenomenal success.<sup>584</sup> International football broadcast on the radio or TV was almost as popular and was increasingly regarded as 'unmissable' by South Korean viewers. Television broadcasts of World Cup matches in 1970, albeit recorded rather than live, won popular acclaim and high ratings.<sup>585</sup> When the national team played in the King's Cup in Thailand or the Merdeka tournament, it became the custom for South Koreans,

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<sup>581</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Oct 1973.

<sup>582</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Nov 1973, 45; interview with former player Kim Ho Gon, Seoul, 12 March 2008.

<sup>583</sup> P. Moseley and B. Murray, 'Soccer', in W. Vamplew and B. Stoddart (eds.), *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, Cambridge, 1994, 227-228.

<sup>584</sup> Kang, *Exploration of Korean Modern History 1970s (2)*, Seoul, 2002, 104-109.

<sup>585</sup> *Wolgan Chukgul*, Aug, 1970, 51; Oct 1970, 69.

including women, who had hitherto shown little interest in football, to gather around their radios and TV sets.<sup>586</sup>

Watching football on television was not restricted to home; for many it was a communal experience and it was in the *Dabang* (tearooms) where South Korea's football fever was most strongly evident. Tearooms, rapidly expanding in numbers from the 1960s, became a convenient place for those seeking to watch any significant event on TV, such as the first Apollo moon landing and President Nixon's visit to China.<sup>587</sup> Of the sport events, football and boxing matches were especially popular. As Cha Bum Geun scored the winning goal in the World Cup qualifying match against Israel and joyous cheers reverberated, the tearooms in Seoul were like small theatres with chairs arranged around TV monitors.<sup>588</sup> The owners of tearooms began to cash in on this situation by raising the price of a cup of tea or coffee for important football matches.<sup>589</sup> The growing popularity of international football led to intense competition between local broadcasters over the rights to show matches. MBC (Munwha Broadcasting Company) clinched the rights to televise the recorded 1970 World Cup matches in South Korea, excluding games played by communist nations, with a record fee of 34,000 dollars after outbidding two other local broadcasters.<sup>590</sup> When a friendly match between the South Korean national team and the Brazilian club Santos, for whom Pele played, was staged in 1972, there was cut-throat competition for the exclusive rights to broadcast the match between MBC and KBS (Korea Broadcasting System). This resulted

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<sup>586</sup> Ibid, Sept 1970, 35; Dec 1970, 38.

<sup>587</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 18 July 1969; 21 Feb 1972.

<sup>588</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 29 May 1973.

<sup>589</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 29 Oct 1973.

<sup>590</sup> Ibid, 6 June 1970.



in a three hundred per cent increase in the rights to broadcast the match.<sup>591</sup>

During the 1970s the media began to take an increasing interest in the style of football played by the national team. South Korean audiences, as either spectators or viewers, were exposed to an increasing number of international matches, albeit mainly between teams from Asia. At the same time, routine exposure to international football on TV increased awareness of different national styles. It became clear that individual artistry and fluid passing were not often seen in South Korean football where the emphasis was very much on speed, as had been the case with North Korea in 1966. Indeed, the two most important attackers in the 1970s, Lee Hoe Taek and Cha Bum Geun were famous for their speed.<sup>592</sup> However, as we have seen, speed alone had proved insufficient against the well-built and skilful footballers of Australia and Israel. Ironically, South Korean football, despite the emphasis of speed and the remarkable mobility of the players, was sometimes criticized for being 'slow' with too many unnecessary passes and poor ball control.<sup>593</sup> For one South Korean football commentator the 'Burmese style', where speed was allied to one-touch pass-and-move football, was more likely to bring results against teams like Australia.<sup>594</sup>

However, these criticisms had a limited impact mainly because of the South Korean obsession with the North. Accordingly, the South Korean approach to football in the early 1970s was largely characterized by an emphasis on fighting spirit and endurance at the expense of the development of a high level of individual skills. The strong

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<sup>591</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 June 1972.

<sup>592</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Oct 1970, 35; *Kyungyang Shinmun*, 5 Jan 1973.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid*, Dec 1972, 47.

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid*, Oct 1971, 77; Dec 1972, 52.

possibility of an international match against North Korea in the near future reinforced this trend.<sup>595</sup> As far as training was concerned, South Korea followed the well-established Northern pattern. National squad players were subjected to training camps lasting several months during which time they were expected to run distances and climb mountains with the aim of being able to play hard for 120 minutes.<sup>596</sup> South Korean sports journalists underpinned this regime by the use of military metaphors, sometimes referring to Hwarang, a legendary warrior who 'underwent severe martial training and sacrificed himself on the battlefield' for Silla, a kingdom of ancient Korea.<sup>597</sup> Typically, a day before the vital World Cup preliminary match against Australia, *Kyunghyang Shinmun* urged South Korea's footballers to demonstrate the 'Hwarang spirit' of 'never retreating on the battlefield.'<sup>598</sup>

### **(5) North Korea: the purge of the World Cup heroes and the 'Cinema Football Club'**

After the 1966 World Cup, internal political struggles accompanied by massive purges seem to have dramatically changed the fortune of North Korean football. In March 1967, the Gabsan faction along some other high-ranking party officials, were purged. The pretext was that they had advocated a revisionist economic policy – stressing the importance of the quality of goods produced as well as the quantity – also that they

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<sup>595</sup> Ibid, Jan 1972, 40.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid, Jan 1972, 39-40.

<sup>597</sup> Nam-gil Ha and J.A. Mangan, 'The Knights of Korea: the Hwarangdo, Militarism and Nationalism', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 15 (2), 1998, 77.

<sup>598</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 9 Nov 1973.

had made a hero of the faction leader.<sup>599</sup> However, it seems likely that the fundamental reason for the purge was mainly intended to strengthen Kim Il Sung's absolute grip on the party and to intensify personality cult centred on him.<sup>600</sup> The Gabsan faction had previously been faithful comrades to Kim Il Sung and strong supporters of North Korean football. Many members of the faction had taken the game up enthusiastically during the Japanese colonial period; football provided a common interest which helped unite those who joined in the armed struggle against the Japanese.<sup>601</sup> The association between the Gabsan and the North Korean World Cup heroes of 1966 was said to be very close. According to one North Korean defector's testimony songs had been sung praising key members of the faction.<sup>602</sup> This may have had unfortunate consequences in that it was reported that most of the players were deported to remote collieries and labour camps having been accused of drinking and womanizing on the eve of the quarter-final against Portugal.<sup>603</sup> Rumours of this unlikely misbehaviour circulated widely but were later denied by the North Korean footballers themselves.<sup>604</sup>

Irrespective of whether the rumour was true or not, it is clear that the purge of the Gabsan faction was detrimental to the further development of North Korean football. One consequence was that in 1967 some members of the World Cup team and their coach were forced to work as coal miners and manual labourers. One of them, Shin

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<sup>599</sup> Seung-heon Lee, 'Reshuffling of North Korean Party and Rise of Solipsism: From Restrictive Pluralism to Solipsistic System', in The North Korean Graduate School of Gyeongnam University (ed.), *A History of Modern North Korea, vol 1*, Seoul, 2004, 351-357.

<sup>600</sup> Jong-seok Lee, *Research into the North Korean Worker's Party*, Seoul, 1995, 296-315.

<sup>601</sup> Kim *et al*, *Football of Our Nation*, 14.

<sup>602</sup> Ju, *A Pyongyang Story written in Seoul*, Seoul, 2010, 215.

<sup>603</sup> Kang and Rigoulot, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang*, 95; Young-man Lee, *Hundreds of Thousands of Stories Intertwined with a Ball*, Seoul, 1998, 174-175; *North Korea*, July, 2006, 130-131.

<sup>604</sup> *The Game of their Lives*, (2002) Documentary Film, Directed by D. Gordon. UK: VeryMuchSo.

Young Gyu, the captain, whom FIFA president Sir Stanley Rous had described as a world-class defender, was sent to work in a pottery factory on account of his bourgeois pedigree as the son of a great landlord.<sup>605</sup> However, Park Du Ik and Park Seung Jin, the two most important goal scorers for North Korea in 1966, managed to avoid this fate along with a few of their colleagues.<sup>606</sup> In June 1967 they played with Kang Ryong Woon, Yang Sung Gook, Kye Seung Wun and Kim Seung Il in a match against a Hungarian team; in July 1968 Kim Seung Il also played in a friendly against a East German club.<sup>607</sup> However, Park Seung Jin was to be deported to a gulag, on suspicion of spying around the mid 1970s, where he allegedly survived only through eating insects while in solitary confinement.<sup>608</sup> Thus North Korean football lost its prime patrons within the political system and its World Cup heroes, at least temporarily, disappeared from view. A further indication of how much the situation had changed was that North Korea did not participate in either the 1968 Olympic and 1970 World Cup Asian preliminaries.

After the Gabsan episode, Kim Jong Il, son of Kim Il Sung extended his control over all cultural sectors in North Korea. His aim was to confirm his status as the only successor to his father, but there was also much general propaganda glorifying his personal autocracy.<sup>609</sup> In these circumstances it was important to have powerful friends in high

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<sup>605</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 22 July 1966; *Sankei Shimbun*, 4 Aug 2001.

<sup>606</sup> Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010. Moon was a former North Korean footballer and coach who later defected to South Korea in 2004.

<sup>607</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24 June 1967; 15 July 1968.

<sup>608</sup> *Sankei Shimbun*, 4 Aug 2001; see also Kang and Rigoulot, *Aquariums of Pyongyang*, 174-175.

<sup>609</sup> Hyang-jin Lee, 'Images of Otherness and "Sleeping with the Enemy" in North Korean Cinema', in J. Portal and B. McKillop (eds.), *North Korean Culture and Society papers from the British Museum and BAKS Study Days 2001 and 2002*, London, 2004, 36.

places and it was largely at Junior Kim's insistence that North Korean football began to emerge from this period of crisis in the early 1970s, not least because its propaganda value was once again appreciated. It seems that some of the 1966 team, having been purged, were now reinstated; Lee Chan Myung, the goalkeeper who had performed so brilliantly in the World Cup, played in the 1972 Olympic qualifying matches.<sup>610</sup> In addition, the more favourable conditions persuaded some elite North Korean footballers to end their self-imposed exile. Moon Ki Nam, who had left in 1968 after his father had been accused of anti-communist activity, returned to Pyongyang to join a super club set up by Junior Kim in 1971. This club's official name was the April 25 Club, derived from the foundation date of Kim Il Sung's anti-Japanese army in 1932, but it was known to the players as the 'Cinema Football Club' on account of Junior Kim's liking for movies and his active involvement in making propaganda films.<sup>611</sup> However, the situation could still be dangerous. Shin Young Gyu was reinstated and sent to the Pyongyang City Club patronized by Kim Sung Gab, younger brother to Kim Il Sung's second wife. As Kim Sung Gab surfaced as a Junior Kim's political rival in the early 1970s, the latter disempowered the former. One outcome of this political struggle was that Shin was sent to a labour camp and his football career came to an abrupt end.<sup>612</sup>

With the support of Junior Kim, North Korea again sought a place in the final stages of the Olympic and World Cup tournaments. After the purge, however, North Korean football found itself in a weakened condition and incapable of achieving much success at international level, save in some competitions against Asia's second-class teams.

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<sup>610</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 25 June 2010; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Aug 1972, 91.

<sup>611</sup> Lee and Kim, *Sports of North Korea*, 188.

<sup>612</sup> Han-young Lee, *Kim Jong Il and the Royal Family: A Memoir of Kim Il Sung's Wife's Nephew*, Seoul, 2004, 91-92; interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010.

North Korea football failed to qualify for both the 1972 Olympics and 1974 World Cup. As far as the regime was concerned, the national team's lack of success reduced football's propaganda value. The reputation gained in 1966 lingered for a while and in the early 1970s North Korea was still regarded as a tough competitor by other Asian nations. Before an Olympic qualifier in 1971 an Iraqi daily noted that the North Korean team was formidable because it included five members of the 1966 squad.<sup>613</sup> Two years later, after being heavily defeated by April 25, the coach of the Singapore national team argued that North Korea was stronger than South Korea, Burma, and Japan.<sup>614</sup> North Korea's distinctive attacking style – another legacy of 1966 – could still attract favourable attention. When April 25 reached the final of the Delhi Cloth Mills (DCM) tournament in 1972 one Indian journalist compared their attack to the 'Gurkhas', the brave Nepali brigade of Britain's Indian Army.<sup>615</sup> However, as it struggled to recover from the consequences of the purge, it was clear that North Korean football was not the force that it had been a few years earlier. As far as the propagandists of the regime were concerned men's football became less important than women's volleyball after North Korea beat South Korea to win the Olympic bronze medal at Munich in 1972.<sup>616</sup>

Although North Korean football was suffering, there was great progress in sports diplomacy in this period. After the IOC conference at Warsaw in June 1969 North Korea was able to participate in the Olympics under the name of DPRK. For North Korean sports this was a defining moment; having to use the name 'North Korea in international sports events had long been a source of discontent and was the reason

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<sup>613</sup> *Baghdad Observer*, 10, 12 Nov 1971.

<sup>614</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 14 Apr 1973.

<sup>615</sup> *The Times of India*, 24 Oct 1972.

<sup>616</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 5 Oct 1972; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 19 Dec 1972.

that they had boycotted the 1968 Olympics.<sup>617</sup> Gathering momentum from this diplomatic victory, the DPRK sought to join the Asian Games Federation (AGF). This involved some complex diplomatic initiatives and partly explains why North Korea refused to play Israel in a 1970 World Cup qualifying match.<sup>618</sup> To achieve this it was necessary to establish good relations with the Arab nations and, in particular, with Iran which was due to host the Asian Games in 1974. The Iranian football Association initially refused to permit North Korea's participation in the 1972 Olympic football preliminary at Teheran because there were no diplomatic relations between the two countries but eventually relented and matches were played in Teheran and Pyongyang.<sup>619</sup> Iran and North Korea, agreed to establish diplomatic relations at ambassadorial level in 1973.<sup>620</sup> Obtaining the consent of the AGF executive committee, including three Iranian members, North Korea joined the AGF in November 1973.<sup>621</sup> In this way North Korea effectively countered South Korea's diplomatic overtures towards Iran over the same period in which football had also played a major part. When Iran played in Seoul in September 1971 Igor Netto, coach of the Iranian team, became the first Soviet citizen to be admitted to South Korea.<sup>622</sup>

Another positive achievement of North Korean sports diplomacy in the early 1970s was the beginning of sports exchanges with Japan. After diplomatic relations between China and Japan were normalized in 1972, North Korea sought to take advantage of the new

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<sup>617</sup> *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, 9 June 1969; Soon-gyo Kim, *The Present Situation of North Korean Sports with its Sports Activities at Home and Abroad as the Central Theme*, Seoul, 1982, 16.

<sup>618</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 5 July 1969.

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid*, 22 Jan 1971.

<sup>620</sup> *Ibid*, 6 July 1972; *Kayhan* (Teheran), 28 April 1973.

<sup>621</sup> *Ibid*, 15 Aug 1973; S. Kim, *Present Situation of North Korean Sports*, 15.

<sup>622</sup> *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, 9, 14 Sept 1971.

situation by developing cultural and economic exchanges with Japan. Football proved a useful medium for this purpose. A Japanese high school football team visited Pyongyang in 1972 and a North Korean high school football team played in Japan in the following year. During their tour, the North Korean team was highly commended by the Japanese press; it was called the 'Red thunderbolt', partly due to the ability of its players to shoot 'like a canon shot'.<sup>623</sup>

However, not all of the North Korean diplomatic gestures through football in this period were successful. Malaysia permitted the North Korean team to visit in 1973, but did not accept North Korea's invitation to travel to Pyongyang for a return match; neither would it allow North Korea to participate in the Merdeka Tournament.<sup>624</sup> Indeed, of the many annual football tournaments in Asia, only the DCM in India was open to North Korea and even here participation was denied after an incident involving the Club from Pyongyang in their replayed final against East Bengal in the 1973. When the match ended in a draw, tournament officials tried to persuade Dokrogang to play extra time but they objected and left the field and East Bengal was declared as the winner.<sup>625</sup> The Dokrogang Club's refusal to co-operate led to a ban on North Korean teams participating in the DCM after 1974 but teams from South Korea were invited to participate at the request of the Indian Football Association.<sup>626</sup> So within a few years of its great success of 1966 North Korea, as a football power, was relatively weak and still somewhat isolated.

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<sup>623</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 15 May 1972; 10, 12 Jan 1973.

<sup>624</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 March, 24 Aug, 1973; *Kyunggyang Shinmun*, 9 April 1973.

<sup>625</sup> *The Times of India*, 30 Oct 1973.

<sup>626</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 22 Oct 1975; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (2003), 292.



## (6) The impact of '1966' on North and South Korean football

In a wider context, the 1966 World Cup offered a foundation for the development of the tournament as a global sporting spectacle. The finals tournament was the first in which Asian and African countries attracted attention on and off the field. In particular, North Korea's top-eight finish, the African boycott and the virtuosity of Mozambican-born Eusebio in Portugal's run to the semi-final would eventually help persuade FIFA to guarantee Africa a berth in the 1970 World Cup.<sup>627</sup> FIFA's decision was an important step towards what Mason has nominated as the 'first real World Cup' in 1982 with twenty-four finalists including two teams from Africa and two from Asia.<sup>628</sup>

Aside from the euphoria derived from the home team triumph, the English public had extra pleasure while watching the team from the Orient in the World Cup. In particular, as we have seen, the fans in Middlesbrough saw North Korea as a plucky underdog and identified with the team. In the wake of the defeat of Italy, the North Korean's popularity spread all over England. North Korea's historic winning goal even appeared in the satirical magazine, *Private Eye* where British Prime Minister Harold Wilson supposedly says 'Ooh Mai Kok heads it in the net with oriental aplomb' while watching the slow motion replay of Park's famous goal!<sup>629</sup> In addition, a great cheer went up from the Wembley crowd watching England-Argentina game as soon as the news of the Koreans being three goals up against Portugal was known.<sup>630</sup> The other important

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<sup>627</sup> P. Alegi, *African Soccerscapes: How a Continent Changed the World's Game*, Athens, 2010, 75.

<sup>628</sup> Mason, 'When Was the First Real World Cup', 6-10.

<sup>629</sup> 'Mrs Wilson's Diary', *Private Eye*, 22 July 1966, cited in D. Sandbrook, *White Heat: a History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London, 2007, 300.

<sup>630</sup> McIlvanney (ed.), *World Cup '66*, London, 1966, 171-172.

reason why support for North Korea grew during the tournament was that spectators and viewers enjoyed their attacking football; it was more fun to watch than the defensive tactics adopted by most of the other teams in 1966.<sup>631</sup> The North Koreans' passion and stamina resonated with the English who loved to watch their non-stop running; they were like dogs at the seaside 'chasing the ball and coming back for more'.<sup>632</sup> There was something about the North Koreans that resonated with the English and their love of the 'bulldog spirit' and this helps to explain how one English journalist came to define the 1966 finals as the 'Korean's World Cup'.<sup>633</sup> Of course, the defeated Italians took a different view of the simple, direct football played by North Korea. In Italy Park Du Ik was widely referred to as 'the dentist' because his goal had inflicted so much pain.<sup>634</sup>

As far as the North Korean government was concerned the 1966 adventure was an enormous success. It helped to make useful propaganda as it could be argued that the style of play that had defeated the Italians and gained admirers in England was both distinctively North Korean and distinctively communist. It also raised the global profile of North Korea and attracted favourable attention in the Third World. Meanwhile the response in South Korea was ambivalent, initially somewhere between happiness and unhappiness. However, not surprisingly in view of the Cold War political context, anxiety soon set in as the global popularity now enjoyed by North Korean football became

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<sup>631</sup> *Observer*, 24 July 1966.

<sup>632</sup> *Guardian* 22 July 1966.

<sup>633</sup> *Daily Mail* (Northern Edition), 25 July 1966; see also D. Winner, *Those Feet: an Intimate History of English Football*, London 2006, 202.

<sup>634</sup> *Scotsman*, 18 June, 2002; E. Galeano, (trans.) M. Fried, *Soccer in Sun and Shadow*, London and New York, 1999, 120-121; Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, 191.

clear. Reports appeared in Seoul which suggested that the North Korean team had been invited to play by eleven different countries as a result of their World Cup fame.<sup>635</sup> When Argentina announced its plan to hold a football tournament in 1966 to commemorate 150 years of independence, in which North Korea – along with Brazil and Chile - would participate, the South Korean embassy in Buenos Aires protested about North Korea's participation.<sup>636</sup> Sometimes in the years that followed the rise of North Korean football was linked to more general anxieties about South Korea's national security and the threat from the North.<sup>637</sup>

In these circumstances, the South Korean military regime began to intervene actively in football affairs, a policy initiative that culminated in the launch of the Park's Cup in 1971. South Korea's football revolution was undoubtedly a response to North Korea in the first instance but also has to be seen in the context of a number of other Asian states, notably particular Malaysia and Thailand, seeking to strengthen their sense of nationhood by way of football. With an increase in inter-Asian matches the South Korean government came to perceive success on the football field as a way of boosting their national prestige. Moreover, in these years football found its place in South Korean popular culture thanks to televised broadcasts of international matches.

Ironically, the South Koreans had less to fear from North Korea than they realized as the advantages that were accrued through the stirring performances of its team in 1966 were thrown away in the aftermath of domestic political turmoil. As we have seen, this

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<sup>635</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 25 July 1966; 30 July 1966.

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid*, 4 Aug 1966.

<sup>637</sup> See, for example, *Wolgan Chukgu*, April 1970, 57.

meant that a number of their World Cup heroes were sent to the gulags. However, the purges and the self-imposed exile of some talented players did not impact on the future of North Korean football as badly as in the case of Hungary when the 'golden team' broke up in after the uprising of 1956.<sup>638</sup> As Kim Jong Il reinforced his political base along with his claim to be the only successor to his father, football regained much of its former status in party circles by the early 1970s. Junior Kim who used film as a means to propagate the glorification of his father, was unable to neglect the propaganda value of the North Korea's number one sport. Soon some World Cup heroes were reinstated and the super club, April 25 came into being.

The early 1970s was a period in which North and South Korea's football were locked together like Siamese twins! Both North and South of the border, football began to assume greater political significance than ever before and to play an important part in state diplomacy as an instrument of foreign policy. Moreover, the preferred style of play in both North and South Korea was recognizably similar and, it could be argued, distinctively Korean. The national teams of both countries played a 'push and run' game relying heavily on the speed and stamina of their footballers. However, it was not simply that South Korea was seeking to emulate the methods that had taken North Korea to the World Cup quarter-finals in England. Both countries could look back to the example set by the intensive training of Hamheung Football Club in the 1930s, discussed in the previous chapters. What remained to be decided was which of the two Koreas, with their twin-like closeness, would achieve soccer supremacy in what was essentially a battle between brothers.

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<sup>638</sup> A. Handler, *From Goals to Guns: The Golden Age of Soccer in Hungary 1950-1956*, New York, 1994, 151-161.

## **The decline of the North and the rise of the South, 1974-91**

The keen economic and diplomatic rivalry between the North and South turned into a runaway victory for the capitalist South in the 1980s. It was in this period that the world became especially aware of the South Korea's 'economic miracle'; in terms of 'economic globalization', as Eric Hobsbawm has argued, the advance of the South Korean economy was a perfect example of the process of rapid industrialization which brought countries once regarded as belonging to the 'Third World' in line with the 'First World'.<sup>639</sup> The staging of the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 underlined South Korea's new status in the global economy and the international recognition that it now enjoyed. While this was happening North Korea slipped backwards and was increasingly seen from outside as an impoverished economy and an unpredictable and potentially dangerous totalitarian regime. To some extent this change in North Korea's position was due to what was happening elsewhere. Even before the Soviet Union was formally dissolved in 1991 it had established diplomatic relations with South Korea and China had also reversed its previous policy to follow suit in 1992. North Korea had been heavily dependent on the two communist giants - economically, militarily and politically; these important underpinnings were removed and the regime found itself in an isolated position and turned in on itself. The winds of change blowing from Eastern Europe had no impact on North Korea which remained under the absolute control of the Kims who showed little interest in building bridges to the rest of the world. Indeed, it seems likely

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<sup>639</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914-1991*, New York, 1996, 361-362.

that they feared that such a policy would undermine the regime's efforts to convince the people of North Korea that they lived in a great nation.<sup>640</sup>

The Park regime in South Korea ended abruptly with Park's assassination in 1979. It was replaced by the Jeon regime, another military government which lasted until 1988. In response to the emergence of democratization movements in South Korea, direct elections for the presidency were held in 1987, and although the Roh regime that followed was yet another military government, it followed a more liberal policy than its predecessors. The changes occurring in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s helped in this respect by liberating South Korea from the straight-jacket of Cold War politics. This allowed the government in South Korea to forge new links with both the Soviet Union and China and also with their neighbours in the North whose position – in diplomatic, political and ideological terms - was now so isolated that they were no longer regarded as a threat. Thus competition with the North became less significant in this period, a marked difference in comparison with the 1970s. Under these circumstances, the two Koreas were able to join the United Nation in 1991, which was regarded as a monumental event signifying peaceful co-existence.<sup>641</sup>

These changes were reflected in the development football in North and South Korea over this period and in the developing football relationship between the two countries. While South Korea began to enjoy some success in international tournaments, reaching the semi-finals of the World Youth Championships in 1983 and qualifying for the final

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<sup>640</sup> J. Lee, *A History of North Korea vol. 2*, 156-194.

<sup>641</sup> D. Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, (New ed.), New York, 2001, 161-248.

stages of the World Cup for the first time in thirty-two years in 1986, North Korea was increasingly marginalized in international football, mainly on account of violent incidents that occurred at the 1982 Asian Games. However, the South's changing attitude towards the North helped to create the conditions for a rapprochement on the field of play, as indicated by the historic friendly matches between the two nations in 1990. This chapter seeks to explain how these resumed Korean derbies were viewed and how they were played in an atmosphere very different from the fiercely contested matches of the 1970s. The factors that led to North Korea's football isolation after 1982 and its decline as a football power are examined along with the reasons for South Korea's emergence as a significant force in the mid 1980s. However, football in South Korea did have its problems and these will be assessed by comparing it with professional baseball.

### **(1) A surrogate war: the Korean derbies**

In South Korea anti-communism reached a high point under the Park regime in the 1970s. Propaganda was prevalent in schools where children were expected to write essays and design posters carrying the anti-communist message.<sup>642</sup> Lee Seung Bok, a nine-year-old South Korean boy who was said to have cried 'I hate the Communist Party' before being killed by North Korean guerillas in 1968, was idolized; statues were erected in his memory and his edifying story was in Korean school textbooks.<sup>643</sup> Moreover, the Park regime, having helped create widespread aversion to communism, turned this against the opposition within South Korea. Opponents of the regime, regardless of the

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<sup>642</sup> Jun-man Kang and Whan-pyo Kim, *Scapegoats and a Sense of Guilt: A History of Anti-Communism in Korea*, Seoul, 2004, 177.

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid*, 166-170.

truth, were labeled as 'communists' in order to justify the imposition of repressive measures.<sup>644</sup> In these circumstances it seemed that the ideological gulf separating the two Koreas was widening and becoming entrenched. As far as the Park regime was concerned, North Korea was simply a puppet regime controlled by the Soviet Union. While the North Korean party organ described South Korea as a corrupted nation exploited by a military regime propped up by the United States.<sup>645</sup>

Just before the Asian Games held at Teheran in 1974, the South Korean first lady was killed by a Korean resident of Japan at the National Theatre in Seoul on August 15, the twenty-ninth anniversary of the nation's liberation. It was reported that the assassin, who had originally planned to kill the President, had been instructed and assisted by an official of a pro-North Korean association in Japan, and this further sharpened pre-existing hostility towards North Korea.<sup>646</sup>

Against this backdrop of intensified tension on the Korean Peninsula, it was inevitable that much attention was focused on the medal race between North and South Korea in Teheran and on football in particular. Kim Il Sung left North Korea's players in no doubt that they were expected to 'kill South Korean football'; the regime's espionage service assisted the preparation by accessing all available films of their rivals in action.<sup>647</sup> The first Korean derby since the war was of utmost importance to the South as well. 'Regardless whether we win the tournament or not', observed a monthly football

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<sup>644</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 51.

<sup>645</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 21, Apr, 1976.

<sup>646</sup> *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, 17 Aug 1974.

<sup>647</sup> Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18, Oct, 2010.



magazine, 'we must not lose to the North'.<sup>648</sup> At first, the political pressure on the South Korean coach was such that he sought to avoid the possibility of being drawn into a match against the North. Key players were 'rested' for a first-round match against Kuwait in order to avoid a North-South clash in round two and, at a later stage, there was a further 'tactical retreat' in a match against Malaysia for the same reason.<sup>649</sup>

It seems unlikely that these decisions would have been taken by the coach if he had not been under political pressure from nervous government officials. A North Korean club, April 25, including many North Korean internationals, had made a positive impression with a 4-0 victory over Japan in Tokyo six months before the Asian Game. After the match the Japanese coach conceded North Korea's superiority and praised their energy and power.<sup>650</sup> KFA officials who had watched this friendly, however, were more confident, believing that the North Korean footballers played in a predictable and monotonous fashion reflecting the rigid structure of North Korean society and that this made them vulnerable.<sup>651</sup> This ideological stereotyping of North Korean football in the South was very similar to the way in which an English journalist depicted Bulgarian football, after the Great Britain-Bulgaria Olympic qualifier in 1956. The Bulgarian team was described as 'an automaton unable to extemporise, or adjust itself to changing circumstances'.<sup>652</sup> Before the Asian Games, the South Korean coach stated that there was no reason to be afraid of North Korea and the team's captain was also very confident. Yet this was not

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<sup>648</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Aug 1974, 27.

<sup>649</sup> Lee, *People's History of Korean Football*, vol. 2, 58-60; *Donga Ilbo*, 7 Sept 1974; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Oct 1974, 37.

<sup>650</sup> Goto, *A History of Japanese Soccer*, 192; *Nikkan Sports*, 11 Mar 1974.

<sup>651</sup> *Kyunghyang Shimun*, 11 Mar 1974; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Sept 1974, 28.

<sup>652</sup> *The Times*, 14, May, 1956, cited in R. Kowalski and D. Porter, 'Cold War Football: British- European Encounters in the 1940s and 1950s', 77.

enough to convince the Park regime, already nervous after the assassination of the first lady, to expose South Korea to the risk of defeat, especially after the Games began and North Korea established a lead in the medals table.<sup>653</sup> Thus it could be argued that the imperative to avoid a clash between the two Koreas on the football field could be traced to President Park's 'morbid fear of assassination' by the North Koreans at the time.<sup>654</sup>

It did not help that South Korean football faced other problems in this period when it found itself relatively isolated in terms of Asian sports diplomacy where an influential alliance linking North Korea, China and several Arab states had emerged. These countries colluded to boycott sports competitions involving Israel and succeeded in expelling both Israel and South Vietnam from the Asian Gymnastics Confederation in 1974. Later in the same year they succeeded in expelling Israel and Taiwan from the AFC.<sup>655</sup> South Korea's relations with Kuwait, one of the most ambitious Arab nations to use the wealth derived from higher oil prices to develop its football, were especially difficult. Not only had South Korea opposed the expulsion of Israel, it had also supported a Thai candidate rather than a Kuwaiti in the election of the FIFA vice-president for Asia. This meant that the South Koreans were not invited to participate when Kuwait staged the 1975 Asian Youth Football Championship whereas both North Korea and China were invited to take part.<sup>656</sup>

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<sup>653</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Sept 1974, 25-26, 28, 31.

<sup>654</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 51.

<sup>655</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 11 Sept 1974; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Jan 1975, 22.

<sup>656</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Jan 1975, 22-23.

In these circumstances – and particularly in view of the global oil crisis – it became important that South Korea should take steps to challenge the diplomatic ascendancy established by North Korea in the Middle East and here sport – especially football - had an important role. A diplomatic initiative by the Korea Amateur Sports Association (KASA) in 1975 saw coaches and players dispatched to various Middle East countries while extending invitations to Iran and Lebanon to play in the Park's Cup competition.<sup>657</sup> The South Korean youth football team played in international tournaments staged in Iran in 1975 and 1976. Perhaps the most important initiative was sending the national team to play friendly matches against Libya in 1976 as part of an initiative designed to establish diplomatic relations.<sup>658</sup> These diplomatic overtures using football helped to pave the way for Korean companies seeking to benefit from the construction boom in the Middle East, thus helping to increase South Korea's overseas earnings enormously.<sup>659</sup>

Football rivalry between South and North Korea was renewed on the pitch in 1976 in the semi-final of the Asian Youth Football Championship at Bangkok. When the match ended with a 1-0 win for North Korea, the president of the KFA declared: 'it does not matter who wins or who loses as we are all Koreans'. This, however, was merely diplomatic rhetoric. There was a delay of thirty minutes before kick-off while the North Koreans argued that one of their team, who had accumulated two yellow cards in previous matches, should be allowed to play. The match was won by a controversial goal, scored while the South Korean goalkeeper was on the ground having been hit by

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<sup>657</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 7 Jan 1975. KASA was later renamed in 1982 as Korea Sports Council (KSC).

<sup>658</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 6 Mar 1975; 16 May 1975; 21 Feb 1976; *Donga Ilbo*, 13 May 1976.

<sup>659</sup> Kang, *Exploration of Korean Modern History 1970s (2)*, 284-286.

the North Korean striker.<sup>660</sup> In South Korea, newspapers rebuked North Korea's foul play and criticized the Malaysian referee, while praising of good sportsmanship of their own players for accepting a wrong decision.<sup>661</sup> *Chosun Ilbo* complained that the match had not been televised in South Korea, thus denying viewers the opportunity of witnessing for themselves the ungentlemanly conduct and rough play of the North Koreans.<sup>662</sup> In contrast, the North Korean newspaper *Nodong Shinmun* criticized the South Korean players who had surrounded the referee to protest at the end of the game, 'evoking criticism and mockery from the crowd'.<sup>663</sup> It was clear that passions still ran high and that the prospects for further football contacts at senior international level had not been helped.

Four months after this clash, it was confirmed that North and South Korea had been drawn in the same qualifying group for the 1978 World Cup.<sup>664</sup> However, a few months later, North Korea withdrew from the tournament, a decision prompted largely by political considerations; it was clear that the regime was unhappy at the prospect of high-profile matches against both South Korea and Israel.<sup>665</sup> There was another important factor which explained the North's withdrawal. After the North Koreans had killed two American officers near the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom on 18 August 1976 tensions on the peninsula were heightened to an extent that there was a danger of full-scale war.<sup>666</sup> Although a statement of regret by Kim Il Sung brought this crisis to

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<sup>660</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 7 May 1976.

<sup>661</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 7 May 1976.

<sup>662</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 9 May 1976.

<sup>663</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 11 May 1976.

<sup>664</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Sept 1976.

<sup>665</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 8 Dec 1976; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Dec 1976, 74.

<sup>666</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 74-83.

an end in September, it seems to have been enough to have left North Korean football on the sidelines as the regime was forced to concentrate on making preparations for war in response to joint South Korea-USA military exercises while, at the same time, hunting down potential enemies within its own borders, such as Moon Ki Nam, stigmatized as a suspected person, who was excluded from the national team.<sup>667</sup>

Thus it was not until 1978 that North-South football rivalry was resumed, initially at the Asian Youth Football Championship in Bangladesh, a tournament that became notorious for the number of over-aged players that were fielded. Over half the North Korean players, for example, were over twenty years of age.<sup>668</sup> Before the match, *Donga Ilbo* predicted that the South Korean side, though younger than their opponents, would triumph on account of their superior technique.<sup>669</sup> As it transpired, the match went to a penalty shoot-out which was won by South Korea thanks to a save by their goalkeeper, who became an instant national hero and was rewarded financially by the KFA, Hanil Bank (his club) and also his old school.<sup>670</sup> This indicates the importance attached to this match in South Korea. Although it was not a senior international, the match provided evidence of the ideological gulf separating the two Koreas. When a South Korean forward protested to the referee in English after a rough tackle, the North Korean defender shouted: 'Son of a bitch, do not speak the language of imperialism (English)'<sup>671</sup> The North Koreans sought, wherever possible, to avoid using the same language as the Americans, whom they saw as their enemy and North Korean sports

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<sup>667</sup> Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010.

<sup>668</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 24 Oct 1978.

<sup>669</sup> *Ibid*, 26 Oct 1978.

<sup>670</sup> *Ibid*, 27 Oct, 3, 7 Nov, 1978; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2 Nov 1978.

<sup>671</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Nov 1978.

authorities had made efforts to Koreanize sports terminology from the 1960s onwards.<sup>672</sup>

However, this match at youth international level served merely as a prelude to the clash between North and South Korea in the final of Asian Games football tournament at Bangkok two months later. After an intense struggle with numerous chances to score wasted by both sides the match ended as a 0-0 draw and the championship was shared.<sup>673</sup> In the eyes of both Koreans and foreigners, the sight of the rival captains, smiling and with their arms around each other's shoulders, sharing the Asian Games' podium was a cause for celebration given the hostility usually associated with North-South relations.<sup>674</sup> But it was a merely brief show for the benefit of press photographers. Before they posed for the cameras, there had been a tussle between the two captains as they tried to push each other off the winner's podium.<sup>675</sup> The captain of South Korea, Kim Ho Gon, recalled later that his first impulse had been to hit his North Korean counterpart, but he had suppressed this instinct and suggesting that they posed in a friendly fashion.<sup>676</sup> There was disappointment among South Koreans, who had watched the nail-biting match on TV and were disappointed with the result, their team having dominated the play.<sup>677</sup> However, few North Koreans were aware of that the match had taken place. *Nodong Shinmun* simply reported that North Korea had won a gold medal for football at the Asian Games and did not give any details of the final against the

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<sup>672</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 10 Sept 1990.

<sup>673</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21, Dec, 1978.

<sup>674</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 21, Dec, 1978; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 21, Dec, 1978.

<sup>675</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 7 Feb 1979.

<sup>676</sup> *Chukgu Gajok(Football Family)*, July 1993, 39; *Pressian*, 14 Mar 2008.

<sup>677</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 21 Dec 1978.

South.<sup>678</sup>

In football terms the Asian Games final was important in helping South Korea to overcome the fear of North Korea which had persisted since the World Cup of 1966. As the game progressed, the North Korean side was found to be way behind of their Southern opponents in every aspect, save for speed.<sup>679</sup> When North and South met again, two years later, in the semi-finals of the Asian Cup, most South Korean newspapers predicted victory for their team and the players approached the match in a relaxed and confident way, even when their opponents took the lead, eventually winning 2-1.<sup>680</sup> For *Chosun Ilbo* this was 'the best day for [South] Korean football', especially as the team had been cheered on by 7,000 South Koreans waving national flags, most of them working at the time as labourers in Kuwait. There was enormous interest in the match in South Korea with half the nation's television sets tuned in for the live transmission at 1.30 am.<sup>681</sup> This coverage was not matched in North Korea where the newspapers tended to file reports only *after* their representatives had achieved a good result. Thus matches between North and South Korean club sides in the King's Cup tournaments held in Thailand, where the North Koreans tended to be more successful, were reported in the North Korean press, but attracted less attention in South Korea where interest focused primarily on the national team.<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 22 Dec 1978.

<sup>679</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 10 Jan 1979, 110.

<sup>680</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 28 Sept 1980; *Donga Ilbo*, 27 Sept 1980; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 27 Sept 1980; interview with a former South Korean footballer, Choi Jong Duk, Seosan City, 17 Mar, 2009.

<sup>681</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 30 Sept 1980.

<sup>682</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 16 Nov, 2 Dec 1981; 14 Mar 1986; 7 Mar 1987.

## (2) Rapprochement on the football field

Gorbachev's *Glasnost* reforms in the Soviet Union and Deng Xiaoping's pragmatism embarrassed the North Korean leadership, since these policies propelled them into a situation where it was no longer possible simply to ignore South Korea. As South Korea's economy boomed – it made the important transition in the late 1980s from being an aid-receiving to an aid-dispensing country – its growing economic importance helped to make this position untenable.<sup>683</sup> Given the emergence of South Korea as a significant regional and global economic force neither China nor the Soviet Union could afford to allow ideological considerations and old loyalties to determine policy in dealing with the two Koreas. Sport provided one route to building better relationships and this was underlined by so-called 'tennis diplomacy' when China permitted South Korean tennis players to compete on its soil for the first time in 1984.<sup>684</sup> Moreover, with the Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 emphasizing South Korea's new status in the world, the Soviet Union and its East European allies ignored North Korean appeals to boycott the event. Cuba was the only athletically significant communist state to boycott the 1988 Games.<sup>685</sup>

Changing attitudes within South Korea itself from the 1980s onwards were also important as the idea that their Northern neighbours were simply a ruthless enemy regime driven by communism became less prevalent. Instead, increasingly, South

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<sup>683</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 198, 202, 207.

<sup>684</sup> *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 Mar 1984, cited in X. Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1895-2008*, Cambridge and London, 2008, 162.

<sup>685</sup> Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), 166.



Koreans were more inclined to treat people in the North as their blood brothers. These changed attitudes were very evident when thirty-five separated families were briefly reunited in 1985 for the first time since the split.<sup>686</sup> Four years later, Jung Ju Young, president of Hyundai, a South Korean conglomerate, visited Pyongyang to explore the possibilities of economic cooperation between the two Koreas. It was especially significant to find the corporate sector taking the lead in this respect.<sup>687</sup>

This changing mood was also seen in football. There is anecdotal evidence of fraternization between North and South at some tournaments in the early 1980s with footballers exchanging banter and food. According to two former South Korean football internationals, Choi Jong Duk and Jung Yong Hwan, Southern footballers sometimes gave presents or hard currency to Northerners with whom they formed friendships in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>688</sup> It helped, of course, that during this period the fear of war decreased dramatically, partly because of the end of the Cold war following the collapse of the Soviet Union, partly because North Korea was now economically weak and politically isolated.<sup>689</sup> It was significant in this new situation that North Korean were no longer viewed as a major competitive threat in the South. When, in the 1986 King's Cup, the South Korean youth team was defeated by what was virtually the North Korean national side there was so little interest in the game that none of the Southern broadcasting companies covered it. One South Korean newspaper argued that this was

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<sup>686</sup> Yeon-Chul Kim, *The Remembrance of Cold War*, Seoul, 2009, 80-84.

<sup>687</sup> Ibid, 312.

<sup>688</sup> Interview with Choi Jong Duk, Seosan city 17 Mar 2009; Interview with Jung Yong Whan, Uijeongbu city, 25 Mar 2008.

<sup>689</sup> Eun-Ha Koh, D.L. Andrews and R. White, 'Beyond the Stadium, and into the Street: Sport and Anti-Americanism in South Korea', in S. Wagg and D. L. Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport and The Cold War*, Abingdon and New York, 2007, 319.

a backward step and requested that all future sporting encounters between South and North should be televised, pointing out that 'South Korean sports' power is now by far superior to that of the North'; moreover, South Koreans were now sufficiently mature to separate politics and sports.<sup>690</sup>

It is also important to note that the first indications of anti-Americanism surfaced in South Korea during in the 1980s partly because the pro-American military government used its military force to stamp down on demonstrations. The regime's brutal suppression (with American connivance) of the Gwangju Democratisation Movement in 1980, for instance, claimed the lives of thousands of citizens.<sup>691</sup> Anti-Americanism was very evident amongst Korean spectators during the Seoul Olympics in 1988. The ungracious behaviour of some American athletes and an American broadcasting company's distorted coverage of a South Korean boxer stoked up such sentiments. As Robert Edelman has noted, the South Koreans were 'quick to emphasize the contrast with the well mannered' Soviet athletes and to 'assert their independence from their American masters'.<sup>692</sup> Thus South Korean crowds rooted wildly for the Soviet basketball players in the 1988 Olympic final and barracked the Americans 'to the shock and dismay of many American viewers'.<sup>693</sup>

During this period there is evidence of the South Korean people drawing closer to North Korea in an unprecedented fashion as the traditionally intimate relationship between South Korea and the United States came under pressure. The extent to which

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<sup>690</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 8 Mar 1986.

<sup>691</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in The Sun*, 386-391.

<sup>692</sup> Edelman, *Serious Fun*, 237

<sup>693</sup> *Hankyora Shinmun*, 30 Sept 1988; Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 191.

attitudes were changing was illustrated by a nationwide public opinion poll in 1990 in which eighty-two per cent of South Koreans indicated that they would support North Korean football team if it took on an American team.<sup>694</sup> The atmosphere of Korean derby was also changing. There were no violent tackles when South and North met in the qualifying round of the 1990 World Cup. The coaches exchanged information on the other teams in the group and their squads exchanged mutual good wishes and spoke of 'going to Rome together'.<sup>695</sup> This amiable mood continued into 1990 and the resumption of friendly matches between South and North was announced days before the opening of Asian Games in Beijing.<sup>696</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, the original sponsors of the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship by reminding its readers of the address delivered by the newspaper's vice-president before the first tournament played in 1929 during the Japanese occupation: 'This football event should not only be celebrated as a game, but be blessed to promote good fellowship between Pyongyang and Gyung-sung, the two biggest cities in Chosun'.<sup>697</sup>

The 'Unification Football Championship' between North and South represented the revival of Gyung-Pyong Football Championship after a fifty-four year gap, was everything that the founders of this patriotic football spectacle in Japanese era would have wished. The two matches played in 1990 were notable in that very little attention was paid to the outcome; the occasion was regarded as more significant than the result. When the North Korean referee awarded a dubious penalty to the home team in the match at Pyongyang many in the 150,000 crowd were as baffled as the South Korean

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<sup>694</sup> *Yonhap News*, 8 Feb 2011.

<sup>695</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 17 Oct, 1989.

<sup>696</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 20 Sept 1990.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid*, 21, Sept 1990.

players and there was little celebration when the kick was converted to secure a 1-1 draw.<sup>698</sup> There was little partisanship amongst South Korean spectators at the return match in the Olympic Stadium in Seoul. When South Korea opened the scoring, there were cries from the crowd urging North Korea to 'score an equalizer!'<sup>699</sup>

However, not all was sweetness and light and there were some indications, even during the tournament, that the North Korean government was anxious. When some South Korean newspapers published articles criticizing the secretive nature of the regime in the North *Nodong Shinmun* responded angrily arguing that such comments might lead to their team refusing to play the match in Seoul.<sup>700</sup> It also complained that government officials had intervened to prevent North Korean journalists from interviewing ordinary South Korean citizens. Indeed, reports in *Donga Ilbo* suggest that the South Korean government may have been heavy-handed in this respect.<sup>701</sup> However, it seems likely that the regime in the North was already starting to backtrack and was finding reasons to reject the idea that North-South friendly matches should be played on a regular basis.<sup>702</sup> They may have feared that annual visits to Seoul would shake the loyalty of North Korean footballers by bringing them into contact with the capitalist world. Some North Korean women footballers, who had rarely traveled abroad, had returned home from the South having realized that much of the information about their neighbours that they were routinely fed by the Pyongyang regime was false. They had

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<sup>698</sup> Ibid, 12 Oct 1990; Ministry of Sports and Youth, *The North-South Unification Football Championship*, Seoul, 1991, 42.

<sup>699</sup> Ibid, 24 Oct 1990.

<sup>700</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24, Oct, 1990; The Ministry of Sports and Youth, *The North-South Unification Football Championship*, 111.

<sup>701</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24 Oct 1990; *Donga Ilbo*, 25 Oct 1990.

<sup>702</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 30 Nov 1990.

shed tears when departing from Seoul.<sup>703</sup>

Despite these developments the Ministry of Sports in South Korea fell in behind the government policy which was to promote cultural and sports exchanges with the North. Over-riding the KFA's objections, the Ministry pushed ahead with plans to set up a women's national team.<sup>704</sup> The aim, as the Minister of Sports admitted, was to send a South Korean women's national team to the 1990 Asian Games in the hope that this would be favourably regarded by the North and lead to more friendly matches. At this time, while North Korean men's football was slightly inferior to that of the South, its women's football was superior, as was proved in the Asian Games when the hastily-assembled South Korean team were crushed 7-0 by their North Korean sisters.<sup>705</sup> The South Korean plan was that women's matches should be played as curtain-raisers before the friendly matches between the men's teams that they hoped would become regular fixtures but, ironically, this was ruled out at the last minute owing to the North's consideration for the South.<sup>706</sup> The South Korean female footballers were sacrificed on the altar of North-South politics. Seven of the team that had lost so heavily to North Korea were dropped and replaced by good-looking and cultivated college footballers in preparation for public appearances in North Korea.<sup>707</sup> However, after the matches were cancelled, the South Korean women's team faded into insignificance.

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<sup>703</sup> Interview with Jung Yong Whan, Uijeongbu city, South Korea, 25 Mar 2008. Jung was the captain of South Korean team in the Unification Football Championship in 1990.

<sup>704</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 16, Feb, 1990.

<sup>705</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Sept 1990 ; *Chosun Ilbo*, 30 Sept 1990.

<sup>706</sup> Ministry of Sports and Youth, *The North-South Unification Football Championship*, 30.

<sup>707</sup> Y. Lee, *The Hundreds of Thousands of Stories Intertwined with a Ball*, 303-306; *Hankook Ilbo*, 12 Oct 1990.

It is worthy of notice that the contrasting playing styles of North and South were much discussed during the Unification Football Championship of 1990. At a press conference held prior to the match in Seoul, the North Korean coach stressed 'stamina' while the South Korean coach emphasized 'individual skills'.<sup>708</sup> The different approaches to the game styles that had made the Gyung-Pyong Championship so interesting in the Japanese era was very apparent in both the matches played.<sup>709</sup> However, the extent to which the playing styles of the two teams actually differed is a matter of opinion based on a subjective view of how the matches were played. Only a few years earlier, in 1984, a Singapore daily, reporting a match between Kuwait and South Korea, had described the South Korean football style as being based on strength and stamina rather than skills: 'The contrasting styles of the two teams [was visible] as they maximized their respective strengths for a 90-minute parade of skill and vision by [Kuwait] versus the sheer sweat [of South Korea]'.<sup>710</sup> We must be careful not to exaggerate the differences between North and South Korean football in this respect.

Despite North Korea's anxieties its relatively isolated position meant that the Kim regime was prepared to continue developing sporting links with the South and to go further in this direction than at any time since partition. Thus it was in 1991 that a great enthusiasm for unified North-South teams engulfed the Korean Peninsula. In April, athletes from the North and South competed as one team in the World Table Tennis Championships and won the women's team event. In June, a unified team played in the FIFA Youth Championship in Portugal, reaching the quarter-finals after having defeated

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<sup>708</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 22 Oct 1990.

<sup>709</sup> *Seoul Shinmun*, 12, 24 Oct 1990; *Hankyora Shinmun*, 24 Oct 1990

<sup>710</sup> *The Straits Times*, 18 Apr 1984.

Argentina, against all odds.<sup>711</sup> The symbolic significance of the success achieved by a unified team which could be appreciated on both sides of the border had obvious political implications in terms of reunification. This success, as *Chosun Ilbo* has pointed out, was taken as a sort of unification in South Korea.<sup>712</sup> The North Koreans expressed great expectation for the team by rooting for them under the catchphrase of 'Korea dashing for the goal of unification'.<sup>713</sup> When the unification team won over Argentina, a Pro-North Korean daily published in Tokyo, *Chosun Shinbo* underscored that good combination play between North and South Korean footballers was a decisive factor for the victory.<sup>714</sup> However there were also some problems. The policy of drafting equal numbers of North and South Korean players into the squad without taking into account the differing levels of skills became the subject of press criticism; it was argued that it was essentially a political strategy which meant that the team selected were weaker than they should have been.<sup>715</sup> There were also complaints against North Korea in the South because some North Korean players were withdrawn from the unified squad in order to prepare for forthcoming Olympic qualifying matches leaving the unified team weakened.<sup>716</sup>

Indeed, where it was in its interests, North Korea continued to operate as a separate football power notably by agreeing to send its senior international team to Washington in October 1991 to play in an exhibition match against an American team that had

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<sup>711</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 24 June 1991.

<sup>712</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 24, June 1991.

<sup>713</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 15, June, 1991.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid*, 20, June, 1991.

<sup>715</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 24 June 1991.

<sup>716</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 15 May 1991; 24 June 1991.

been arranged by a Pyongyang-born soccer enthusiast living in New York. At the time this fitted in with North Korea's strategy of seeking better relations with the United States in order to compensate for the allies it had lost in the communist world.<sup>717</sup> However, the outcome from North Korea's point of view was disappointing and the US State Department went to some lengths to downplay the significance of the event. 'This game is valuable for both sides', commented a State Department official, 'but in terms of a political dimension ... this is not Ping-Pong diplomacy'" <sup>718</sup> With the Bush administration preoccupied with problems in the Middle East following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and continuing to exert pressure regarding the nuclear issue, the North Korean government achieved a lot less than it had hoped for when agreeing to the match.<sup>719</sup>

Though victory achieved away from home against the American enemy had enormous ideological significance in North Korea, other aspects of the trip to the United States were important in terms of football development. For the first time, the North Koreans had a foreigner on the bench in a coaching capacity. Pal Csernai, who had fled from his native Hungary to West Germany in the 1950s and then coached Bayern Munich, was hired as a technical adviser to in 1991<sup>720</sup> This development was highly significant in terms of North Korean sports policy and culture. From the late 1980s the regime in North Korea was increasingly adopting open-door policies and embracing some aspects of capitalism. This was exemplified by the opening of a golf course in 1987, the inauguration of an international football tournament with money prizes in 1990, and

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<sup>717</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 239; *Washington Post*, 2 Oct 1991.

<sup>718</sup> *Washington Post*, 18 Oct 1991.

<sup>719</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 225.

<sup>720</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 21 Oct 1991; *Washington Post*, 18 Oct 1991.



building a leisure amenity in 1994 to entice foreign tourists.<sup>721</sup> Yet, more fundamental change, such as granting North Korean players the same freedom of movement as that enjoyed by the many East European players who had found foreign clubs, was still a step too far.

### **(3) The Bad boys and Red devils**

In the 1970s North Korea became notorious in world football circles for its belligerence towards opponents and vehement protests, sometimes involving physical violence, when contesting a referee's decisions.<sup>722</sup> The most violent case in this decade came in the Montreal Olympics, where a North Korean footballer struck the referee during a match with the Soviet Union, incurring a one-year FIFA ban from international football.<sup>723</sup> Nothing, however, could match the violence which followed North Korea's semi-final defeat by Kuwait during the Asian Games at New Delhi in 1982. The North Korean players were angry with the referee who had awarded a penalty against them in a tight match which they lost 3-2. At the final whistle North Korean footballers, officials and supporters attacked the referee with chairs and flag-posts. Despite the efforts of lathi-wielding Indian policemen to rescue the referee, he was badly beaten up and his face started bleeding.<sup>724</sup> To make matters worse this incident was soon embroiled in a larger controversy over bribery allegations when the Thai referee, Vijit Ketkaew, who had been so brutally assaulted, related that he had been approached by the North Koreans and

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<sup>721</sup> *Hankook Ilbo*, 28 Nov 1994.

<sup>722</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 29 Apr 1976; *Donga Ilbo*, 17 Oct 1978.

<sup>723</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 28 July 1976.

<sup>724</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 1 Dec 1982; *Times of India*, 1 Dec 1982.

given a vase and a bottle of liquor, but that he had rejected their request for favourable treatment.<sup>725</sup> This was followed by a counter-allegation from a North Korean official who claimed that Vijit had accepted a 15,000 dollar bribe from Kuwait; they also revealed that they had asked for the referee to be changed after he had appeared to favour Kuwait in their quarter-final tie against Iran.<sup>726</sup>

Although the truth or otherwise of these allegations remains unresolved there were widespread suspicions that Arab nations were trying to 'buy' referees. During the match the sympathies of the Indian spectators had been with the North Koreans rather than the 'oil-rich' Kuwaitis. A *Times of India* report noted that the 50,000 crowd had 'cheered the North Koreans' and demanded that the match be replayed.<sup>727</sup> Significantly, the South Korean press was also sympathetic to the North; this was an indication of how attitudes were beginning to change at this time. *Dong Ilbo* observed that whenever any national team played against an Arab oil-producing country, they were in effect playing against 'fourteen men', including one referee and two linesmen. It went on to argue that any referee coming from an underdeveloped nation was particularly susceptible to accepting a bribe paid in 'petrol money'.<sup>728</sup> These comments were no doubt influenced by memories of a controversial World Cup qualifying match between South Korea and Kuwait a year earlier when a referee from Colombia had controversially disallowed a South Korean equalizer and 'raised some protest from the Korean players'.<sup>729</sup>

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<sup>725</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 3 Dec 1982.

<sup>726</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 2 Dec 1982; *Chosun Shinbo*, 3 Dec 1982.

<sup>727</sup> *Times of India*, 1, Dec, 1982.

<sup>728</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Dec 1982.

<sup>729</sup> *Kuwait Times*, 30 Apr 1981.

The dispute over how the North Korean rampage would be penalized continued for some time. At first, the local organizing committee for the Asian Games suggested that the matter should wait until the president of FIFA arrived in New Delhi. However, Thailand's AFC representative rejected this outright, claiming that, 'The Indian authorities, instead of accepting the blame for their poor security measures, [were] now trying to find excuses [*sic*] to save a political friend [North Korea]'.<sup>730</sup> It seems likely, in this instance, however, that it was the prospect of cancelling the third-place match, which was expected to attract a crowd of over 70,000, rather than favouritism towards North Korea which was critical. If North Korea had been expelled from the tournament and the third-place match cancelled the organizing committee would have been obliged to refund those who had already bought tickets and it was anxious to avoid the financial loss that would have resulted.<sup>731</sup>

Whatever the provocation North Korea's violence could not go unpunished and the AFC imposed a two-year ban from international football, a decision later confirmed by FIFA.<sup>732</sup> Predictably, the North Koreans viewed this as harsh and unfair, arguing that it was not North Korea but the referee who should be punished.<sup>733</sup> Inevitably, the two-year ban would consign North Korean football to the doldrums but it was also clear that its reputation had been seriously damaged by these events. A North Korean deputation apologized to the President of Thailand for the misconduct of its players and officials and secured an assurance that the matter would sooner or later be forgotten but the incident had provided its critics with an open goal. 'China won the

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<sup>730</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 2, Dec 1982.

<sup>731</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 3, 5 Dec 1982; *Chosun Ilbo*, 3 Dec 1982; *Donga Ilbo*, 1 Nov 1984.

<sup>732</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 4, 19 Dec 1982.

<sup>733</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 6, Dec, 1982.

most gold medals for its athletic prowess', noted a Thai newspaper as the Asian Games drew to a close, 'but if they gave one for rotten sportsmanship it would go to North Korea'.<sup>734</sup> For a number of years the North Koreans had to live with the reputation of being the 'bad boys' of Asian football and, when they resumed international matches after 1984, refurbishing their tarnished image was as important as achieving success on the field. This was still the situation in 1989, as the *Straits Times* indicated prior to the World Cup qualifying tournament held in Singapore.<sup>735</sup>

North Korean terrorist acts in the 1980s reinforced this negative image originating from the football field. In 1983, during a state visit to Burma, seventeen high-ranking officials accompanying the South Korean President died when a bomb planted by North Korean army captains was detonated.<sup>736</sup> In 1987, in another shocking act of terrorism committed by North Korea, a bomb exploded on Korean Air Lines flight 858 claiming 115 lives. It seems likely that these terrorist atrocities were the North Korean regime's way of responding to the enhanced economic and political status that South Korea was beginning to experience, especially after the decision in 1981 to award the 1988 Olympic Games to Seoul. Oberdorfer has argued that the aim of bombing the South Korean airliner was to 'dissuade the nations of the world from participating in the Seoul Olympics'.<sup>737</sup>

The violence at the New Delhi football stadium could not be disassociated from their intimidating social climate in which terror schemes targeting South Korea were

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<sup>734</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 3, 5 Dec 1982.

<sup>735</sup> *The Straits Times*, 12 Oct 1989.

<sup>736</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 141.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid*, 183-184.

frequently laid out by the North Korean leadership. North Korean athletes must have come under pressure to win against their compatriots in the 1982 Asian Games. But the gap between the two Koreas in the medal race in 1982 was much wider in comparison with that in the previous Asian Games. In 1978, the gap had been only three gold medals; in 1982 it was eleven.<sup>738</sup> It was for this reason that the head of North Korean contingent to the Asian Games expressed great disappointment at how poorly his athletes performed. 'The sportsmen', he said, 'had failed to come up to expectation in football, boxing, weightlifting and shooting'.<sup>739</sup> Moreover, North Korea had been defeated by South Korea in all head-to-head clashes in the five team events at New Delhi.<sup>740</sup> It seems possible that these humiliations heaped additional pressure on the North Korean footballers as they approached the semi-final. At home they were 'treated as if they were senior party cadre', enjoying a relatively high standard of living with luxury cars and apartments. They also enjoyed the privilege of frequent trips overseas. In these circumstances much rested on achieving success in football which could compensate for North Korean failures in other sports.<sup>741</sup> Thus, when this face-saving mission was thwarted by a controversial refereeing decision, the North Korean team and their officials over-reacted.<sup>742</sup>

Ironically, the two-year ban on North Korea playing any match under the jurisdiction of the AFC and FIFA immediately provided a great opportunity for South Korea, whose under-20 team was picked to take their place in the final round of the Asian youth

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<sup>738</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Dec 1978; *Chosun Ilbo*, 4 Dec 1982.

<sup>739</sup> *Times of India*, 4 Dec 1982.

<sup>740</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Dec 1982.

<sup>741</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 16 Nov 1987; 28 Feb 1991; *Chosun Ilbo*, 23 Oct 1990.

<sup>742</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Dec 1982.

tournament in 1982. Although it had been defeated by the North in the Asian qualifying competition the South Korean side was thus given the unexpected opportunity to reach the final stages of the FIFA World Youth Championship in Mexico as a representative of Asia.<sup>743</sup> The South Korean team seized their chance and reached the semi-finals in Mexico, the country's best achievement to date in any FIFA competition, a feat which generated enormous public interest back home. Almost eighty-four per cent of people in Seoul watched the South Korea-Brazil semi-final live on television; the usual morning rush-hour traffic was absent and pigeons were said to have basked in the sunshine on the abnormally quiet roads.<sup>744</sup> On their return home the team was awarded the Medal of Sports by President Jeon Du Whan and the players were showered with gifts, such as colour television sets and refrigerators, by various South Korean conglomerates.<sup>745</sup> As far as the President was concerned the team's achievements in Mexico justified the government's policy of using sport to pursue the wider goal of modernization because it signaled that South Korea was capable of leaping the gap between the Third World and the First.<sup>746</sup> Their success in reaching the semi-finals fully justified underwriting the additional expenditure that had been required to send the team to Mexico fifteen days early so that they would become acclimatized before the competition got under way.<sup>747</sup> South Korea now designated itself a 'sports republic' as the government obsessively pursued a policy of using sport to raise the national profile ahead of the 1988 Seoul Olympics.<sup>748</sup>

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<sup>743</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 4 Dec 1982; *Chugan Sports*, 5 Jan 1983, 39.

<sup>744</sup> *Ilgan Sports*, 17 June 1983.

<sup>745</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21, 22 June 1983.

<sup>746</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 23 June 1983.

<sup>747</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, July 1983, 24.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid*, 7 Dec 1988.

After South Korea had lost to Scotland in their first game, Jeon – who had played as goalkeeper for the Korean Military Academy – advised that ‘more training and study’ were required to achieve success against physically powerful and high skilled teams from the West.<sup>749</sup> However, the team did not need his advice. It was in this competition that a distinctive, up-tempo South Korean style of play was clearly manifested to the world. As far as the Mexican press was concerned the South Koreans were the ‘Red Devils’ – a less sensational and mysterious version of the North Korean ‘Red Mosquitos’ of 1966; they played in a similar style and achieved similarly unexpected results.<sup>750</sup> FIFA President Dr Joao Havelange was particularly delighted at the success of one of the lesser-known football nations, praising their swift attack relying on wing play.<sup>751</sup> It helped to promote his agenda that FIFA’s international competitions should be characterized by a ‘genuine challenge from all corners of the earth’; it had been hoped, when the World Youth Championship had been established that it would encourage genuine world competition.<sup>752</sup>

It is worth noting that the performance of the ‘Red Devils’ was basically based on building physical fitness through a concentrated preparatory training programme lasting forty-six days, in which the footballers wore masks for an hour per day so that they would be able to endure oxygen deficiency in the extreme altitude of Mexico.<sup>753</sup> The South Koreans owed much to the charismatic leadership of the coach, Park Jong Whan,

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<sup>749</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 6 June 1983.

<sup>750</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 13 June 1983; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Aug 1983, 48.

<sup>751</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15 June 1983.

<sup>752</sup> FIFA, *FIFA/Coca-Cola Cup-World Youth Championship-Mexico 1983 Technical Report*, Zurich, 1983, 17; Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 94.

<sup>753</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 16 June 1983.

whose preparations for the tournament were meticulous; he even arranged for them to train on artificial grass when most South Korean clubs and players had access only to clay surfaces.<sup>754</sup> Park Jong Whan's tireless running game based on physical strength succeeded in getting the best out of some rather mediocre players, but it had its limitations. One editorial complained that South Korea played 'uneconomical football' which meant that the team tended to become exhausted as the match went on. However, it was also accepted that the style adopted by the Red Devils may have been the only way in which South Korea could compete effectively against bigger and more skilful players from Europe and South America.<sup>755</sup> Again this seemed to owe something to the approach adopted by North Korea in the 1966 World Cup.

It may be significant that Park Jong Whan was less successful at senior level. Even though, at his request, many of the young players who had competed so well in Mexico were included in the senior international squad, South Korea failed to qualify for the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles.<sup>756</sup> Five veteran footballers revolted against his Spartan training methods and left the training camp after complaining of the coach's favouritism towards the younger players.<sup>757</sup> Most of them were recalled, but it was an unhappy omen and the attempt to combine old and new in the national team was a failure.<sup>758</sup> It did not help that referees appeared to continue favouring teams from the Middle East. The Asian qualifying round in which nine nations competed saw three Middle East teams securing the Olympic spots, while four South and Far Eastern nations were

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<sup>754</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 20 June 1983.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid*, 17 June 1983; *Donga Ilbo*, 16 June 1983.

<sup>756</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 23 Aug 1983.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid*, 7 Sept 1983.

<sup>758</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 9 May 1984, 38-39.



eliminated.<sup>759</sup> The footballers from the Middle East, particularly Kuwait and Saudi Arabia were noted for their individual skills, rapidly developed under the guidance of Brazilian coaches.<sup>760</sup> However, this round was marked by controversies surrounding refereeing decisions, all of them in matches played by countries from the Middle East.<sup>761</sup> Saudi Arabia, in particular, was suspected of bribery allegations and, prior to the crucial Saudi Arabia-South Korea match the media in Seoul predicted that the referee would be the most important factor in deciding the outcome.<sup>762</sup> This proved correct. In a dramatic game, Saudi Arabia was awarded two controversial penalties and ran out 5-4 winners. There were complaints that 'South Korea had won the game, but lost to petrol money'.<sup>763</sup>

#### **(4) The professionalization of South Korean football**

The most noteworthy change in South Korean football in the 1980s was the inauguration of a professional league in 1983. This shift, along with the professionalization of baseball a year earlier, was made possible by the Jeon military regime's intention to use sports entertainment as a medium of social control as it sought to alleviate political tensions simmering after the Gwangju Democratization Movement in 1980.<sup>764</sup> Thousands of protesters in the south-western city had been

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<sup>759</sup> Ibid, 2 May 1984, 38; 9 May 1984, 36.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid, 2 May 1984, 39.

<sup>761</sup> Ibid, 9 May 1984, 41-42.

<sup>762</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 24 Apr 1984.

<sup>763</sup> Ibid, 25 Apr 1984; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25 Apr 1984.

<sup>764</sup> Ha and Mangan, *Ideology, Politics, Power: Korean Sport-Transformation, 1945-92*, 231-237; Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Contemporary History 1980s (2)*, Seoul, 2003, 104-112; *Sisa Journal*, 24 Feb 2000, 40.

angered when their charismatic local politician, Kim Dae Jung, was arrested after it had been alleged that he was connected with a pro-North Korean organization. They did not trust the regime, which was largely led by south-easterners, and in the ensuing clashes many people were brutally murdered by the armed forces.<sup>765</sup> It was hoped that professional sport would help to distract the attention of the population from an unpopular government.

It has to be said, however, that the KFA had its own reasons for promoting a professional league and these dovetailed with the regime's broad strategy. It was becoming imperative that the problem of footballers' pay, which had become an embarrassing source of discontent, should be addressed. Dissatisfaction had come to the fore after Cha Bum Keun was transferred to the West German professional league in 1979 and his handsome salary became a much discussed topic in the South Korean media.<sup>766</sup> Many footballers in the South Korean national team became ambitious to go to abroad and one resigned in order to move to a club in the Hong Kong semi-professional league where financial rewards were higher. Anxious about the prospect of a 'brawn-drain' which would deplete the national team of its star players, Choi Soon Young, president of KFA, pledged to found a professional club in Korea within a year.<sup>767</sup>

It was under these circumstances that Hallelujah, South Korea's first professional football club, came into being in 1980. The Hallelujah football team was largely made up of evangelical Christian footballers and enjoyed the financial backing of Choi, a devout

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<sup>765</sup> Kang, *The Exploration of Korean Contemporary History in the 1980s (1)*, Seoul, 2003, 115-9; Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 382-383.

<sup>766</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 19 Dec 1979, 16-17.

<sup>767</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

Christian and the head of a conglomerate. This religious football club provided its footballers with an exceptionally good salary, compared with that of bank teams, but preaching the gospel was as important to the Christian footballers as making money.<sup>768</sup> Some Hallelujah players who eagerly devoted themselves to the propagation of Christianity left the team when its training programme began to interrupt their missionary work.<sup>769</sup> With other company-sponsored professional clubs joining the league one after another, Hallelujah transformed itself into an amateur club in 1985. Choi claimed that he anxious that it should focus on 'its original object of missionary work'.<sup>770</sup> However, the real reason for this decision was that Choi's company had run into financial difficulties.<sup>771</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to stress that Hallelujah paved the way for the birth of other professional football clubs backed by conglomerates.

South Korean businesses played an important part in developing elite sport in the 1980s, a decade that saw many *Chaebols* (owners of South Korean conglomerates) assume leading positions in various sports associations which had hitherto been dominated by politicians and technocrats. Choi had set the trend when he took over the management of the KFA in 1979.<sup>772</sup> By 1983, no less than thirty out of a total of thirty-five sports associations were being run by *Chaebols*. Their financial contribution proved critical in helping South Korean athletes gain medals more than had been expected in the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Olympics in Seoul.<sup>773</sup> The regime

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<sup>768</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 20 Dec 1980; *Chugan Sports*, 19 Dec 1979, 17.

<sup>769</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 19 May 1982, 34-35.

<sup>770</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 20 July 1985; *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Aug 1985.

<sup>771</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 28 Aug 1985, 44-45.

<sup>772</sup> *Chukgu Gajok*, July 1993, 8.

<sup>773</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 29 Jan 1983; *Donga Ilbo*, 6 Oct 1986; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 2 Oct 1988.

encouraged the *Chaebols* to become involved and they poured a vast amount of money into the development of elite sports in this period while also providing the necessary financial assistance for the staging of prestigious sporting mega events. In return the *Chaebols* were awarded building contracts for new stadia and associated infrastructure improvements.<sup>774</sup>

The professionalization of South Korean football was also much dependent upon *Chaebols*, who founded new clubs such as Hallelujah, Daewoo, Yukong, LG, and Hyundai. These clubs and the publicity they attracted helped to raise public awareness of the enterprises with which they were associated but all of them were run at a loss, a problem which generated some concerns regarding the extravagance of the *Chaebols* as they poured their money into football.<sup>775</sup> However, despite these losses, such was the commercial rivalry between the various *Chaebols* that they continued to invest money in professional football. The rivalry between Hyundai and Daewoo, the two front-runners of South Korean automobile industry, was particularly intense as they fought each other to recruit the most talented players, notably Kim Jong Bu, poached by Daewoo just as he was about to finalize a contract with Hyundai in November 1987. This incident prompted the Hyundai club to disband in protest, though this dramatic decision was reversed a month later.<sup>776</sup>

Television was another important influence and helped to make professional sports a national spectacle in an age of rising consumerism. As living standards improved the

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<sup>774</sup> Gwang-heon Ko, *Sports and Politics*, Seoul, 1998, 89-90.

<sup>775</sup> *Monthly Chosun*, 29 July 1984, 37-38.

<sup>776</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant traces*, 271-273; 289-293; 303-306.

number of colour TV sets in use increased by three million between 1982 to 1986, allowing the Korean middle-classes to consume professional sports in the comfort of their own homes. Previously it had been customary to watch televised live sporting events at *Dabang* and other communal places.<sup>777</sup> KBS, the South Korean broadcasting company, eagerly supported professional football; all televised professional football matches were broadcast exclusively on KBS in 1983 and 1984.<sup>778</sup> Its main rival, MBC, founded a professional baseball club and paid enormous fees for the rights to broadcast as many professional baseball games as possible.<sup>779</sup> The intense rivalry between broadcasters resulted in a deluge of sports programmes on television which was much criticized by intellectuals opposed to the Jeon regime who regarded it as a sinister development.<sup>780</sup> Expanded television coverage was matched by newspapers. Not only did the space allocated to sport by the dailies increase but two new specialist sports newspapers were founded in the 1980s, making three in all.<sup>781</sup> By virtue of this expansion, South Korean dailies were increasingly inundated with articles pertaining to professional sports and developed a particular interest in stories about players' private lives not covered by television.<sup>782</sup> It was the 1980s that the sports pages of the popular press in South Korea, to borrow a description a change which had occurred in English daily newspapers in the 1960s, were turned into a 'kind of sports magazine'.<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>777</sup> Joongang Ilbo, *Ah, Korea!*, Seoul, 2005, 100.

<sup>778</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, June 1985, 38; Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant traces*, 252.

<sup>779</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 24 Feb, 24 Sept 1983.

<sup>780</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 25 July 1983; *Mal (The Language)*, 1 Oct 1987, 24.

<sup>781</sup> H. Jung, *Sports, Korea Fantasy*, 155; Han-su Choi, *Does TV Benefit from Sports?*, Seoul, 1998, 49-53.

<sup>782</sup> Young-jin Choi, *The Politics of Korean Regionalism and Identity*, Seoul, 1999, 165-166.

<sup>783</sup> R. Holt and T. Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000*, London, 2000, 94.

After professional baseball was successfully launched in 1982, the South Korean football authorities hastily sought to set up a professional league to compete for the people's attention. They needed to find a way of increasing poor attendances; no domestic club match in 1982 attracted a crowd of more than 8,000.<sup>784</sup> The first year of professional football saw some success in this respect with attendances averaging 10,000 per game, a significant increase in popularity which was partly attributable to keeping ticket prices low and providing fans with more free gifts than baseball.<sup>785</sup> However, in stark contrast to baseball which grew increasingly popular, it proved impossible to sustain this improvement in match attendances.<sup>786</sup> The main reason for the failure to attract larger crowds was that the interests of the clubs were secondary to those of the national team. With three important international tournaments in the 1980s – the World Cup in Mexico and the Asian Games in Seoul in 1986 and the 1988 Olympic tournament, also in Seoul – the needs of the national team were a priority. This meant that clubs in the professional league were often without their star players and consequently the competition failed to capture the public imagination.<sup>787</sup>

When the national team had to play World Cup qualifying matches in 1985, it was decided to cut the number of league fixtures.<sup>788</sup> With attendances falling, many club owners argued that the league should be abandoned until early November, the end of the qualifying matches. However, this change of schedule would bring its own problems

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<sup>784</sup> Shin and Kim, *Football and its Brilliant traces*, 250-251.

<sup>785</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Nov 1983, 39; *Donga Ilbo*, 12 Apr, 17 May 1983.

<sup>786</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Aug 1985, 32-3; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 17 Nov 1987.

<sup>787</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, June 1985, 37; *Chosun Ilbo*, 5 Sept 1989.

<sup>788</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Oct 1985, 27.

because it would be more difficult to attract fans during the cold winter months.<sup>789</sup> Normally the professional football season in South Korea ran from spring to autumn. These intractable problems were compounded in 1986 when star players joined the national squad for training in March, just after the start of the season, and were free to play only three games for their clubs before rejoining the national team in July for the Asian Games. Attendances in 1986 was no more than 1,000 per game and professional football clubs were turned into a 'circus troupe' entertaining small crowds in small towns as they were denied access to larger stadiums in big cities which had been designated as football venues for the Asian Games.<sup>790</sup>

In these circumstances it was not surprising that the professional clubs did not take root and there are virtually no instances of football clubs being adopted by locals as 'their team'. It did not help that there was a regional imbalance with no professional club established in the south-west; all six professional football clubs were based either in Seoul or in the large ports of the south-east.<sup>791</sup> Moreover, the league did not help itself by failing to establish a regular programme of home and away fixtures until 1986.<sup>792</sup> Unlike professional baseball where most players were appearing for their local team, there were very few home-grown footballers with whom local fans could identify. In the absence of local patriotic support, the popularity of football clubs was far less than that enjoyed by baseball teams.<sup>793</sup> In reality, by the 1980s, professional football had too

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<sup>789</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25 Sept 1985.

<sup>790</sup> *Ibid*, 27 June, 4 July 1986; *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1986, 30-1, Dec 1986, 27.

<sup>791</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Dec, 1990.

<sup>792</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 31 Mar 1987.

<sup>793</sup> *Gwangju Ilbo*, 29 June 1987; Korea Baseball Organization(KBO), *The 1983 Korean Professional Baseball Yearbook*, Seoul, 1983, 256-261; *Chugan Sports*, 25 Apr 1984, 122-124.

much ground to make up. From the 1970s onwards the popular enthusiasm for high school baseball was immense. Four high school baseball tournaments sponsored by major newspapers were well established and attracted large attendances and extensive media coverage, while high school football did not appeal to the public at all.<sup>794</sup> Winning a major baseball tournament catapulted a school and its team into public prominence and enhanced local pride. High school baseball rather than football thus became the focal point for local communities. This local passion for baseball and its accompanying regional rivalry, particularly between the south-east and south-west, provided a framework in which professional baseball could flourish and establish itself as South Korea's most popular sport.<sup>795</sup>

### **(5) The 1986 World Cup and the making of 'FC Korea'**

Qualifying for the World Cup finals was an elusive dream for South Korea during the 1970s, although much effort was made to fulfill this ambition. However, the possibility to reach the finals grew in the 1980s as the result of the expansion of the finals from a sixteen to a twenty-four-team contest in which Asia/Oceania and Africa's representation doubled to two countries apiece.<sup>796</sup> This change had been proposed by Havelange partly to attract support from African and Asian countries in the FIFA Presidential Election of 1974.<sup>797</sup> There was much apprehension in Europe when the new format was announced in 1979 and fears that it would dilute the quality of the competition. British

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<sup>794</sup> Ibid, 30 Jan 1980, 32-33; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 June 1975.

<sup>795</sup> J. Lee, *The Peculiar Relationship between Regional Antagonism and Korean Baseball: 1970s-1980s*, De Montfort University, MA dissertation, 2008, 39-87; *Joongang Ilbo*, 2, December, 1989.

<sup>796</sup> Lanfranchi et al, *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, 230.

<sup>797</sup> Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 67.



journalist Brian Glanville was especially outspoken and rebuked Havelange for selling World Cup finals places to the 'Afro-Asians and their ilk'.<sup>798</sup> However, South Korea again failed to qualify for the 1982 World Cup in Spain, with Kuwait eventually advancing to the finals as the Asian representative along with New Zealand representing Oceania. For the first time World Cup matches were broadcast via color TV in South Korea, albeit recordings rather than live transmission, and this enhanced interest in the tournament, even though, as one newspaper editorial lamented, it was only possible to watch as neutrals. There was a vicarious satisfaction to be derived from watching Kuwait draw with Czechoslovakia, since it was believed that South Korea was probably as good as the team that had defeated them in such controversial circumstances.<sup>799</sup>

As far as South Korea was concerned, the arrangements for the 1986 World Cup were much more favourable. Oceania was excluded from the Asia preliminaries and, more important, the two places allocated to Asia were geographically zoned with one allocated to the Middle East and one to South-East Asia. This meant that South Korea and its neighbours would no longer be confronted with the problems of playing qualifying matches against Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.<sup>800</sup> Despite unexpectedly losing away from home to Malaysia, the South Korean national team reached the final qualifying round where they faced Japan with whom they were now fairly evenly matched. Although, historically, South Korea had dominated in head-to-head confrontations with Japan to the extent that any defeat – such as that inflicted in the 1982 Asian Games - was regarded as a shock, Japanese football was now on an upward

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<sup>798</sup> Glanville in *World Soccer*, March, 1982, 30, cited in Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 99.

<sup>799</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 15 Jun 1982; 10 Jul 1982.

<sup>800</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 May 1984; Goto, *Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, Tokyo, 1997, 66.

curve.<sup>801</sup> In the early 1980s, the Japanese national side benefited from the arrival of a new generation of footballers possessing highly-developed individual skills and therefore represented a serious threat to the South Koreans.<sup>802</sup> The match generated enormous interest in both Japan and South Korea and the first leg at the Tokyo National Stadium sold out, the first time in a decade that this had happened. In the end, South Korea re-asserted its ascendancy, qualifying for the finals in Mexico by winning 2-1 in Tokyo and 1-0 in Seoul. Thus South Korea qualified for the final stages of the competition for the first time since 1954.<sup>803</sup> Significantly, defeat prompted the Japanese to look to South Korea as a model and the first seeds of professional football in Japan, which finally arrived in 1993, were sown at this time.<sup>804</sup> Whatever the limitations of South Korean professional football – and there were many – it seemed to have helped the national team to qualify for the final stages of FIFA's most prestigious tournament.<sup>805</sup>

In South Korea qualification raised the level of public interest and also the level of expectation; seventy-one per cent of South Koreans polled before the start of the finals predicted that their team would advance to the second round of 1986 World Cup.<sup>806</sup> It certainly helped that the national side could call on the services of Cha Bum Keun, who had scored seventeen goals in the German *Bundesliga* during the 1985-86 season and was widely regarded as the best footballer South Korea had ever produced.<sup>807</sup> The European media, however, was inclined to write the South Koreans off; *The Times* in

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<sup>801</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 27 Nov 1982.

<sup>802</sup> Goto, *Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, 72-5; *Wolgan Chukgu*, Sept 1985, 28-31.

<sup>803</sup> Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 242-43; KFA, *100-year History of Korean Football*, 526-528.

<sup>804</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 4 Nov 1985; S. Kawabuchi, *Grabbing the Rainbow*, Tokyo, 2006, 35-46.

<sup>805</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, Dec, 1985, 38.

<sup>806</sup> *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 30 May 1986.

<sup>807</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 28 Apr 1986; Goto, *Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, 76.

London observing that the South Koreans ‘will be hoping merely to restrict the goals they concede to tolerable respectability’.<sup>808</sup> Drawn in a very tough group, South Korea managed to perform respectably, drawing with Bulgaria (1-1) but losing to the eventual champions Argentina (3-1) and Italy (3-2).<sup>809</sup> Nevertheless South Korean football was still hard to evoke any positive response from Western critics and *The Times* was particularly scathing in reporting the match between Argentina and South Korea, arguing that it had proved that South Korea was a long way from becoming a major force in world football.

*South Korea should stick to karate [sic] ... South Korea gave substance to the argument that even as the legitimate representatives of Asia, they have no right to be in a world championship ... They were naïve, consistently misjudged the flight and pace of the ball in an amateurish way and compensated for this deficiency only with the vigour of their running and physical challenge.*<sup>810</sup>

Ironically, in the light of these comments, England also lost to Argentina by three goals to one in the quarter finals.

Though the South Korean team returned home after the group stage the 1986 World Cup was a turning point in that it marked the beginning of the social phenomenon of supporting ‘FC Korea’ in international matches. During the qualifying rounds there was much evidence that public interest was at level that it had not reached previously

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<sup>808</sup> *The Times*, 26 May 1986.

<sup>809</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 530-531.

<sup>810</sup> *The Times*, 3 June 1986.

prompting the KFA to switch home matches to a larger stadium in order to cope with the demand for tickets. Gate receipts for the game against Japan at Seoul were the largest in South Korean sports history.<sup>811</sup> Fans showed an unusually high level of engagement, some telephoning the KFA when it began to rain on the morning of the match against Malaysia to demand that the pitch be covered so as not to give South Korea's opponents the advantage of playing in familiar wet conditions.<sup>812</sup> The KFA's decision to cover the pitch with plastic as an emergency measure was in part a response to this kind of pressure.<sup>813</sup> The popularity of World Cup live coverage on television was also unprecedented. More than half the population of South Korea watched live matches of their team, even though they were generally televised at the break of day due to a time difference between Mexico and South Korea.<sup>814</sup> Television advertising rates for the South Korean games were more expensive than for 'News Desk', the most popular prime-time programme of the day.<sup>815</sup> The Korea Telecommunication Authority made a handsome profit from a campaign urging people to sending encouraging telegram messages to the national team in Mexico.<sup>816</sup>

Why did such World Cup fever grip the nation? The answer may lie in the fact that qualification for the World Cup finals after a gap of thirty-two years was seen by the South Korean people as a significant achievement in itself, but the timing was also an important factor. For the South Korean national team to represent the country at such

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<sup>811</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, May 1985, 94; *Donga Ilbo*, 29 Oct 1985

<sup>812</sup> *Wolgan Chukgu*, June 1985, 28; KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 381-382, 465-466.

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid*, June 1985, 26.

<sup>814</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 21 May 1986; *Donga Ilbo*, 3 June 1986.

<sup>815</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 3 June 1986.

<sup>816</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 June 1986.

a high-profile international event tapped into a prevailing sense of enhanced national prestige following two decades of miraculous economic progress which was especially powerful during the build-up to the 1988 Seoul Olympics.<sup>817</sup> The reason why seventy-one per cent of South Koreans audaciously predicted that their team would make the second round could be seen as an expression of self-confidence in the growing strength of their nation state.<sup>818</sup> Simply getting to Mexico helped to satisfy the South Korean people's desire that its achievements since the Korean War – in particular the economic miracle it had experienced – should be more widely recognized. Thus it was important and satisfying to see South Korea taking its place as Asia's representative alongside the major football powers of the world. We should also reflect here on the capacity of sport, especially football, to serve as a vehicle for expressions of national identity. 'The imagined community of millions', Eric Hobsbawm has famously observed, 'seems more real as a team of eleven named people'.<sup>819</sup> This was what South Koreans seemed to discover for themselves as they followed their team in the 1986 World Cup.

While South Korean football was making significant progress in the 1980s, the condition of North Korean football remained largely unchanged except that new criteria were used to guide the selection of players for the national team when its period of suspension from international competition ended. North Korea became increasingly obsessed with size – tall players with a large build were preferred – which made their national team more powerful but less skillful.<sup>820</sup> The results were generally

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<sup>817</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 4 Dec 1985.

<sup>818</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 31 May 1986.

<sup>819</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge, 1990, 143.

<sup>820</sup> Goto, *Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, 37.

disappointing. Though the return of international matches was keenly anticipated, size and physical fitness were not enough and North Korea was defeated by Japan over two legs in the World Cup qualifying round in 1985.<sup>821</sup> The power and energy of North Korean football did bring one victory in the 1986 King's Cup in Thailand, thanks mainly to Kim Yong Nam, one of the new generation of tall North Korean players, who set up two goals in the final against Denmark's August Gymnastic Football Club.<sup>822</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, ideologically faithful as ever, argued that this win could be attributed to the Party's special treatment of elite North Korean footballers, who were rewarded for their efforts with apartments and colour TV sets; it also argued that a foundation for further success had been established.<sup>823</sup> However, success never came for the footballers of North Korea's increasingly isolated communist state.

## **(6) Conclusion**

The fear of defeat provides the key to understanding the football relationship between North and South Korea in the period 1974-91. Firstly, during the 1970s, it was South Korea that felt anxiety over at the prospect of any defeat that might be inflicted by its ideological enemy. However, this apprehension rapidly waned over the course of the next ten years or so after the South Korean national team defeated North Korea for the first time in 1980 and when the latter was suspended from international football for two years after the referee had been violently attacked at the end of a match at the 1982 Asian Games.

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<sup>821</sup> Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 238-240; *Chosun Shinbo*, 12 Mar 1985.

<sup>822</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 14 Mar 1986.

<sup>823</sup> *Ibid*, 27 Apr 1986.

When North Korea resumed international matches and played in the 1986 World Cup preliminaries, it was clear that it had been adversely affected by the two-year ban. A South Korean coach who watched their matches against Japan observed that the North Korean football team had deteriorated and now had a lower skill level than before the ban had been imposed in 1982.<sup>824</sup> As South Korean confidence in its own football grew there was little to fear from North Korea. It was now the North Korean leadership that feared an embarrassing defeat by the South and this was underlined in January 1983 when it was announced that North Korea would not participate in any sporting competition involving South Korea except for the Asian Games and the Olympics.<sup>825</sup> Though this did not happen, it indicates the high level of anxiety in the North Korean regime at the time. During the 1980s South Korea's football ascendancy continued with North Korea achieving success only in the King's Cup, effectively Asia's second-tier football competition. But whereas North Korea sent its senior national team to this competition South Korea sent only club sides or the national youth team so, to some extent, this success should be discounted.<sup>826</sup>

This reversal of the relative standing of North and South Korea as football powers, along with the simultaneous collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states and the termination of the Cold War, increasingly diluted the intensity and mutual animosity surrounding the Korean derby in the 1990s. At this time the South Koreans came to view the people of the North as their compatriots. Indeed, the South Korean football coach declared openly that South Korea should help the North to qualify for the 1990

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<sup>824</sup> *Kyungyang Shinmun*, 22 Mar 1985.

<sup>825</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 20 Jan 1983.

<sup>826</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 2, 7 Mar 1987.

World Cup finals by defeating UAE in the Asian qualifying round, even though the South had already secured their berth.<sup>827</sup> Such statements signaled that the South Koreans no longer saw the North as their main enemy, particularly in the world of football. Under these new and friendlier circumstances South and North Korea played the Unification Football Championship matches in 1990, and a year later, unified North-South team was sent to the FIFA World Youth Football Championship. But this mood of unprecedented amiability and co-operation did not last very long and relations between North and South Korea soon worsened as we shall see in the next chapter.

It did not help that North Korea were regarded as ‘bad boys’ in international football circles after their unsportsmanlike conduct in 1982. However, in mitigation, it could be argued that the North Korean footballers were under extreme pressure at the 1982 Asian Games, their compatriots in other sports having underperformed. Given that football was considered to be the ‘King of sports’ in North Korea, and its potential value to the regime for propaganda purposes, it is not surprising that there was an explosion of anger and frustration, especially as it underlined the North Korean claim that the referee had been bribed by their opponents. The North Korean government was always aware of the propaganda value of football. This was something it had learned from 1966. While discussing the possibility of co-hosting the 1988 Olympics remained on the table they even suggested that the Olympic football tournament should be staged in North Korea.<sup>828</sup>

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<sup>827</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 28 Oct 1989.

<sup>828</sup> Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), Urbana and Chicago, 2002, 165-166; KSA, *A 70-Year History of the Korean Sports Association*, Seoul, 1990, 406.



Around the same time, South Korean football represented their playing style to the world. The South Korean youth team that reached the semi-finals of the 1983 FIFA Youth Championships, owed its success largely to its reserves of stamina developed over a long period of intensive fitness training. This proved especially useful in the high-altitude conditions of Mexico; indeed, there was no option given the relentless running game that the South Korean 'Red Devils' played. The type of football played by the South Korean youth team in 1983 was very similar to that which had been played by the North Korean senior team at the 1966 World Cup; it was based on developing the endurance required to run at the same unrelenting pace from the kick-off to the end of the match. It seemed that a distinctive (North and South) Korean style of football with the accent on building physical strength so as to sustain fast and industrious movements on the pitch for the full ninety minutes was being crystallized in the international arena. There were, of course, discernible differences between the football styles of the North and South; North Korea relied totally on physical strength while there was some room in the South Korean team for individual flair. However, these differences were only apparent when the two teams played against each other, which did not happen very often in this period. Therefore, though it might be suggested that the political ideologies prevailing on either side of the North-South border from the early 1950s shaped the playing style of the two national teams, it could also be argued that it was what the two Koreas had in common that was more important and that there was a distinctive Korean approach to the game that could be traced back to the Japanese colonial era.

Though this distinctively Korean approach to the game had its limitations it was sufficient to carry South Korea to the World Cup finals in Mexico in 1986. By this time, South Korean football at the highest level had been professionalized, a structural shift that was funded at club level largely by the *Chaebols*. Clubs financed by large corporations found it more difficult to establish roots in the communities where they played, certainly it was more difficult than for baseball clubs which grown organically through their strong connection with the school system. Thus, as far as most South Koreans were concerned it was the national team that captured their interest and imagination. It was often said ‘two faces of South Korean football’ – the domestic game, which attracted little interest, and ‘FC Korea’, the senior representative team, that picked up support in 1985-86 ‘when the World Cup phenomenon swept across the nation.’<sup>829</sup> For South Koreans, reaching the 1986 World Cup finals was an important signifier of how far they had come and how much they had achieved since the Korean War and of the relatively high place that their ‘sports republic’ now occupied in the world. It allowed them to project their national pride and distinctive identity onto a global screen. However, it is worth reflecting on the role of contingency here as this would not have been possible if the World Cup finals had not been expanded to accommodate twenty-four teams and if the Asian qualifying group had not been divided into two separate zones, allowing South Korea to avoid some powerful footballing nations in the Middle East and to qualify as the champions of South-East Asia.<sup>830</sup>

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<sup>829</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 5 Nov 1985.

<sup>830</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football*, (1986), 442, 475.

### **'Again 1966': the two Koreas and the 2002 World Cup, 1992-2002**

The idea of Japan and South Korea co-hosting the 2002 World Cup finals emerged from the politics of the bidding race. Competition to stage the first World Cup finals to be held in Asia was so intense that it raised anxieties that it might severely damage relations between the two countries. Although Japanese football officials were generally opposed to the idea of co-hosting, some Japanese politicians were favourable. Initially, public opinion in South Korea, where Japan had been hitherto viewed as an arch-rival rather than as a potential partner, suggested that co-hosting was unacceptable, though once FIFA had made the decision, it was generally welcomed and viewed as a diplomatic victory for South Korea, whereas in Japan the outcome was seen as an embarrassment. At one time it had seemed certain that the 2002 tournament would be hosted by Japan alone but the internal politics of FIFA created a situation in which the Japanese were forced to compromise at the last minute.<sup>831</sup>

The 2002 World Cup brought national euphoria for the people of South Korea and its significance had implications beyond football itself. Enthusiastic support for the national team in front of gigantic public screens turned the streets into football stadiums as South Korea progressed to the semi-final. This nationwide phenomenon was portrayed as providing evidence that South Korea had overcome the IMF(International Monetary Fund) crisis that had inflicted financial difficulties its people since 1997. The

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<sup>831</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 June 1996; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 2 June 1996; Goto, *A History of Japanese Soccer*, 297-299; Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 132-133.

achievements of the South Korean team was a legitimate source of national pride and its Dutch coach Guus Hiddink was widely praised for his democratic and meritocratic approach which involved breaking down the rigid hierarchical order in the national team and defying the old boy network in selection policy.<sup>832</sup> Hiddink's methods were widely discussed in the South Korean media and it was often argued that he had set a global standard which South Korea should seek to emulate in other areas.<sup>833</sup> Meanwhile it was especially important that the 2002 World Cup offered an opportunity for the younger generation of South Koreans to demonstrate that it was a significant cultural and social force. In some ways this anticipated the Presidential election of December 2002, the outcome of which was profoundly affected by the young and their internet culture.<sup>834</sup>

The North Korean experience was quite different. Men's football had ceased to function as a key propaganda tool after the humiliation of the national team in the 1994 World Cup preliminaries and for many North Koreans was simply a happy reminder symbolizing the 'good old days'. With the support of the party, women's football and men's basketball now assumed the place that men's football had previously occupied. This new order in North Korean sport largely coincided with the emergence of a strategy of brinkmanship in foreign policy driven largely by the regime's dangerous but effective nuclear programme, one of the last options available for demonstrating that it remained a power to be taken seriously. In its own way North Korean women's football served the same purpose as it became the dominant force in Asia in the early twenty-first century. The regime took every opportunity to use the achievements of its women's

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<sup>832</sup> Kang, *Football is Korea*, 245-246.

<sup>833</sup> *Hanguk Gyungjae Shinmun*, 26 June 2002.

<sup>834</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Dec 2002.

team for wider propaganda purposes though it seems likely that only those not suffering from North Korea's food shortages would have been in a position to celebrate.

This chapter begins with the 1994 World Cup preliminaries since it was a starting point of the bidding race between South Korea and Japan and also marked a watershed in North Korean football. An analysis of the winding road leading to the co-hosting the 2002 World Cup follows; what this signified both south and north of the border is also considered. Attention will then be given to explaining as to how an ordinary South Korean team was able to achieve extraordinary results in 2002 and the wider significance of successfully co-hosting the tournament. Finally, developments in North Korea, where the emphasis shifted from men's to women's football as the new torch-bearer of national pride, will be considered.

### **(1) The Miracle in Doha**

The prospect of holding the World Cup finals in Asia was first glimpsed at the very beginning of the 1990s when it was announced that Japan would inaugurate a professional football league in 1993. The 'J-League' was an immediate success and Japan was overtaken by a wave of enthusiasm for football; some fixtures were sold out four months in advance.<sup>835</sup> Even before the start of the league, however, football's new popularity in Japan was evident when the Asian Cup was held in Hiroshima in 1992. Previously, there had been very little interest in the Asian Cup which took place in the

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<sup>835</sup> Light and Yasaki League Football and the Rethinking of Regional Identity in Japan, 36; Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 217.

same year of Olympics.<sup>836</sup> In 1988 Japan had been content to send a team of college footballers, media interest had been minimal and not a single journalist traveled with the team. However, in 1992, the situation had changed dramatically. Football enthusiasts from all over Japan gathered at Hiroshima; they showed their support for the team by singing and synchronized clapping in all stands and there were unprecedented celebrations after the victory over Saudi Arabia in the final.<sup>837</sup> Football had not been so popular in Japan since the national team had won a bronze medal at the Mexico City Olympics in 1968.

The idea that South Korea might stage the 2002 finals surfaced at about the same time. It was broached by Kim Young Sam during his successful presidential election campaign in 1992, and was also taken up by Chung Mong Joon, the KFA's president, who was also a congressman with serious political ambitions of his own.<sup>838</sup> Despite some press criticism that the idea of South Korea staging the tournament was unrealistic it was clear from the start that it had some political mileage, not least because it involved a strong element of rivalry with Japan.<sup>839</sup>

In the mid 1990s, the South Korean media viewed the newly established and instantly popular J-league with both curiosity and envy. There was surprise that professional football had succeeded in a country where baseball had long been regarded as its national sport.<sup>840</sup> However, it was also recognized that this was linked to the strength of

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<sup>836</sup> Goto, *A History of Japanese Soccer*, 272.

<sup>837</sup> Goto, *Future Centuries of Japanese Soccer*, 120-121; *History of Japanese Soccer*, 276.

<sup>838</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 22 Dec 1992; 13 Jan 1993.

<sup>839</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 2 Apr 1993.

<sup>840</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 20 Jan 1994.

Japan's economy which generated the resources required to attract foreign football stars, such as Gary Lineker and Zico, to J-League clubs.<sup>841</sup> When the preliminary round for the 1994 World Cup began, curiosity and envy turned to alarm as South Korean football pundits noted that the J-League had led to a rapid improvement in the quality of Japan's national team. For many South Koreans it was especially important to maintain the dominance established over their former colonial oppressors on the football field.<sup>842</sup>

The 1994 World Cup Asian final qualification round held at Doha in October 1993 featured six teams: Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, South and North Korea, and Japan. It attracted a good deal of media attention around the world, firstly because it brought together teams from so many nations that were hostile to each other, and secondly because three of the teams represented nation states that were fiercely anti-American, raising questions about the finals which were to be staged in the USA.

*Iran and Iraq are perpetual adversaries, North and South Korea share the world's most heavily-armed border and, in the absence of a peace treaty, are still technically at war. Saudi Arabia, from where the allied coalition struck at Iraq during the Gulf War is another contender ... The top two teams will advance to next June's World Cup finals in the United States- a bitter foe of Iraq, Iran and North Korea and a staunch ally of Japan, South Korea and Saudi Arabia.*<sup>843</sup>

What made the tournament an even more interesting prospect was that the six teams were evenly matched with South Korea's coach predicting at the start that chances were

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<sup>841</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2 May 1993.

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid*, 11 Apr 1993.

<sup>843</sup> *The Straits Times*, 14 Oct 1993.

'equal for all the teams'.<sup>844</sup>

South Korean-Japanese rivalry was another factor that had to be taken into account from the start as the KFA had resented the successful Japanese lobbying which had resulted in the previous qualifying round being held in Qatar.<sup>845</sup> As the tournament reached its climax South Korea suffered a 1-0 defeat to Japan, the first Japanese success against what the *New York Times* called their 'historically more powerful soccer neighbor' in a World Cup qualifying match since 1954.<sup>846</sup> While an estimated 1,000 Japanese fans celebrated at the stadium, live television coverage achieved highest viewing rates in Japanese football history, a further indication of the popularity that the game now enjoyed in Japan. Miura's winning goal 'must live in national memory', a Japanese sports daily noted.<sup>847</sup> For the South Koreans, this result was seen as a disaster; for one journalist it was 'the second national humiliation day', the other having occurred in 1910 when Korea had lost its sovereignty to Japan.<sup>848</sup> Although the South Korean press criticized the performance of its own team there was awareness that Japanese football had benefited from a concerted national drive which incorporated professionalization, the J-League, extending invitations to world-class national teams from Europe and South America and hiring a foreign coach for the national team. Japan's ambition to stage the 2002 World Cup was part of the same drive.<sup>849</sup>

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<sup>844</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 10 Oct 1993; *The Straits Times*, 14 Oct 1993.

<sup>845</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 20 Oct 1993.

<sup>846</sup> *New York Times*, 26 Oct 1993.

<sup>847</sup> *The Straits Times*, 26 Oct 1993; *Nikkan Sports*, 27 Oct 1993.

<sup>848</sup> *Kukmin Ilbo*, 26 Oct 1993.

<sup>849</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 26, Oct, 1993; Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 268-270.



With one round of the tournament remaining, the fortunes of South Korea were contingent on the results of other games.<sup>850</sup> Goal difference was likely to decide the two slots, with five teams still having a chance to qualify. South Korea completed their mission by defeating North Korea in the final match but it seemed that they had not qualified. They were rescued, however, when Iraq equalized in the last minute in their match against Japan. Thus the qualifying tournament ended with South Korea's success, qualifying on goal difference over Japan.<sup>851</sup> Such was the football rivalry between the two countries that while the South Koreans were delighted by the 'Miracle in Doha', the Japanese saw it as a tragedy.<sup>852</sup> After the match the flag flying in front of the Iraqi embassy in Tokyo was stolen by infuriated Japanese fans; meanwhile the Iraq embassy in Seoul was swamped by calls from South Koreans expressing gratitude and the KFA asked the government whether it would possible to invite the Iraqi national team to play in Seoul. As the South Korean government was anxious to avoid friction with the USA permission was not granted though a compromise was agreed which saw Jaffar, the scorer of the crucial Iraqi goal, invited to South Korea by a private sponsor and a football bearing his autograph exhibited at the KFA.<sup>853</sup>

Jaffar's goal was vital not only because it allowed South Korea to qualify but also because qualification added momentum to its bid to stage the 2002 World Cup. Chung Mong Joon openly asserted that South Korea, who had reached the final stages four

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<sup>850</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 27 Oct 1993.

<sup>851</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 29, 30 Oct, 1993.

<sup>852</sup> Jung-san Kim, 'Chung Mong Joon', in KFA, *Korean Football Hall of Fame*, Seoul, 2005, 305-306; Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 280-286.

<sup>853</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 6 Jan 1994; Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 286.

times, was more eligible than Japan, who had never qualified before.<sup>854</sup> He also announced that he was considering standing against a Japanese candidate for the FIFA vice-presidency in an attempt to strengthen South Korea's position within world football's governing body and raised the possibility of hosting the event jointly with the North in the hope that this might influence the outcome.<sup>855</sup> At this stage, however, Japan seemed to be well ahead of South Korea. Not only did Japan have the advantage of a superior infrastructure but Japanese companies, such as Canon and Fuji Film, accounted for a third of FIFA's official corporate sponsors.<sup>856</sup>

Failure in the 1994 World Cup preliminary round dealt a huge blow to North Korean football. In March 1993, North Korea had announced its withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which quickly led to widespread anxieties regarding the prospect of it acquiring nuclear weapons.<sup>857</sup> In these sensitive political circumstances football might have provided some useful propaganda opportunities but the national team – soundly defeated by both South Korea and Japan - never fulfilled the party's expectations.<sup>858</sup> North Korea's matches were reported in *Nodong Shinmun* and *Chosun Shinbo*, newspapers published in Tokyo and widely read by pro-North Koreans residing in Japan. These two dailies printed some optimistic previews before the qualifying tournament and reported North Korea's 3-2 victory over Iraq in their first round.<sup>859</sup> There were no further reports as the form of the North Koreans slumped and they lost

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<sup>854</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 31 Oct 1993.

<sup>855</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 3 Nov 1993; *The Straits Times*, 30 Oct 1993.

<sup>856</sup> *Nikkan Sports*, 29 Oct 1993; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 31 Oct 1993.

<sup>857</sup> Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, 279-280.

<sup>858</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 29 Oct 1993; *Nikkan Sports*, 22 Oct 1993;

<sup>859</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 3, 17 Oct, 1993, *Chosun Shinbo*, 6, 16, 18 Oct, 1993.

their remaining matches.

North Korea did not send any reporters to Doha. The *New York Times* suggested that the plan was to wait and see. If the national team failed, there would be no reports and the North Korean public would remain in ignorance.<sup>860</sup> However, it appears that this strategy may not have been entirely successful. *A Laurel Wreath*, a novel by a North Korean basketball player, published in 1999, sought to capture the mood of the nation, particularly Pyongyang, after the preliminaries, with passers-by looking depressed, a decrease in production at factories, and calls to the sports authorities from some citizens complaining the football's failure.<sup>861</sup> An interview with the author in *Chosun Shinbo* in 2000 confirmed that this impression of the public mood in 1994 was based on eyewitness accounts.<sup>862</sup>

The disappointing results of the North Korean national team in the qualifying tournament enraged the party at a time when it desperately needed to boost morale in a grave economic situation in which food and commodity shortages were rampant. Disappointment bred punishment. The national football coach and his assistants were interrogated for three days and criticized for lack of leadership and strategy. The coach, who would later defect to South Korea, was banished to a factory producing sporting goods and a number of players in the team that had played in the qualifiers would not be recalled to the North Korean squad.<sup>863</sup> As it happened, there was little opportunity for them to wear the national team's jersey when a ban on international football

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<sup>860</sup> *New York Times*, 15 Oct 1993.

<sup>861</sup> D. Kim, *A Laurel Wreath*, Pyongyang, 1999, 4.

<sup>862</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 21 Feb 2000.

<sup>863</sup> *Hanguok Ilbo*, 7 Nov 2000.

matches was imposed in 1994 when Kim Il Sung died and a period of mourning was declared. Although this came to an end in 1995 there were no full international matches for the North Korean men's team until 1998.<sup>864</sup>

## **(2) The race between Japan and South Korea to stage the World Cup**

It became clear that South Korea and Japan were seriously engaged in a battle for the 2002 World Cup when Chung Mong Joon and Murata Tadao became rival candidates for the AFC seat on FIFA's executive in 1994. When Chung won the election by virtue of his energetic campaign which involved visiting as many AFC member countries as possible, South Korea, for the first time, gained an important space to engage in football diplomacy within FIFA. It was also guaranteed one vote on the committee which would decide which country would host the World Cup finals.<sup>865</sup>

Having achieved this Chung's football diplomacy then concentrated on building an alliance with the UEFA whose president, Lennart Johansson, needed help from non-European members to challenge Havelange, FIFA's president.<sup>866</sup> A Brazilian business tycoon, Havelange had filled FIFA's coffers by taking full advantage of advertisers' growing interest in football in an age of globalised and media-led mega sporting spectacles.<sup>867</sup> However, by the mid 1990s, when he was in his eighties, his intransigent style of governance meant that he was increasingly unpopular, particularly amongst

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<sup>864</sup> Dong-gil Chung, *North Korean Sporting Hero*, Seoul, 2001, 273-274; *Donga Ilbo*, 31 July 1998.

<sup>865</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 15 May 1994; *Donga Ilbo*, 8 June 1996; J. Kim, 'Chung Mong Joon', 310-314

<sup>866</sup> O. Butler, 'Getting the Games: Japan, South Korean and the Co-hosted World Cup', in J. Horne and W. Manzenreiter (eds.), *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup*, London and New York, 2002. 47.

<sup>867</sup> Lanfranchi et al, *100 Years of Football: the FIFA Centennial Book*, 245-249.

European members, at a time when the days of his presidency were numbered.<sup>868</sup> With Havelange openly supporting the Japanese bid during the World Under-18 Championship held in Tokyo in 1993 by giving the impression to the Japanese that 'they were the firm favorites', it was a natural corollary that Chung and the European representatives would collaborate to pursue their mutual interests.<sup>869</sup>

Havelange began to intervene directly in the bidding race from 1995. He attempted to bring the World Cup decision date forward from June 1996 to the end of 1995 in order to place the South Koreans at a disadvantage; this move was blocked after Chung's protest supported by UEFA.<sup>870</sup> Chung seized the opportunity to undermine Havelange after he visited Nigeria and talked with its military dictator in 1995 after the Under-20 Championship had been cancelled due to an outbreak of cholera and meningitis.<sup>871</sup> Unfortunately, Havelange's visit coincided with the execution of dissidents by the Nigerian government. 'The timing could not have been worse', observed Chung. 'This visit has greatly damaged the image of FIFA'.<sup>872</sup> Chung, in association with UEFA, then attacked Havelange's 'backroom politics' when awarding television rights for the World Cup and tried to block the decision to give the contract to International Sports & Leisure (ISL) with which Havelange was closely linked. He believed that the fact that forty-nine per cent of shares in ISL were owned by Dentsu, a Japanese advertising agency, had helped to ensure Havelange's support for the Japanese bid.<sup>873</sup>

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<sup>868</sup> Butler, 'Getting the Games', 46-47.

<sup>869</sup> Sugden and Tomlinson, 'The 2002 and 2006 World Cup Bidding Wars', in J. Horne and W. Manzenreiter (eds.), *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup*, 60; *Donga Ilbo*, 12 Nov 1991.

<sup>870</sup> Butler, 'Getting the Games', 48.

<sup>871</sup> Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 125-127.

<sup>872</sup> *Reuter Information Service*, 15, Nov, 1995, cited in Darby, *Africa, Football and FIFA*, 128-129.

<sup>873</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2 June 1996; *Joongang Ilbo*, 30 Oct 1995; *Donga Ilbo*, 13 Dec 1995; 13 June

Despite the South Korea-UEFA alliance, Havelange continued to strive for the success of the Japanese bid. It was revealed that he had pressed the officials who inspected facilities in 1996 to see that they complied with FIFA standards to present a report in favour of Japan.<sup>874</sup> Havelange allocated four million dollars to the Confederation of North, Central and Caribbean Association Football Associations (CONCACAF) in order to secure the backing of its FIFA executive members for the Japanese bid. When he met eight members of the FIFA executive from Asia, South America and Africa weeks before the decision day, he urged them to thwart Europe by supporting Japan.<sup>875</sup> The Japanese kept pace with Havelange by promising sponsored football schools and pledging to grant a loan to help football development Africa, since African votes could be crucial to determine the host of 2002 World Cup.<sup>876</sup>

There were significant differences between the ways in which the rival Japanese and South Korean bids were organized. Influential and capable persons in every corner of South Korean society were brought in to support the bid. In Japan the campaign was dominated by football officials and businessmen.<sup>877</sup> It was led by major figures from the corporate sector just as Japan's economic glory days were coming to an end. Confronted by economic stagnation, they clearly saw the staging of the World Cup as a launch pad for overcoming enduring recession.<sup>878</sup> There was very little in the way of

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<sup>874</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 8 Mar 1996.

<sup>875</sup> *Ibid*, 30, 31 May 1996.

<sup>876</sup> Butler, 'Getting the Games', 48.

<sup>877</sup> *Ibid*, 44-45.

<sup>878</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 June 1996.

direct support from the Japanese government. This was partly due to ongoing political instability from the late 1980s when the conservative Liberal Democratic Party's long hegemony ended and was followed by a succession of weak governments.<sup>879</sup>

In South Korea the situation was quite different. The South Korean President, Kim Young Sam, wore T-shirts imprinted with '2002 World Cup' while jogging and lobbied various heads of state and FIFA executive members in support of his country's bid.<sup>880</sup> His rival, Kim Dae Jung, leader of the opposition party, who became President in 1997, showed his support by sending letters to all twenty-one FIFA executive members.<sup>881</sup> Many foreign branches of Hyundai – Chung Mong Joon was one of the sons of the company's founder - actively engaged in the World Cup project, gathering information about the bidding race and arranging meetings with important foreign football figures.<sup>882</sup> In February 1996, Protestants, Catholics, Buddhists, and some leaders of local religions conducted a campaign in favour of staging the World Cup and four eminent religious figures would be enlisted by the Korea World Cup Organizing Committee.<sup>883</sup> Not surprisingly, given the differences between the two campaigns, public support for staging the World Cup was much stronger in South Korea than in Japan. Whereas ninety per cent of South Koreans polled in 1996 were enthusiastic about the prospect; only twenty-nine per cent of Japanese were fully supportive of their country's bid.<sup>884</sup>

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<sup>879</sup> A. Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: from the Tokugawa Era to the Present*, New York and Oxford, 2003, 310-320.

<sup>880</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1 June 1996.

<sup>881</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 28 May 1996.

<sup>882</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 June 1996.

<sup>883</sup> *Ibid*, 23 Feb 1996; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 28 Dec 1996.

<sup>884</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 9 Feb 1996.

As the bidding competition intensified, the co-hosting issue surfaced amongst South Korean and Japanese politicians in 1995. The idea had been cautiously put forward a year earlier by the Japanese Foreign Minister Kono Yohei who was 'the dove' amongst Liberal Democratic Party members and wished to make good relationship with South Korea.<sup>885</sup> When leading figures from South Korea's ruling party met with some leading Japanese politicians, including Kono, in Tokyo in July 1995, they formed a consensus over the co-hosting idea. An influential Japanese daily, *Asahi Shimbun*, immediately gave its editorial support, expressing concern that that the intense contest to stage the World Cup could develop into a serious diplomatic conflict given the South Koreans' deep-seated antipathy towards Japan.<sup>886</sup> At first, however, the idea of co-hosting drew a hostile response from Japanese football officials who thought that following this politically-driven strategy was unnecessary, considering Havelange's strong support and Japan's superior economic power.<sup>887</sup>

There was also resistance to this idea in South Korea. Chung Mong Joon pointed out that it may well have been a Japanese ploy aimed at disrupting the South Korean bidding campaign.<sup>888</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun* accused a Korean politician who had discussed the co-hosting issue with some Japanese counterparts of defeatism, arguing that he had given the impression that the South Korean bid was weaker than the Japanese bid.<sup>889</sup> There was no place for international goodwill in this debate, since it was widely believed in South Korea that the Japanese suggestion was neither serious

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<sup>885</sup> Ibid, 22 Sept 1995; *Donga Ilbo*, 28 Dec 1996.

<sup>886</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 July 1995; *Asahi Shimbun*, 14 July 1995.

<sup>887</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 22, Sept 1995.

<sup>888</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 19 July 1995.

<sup>889</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 17 July 1995.



nor sincere. There was even concern that Japanese government could use the co-hosting idea to bury the unhappy past between the two countries without any official apology for the suffering it had caused Korea.<sup>890</sup> Not surprisingly, public opinion in South Korea was against the idea: eighty-one per cent of South Koreans opposed co-hosting with Japan in an opinion poll undertaken in 1995. What a vast majority of the South Koreans wanted was co-hosting with the North, not Japan.<sup>891</sup>

This prospect surfaced a few months later, in January 1996, with the surprising news that North Korea had suggested to FIFA that it should co-host the 2002 World Cup with the South, an unexpected offer that threatened to complicate the bidding contest. At first this development was welcomed in the South because it was consistent with the long-term aim of reunification and thus seemed to add value to the Korean bid. Havelange, salivating at the prospect of a Nobel Peace Prize, also gave some serious consideration to the idea.<sup>892</sup> However, eventually the South Korean government took a more sceptical view, especially when the North broke off its talks with the South.<sup>893</sup> Former Prime Minister, Lee Hong Koo who was actively involved in the bidding campaign along with Chung Mong Joon, argued that the discussion with North Korea in relation to co-hosting should only take place if and when the South was awarded the finals. The bidding process was difficult enough for South Korea without an additional complication courtesy of Pyongyang.<sup>894</sup> It seems that this cautious approach was justified. Having floated the idea, no official proposal from North Korea was

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<sup>890</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 July, 4 Aug 1995.

<sup>891</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 13 Mar 1995.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid*, 28 Jan 1996; Butler, 'Getting the Games', 45.

<sup>893</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 21 Jan 1996.

<sup>894</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 5 Feb 1996.

forthcoming and the idea was quietly forgotten even before it was formally withdrawn via a fax to FIFA shortly before the decision day.<sup>895</sup>

The rationale behind the North Korea's initiative remains unclear but there were good reasons for its government's interest in the 2002 World Cup. Faced with a major economic crisis, the North Korean leadership feared that its ability to control the people was weakening. From 1996 onwards, after the collapse of the rationing system and a devastating famine, many of those living in the north of North Korea made the journey across the poorly guarded border with China.<sup>896</sup> As revealed by North Korean defectors who had lived in Chongjin, North Korea's third largest city and the place most severely hit by famine, confirmed in interviews with American journalist, Barbara Demick, the food crisis was the main reason for their departure.<sup>897</sup> As state-enterprise coal mines and steel mills closed, there was a noticeable rise in small-scale commercial activity, such as market stalls, as the party lost its grip. Travel restrictions, for example, became difficult to enforce as the state bureaucracy became demoralized and open to bribery and corruption.<sup>898</sup> For Kim Jong Il, struggling to establish himself as leader after his father's death in 1994, any distraction which would help to restore the people's loyalty to the regime – especially if it reminded them of the heady days of 1966 – was to be given serious consideration if the revolution was to be protected.<sup>899</sup>

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<sup>895</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 29 May 1996.

<sup>896</sup> A. Lankov, 'The Natural Death of North Korean Stalinism', *Asia Policy* (1), Jan 2006, 105.

<sup>897</sup> B. Demick, *Nothing to Envy: Ordinary Lives in North Korea*, New York, 2010, 3-210; I. Hilton, 'How to Defect', *London Review of Books*, 10 June 2010, 26-28.

<sup>898</sup> Lankov, 'The Natural Death of North Korean Stalinism', 109-114.

<sup>899</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 21 Jan 1996.

Meanwhile, the bidding race between South Korea and Japan became more intense and more vicious with the rivals resorting to a smear campaign. When accused of bribing FIFA officials, South Korea countered by claiming that the J League was 'just an elaborate lobbying device to win the World Cup'.<sup>900</sup> However, by this time diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan had worsened considerably for other reasons after Japanese Foreign Minister Ikeda Ukihiko revived his country's claim to the disputed island of Dokdo (Korean)/Takehima (Japan) in February 1996.<sup>901</sup> Although it was a popular cause with the right wing in Japan the intervention seemed ill-timed and provocative; it could only make the football-related rivalry between the two countries more difficult.<sup>902</sup> Not surprisingly, when Japan and South Korea clashed in the Olympic preliminaries in March 1996, the South Koreans in the stadium cried 'Dokdo is our land!' and also 'for the World Cup in Seoul'.<sup>903</sup>

In these difficult circumstances, co-hosting began to be seen as a compromise solution that would give something to both sides and it was brought seriously into play when the eight European members of FIFA's executive met in April 1996. They were anxious that the bidding race was degenerating rapidly with 'cash in a plain brown envelope' the only missing element. At the same time, they were under pressure from the Japanese companies that now sponsored much of European football and needed to make concessions, despite Japan's alliance with Havelange, their mutual foe. The great attraction of co-hosting for European members of FIFA, therefore, was that offered a way of resolving the conflict between South Korea and Japan while enabling them to

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<sup>900</sup> *Washington Post*, 13 May 1996.

<sup>901</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 13 Feb 1996.

<sup>902</sup> *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 11 Feb 1996; Kang, *Football is Korea*, 245.

<sup>903</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 28 Mar 1996.

undermine Havelange who remained openly committed to the original Japanese bid.<sup>904</sup>

Having started behind Japan in the race for the 2002 tournament South Korea could afford to compromise. Chung Mong Joon was thus able to adopt a flexible stance: South Korea would accept joint-hosting with Japan if asked to do so by FIFA.<sup>905</sup> In contrast Japanese football officials continued to pin their hopes on a decisive vote in which Havelange's influence would prevail in their favour.<sup>906</sup> As the decision day approached, however, and it became clear that executive members from Europe, Africa and North and Central America favoured the co-hosting solution, Japan was in such a weak position that even Havelange was urging them to accept co-hosting or risk losing the tournament altogether and the details were agreed at a meeting between Miyazawa Kiichi (Japan) and Lee Hong Koo (South Korea) a day before the appointed decision day.<sup>907</sup> While the Japanese media saw this outcome as a defeat for Japan, the South Korean media saw it as a victory over the old enemy and also as a triumph for democracy over Havelange's autocracy within FIFA.<sup>908</sup>

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<sup>904</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 30 Apr 1996; Sugden and Tomlinson, '2002 and 2006 World Cup Bidding Wars', 58-59; Butler, 'Getting the Games', 48-49.

<sup>905</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 4, 25 May 1996.

<sup>906</sup> *Ibid*, 23 May 1996; 27, May, 1996; Goto, *History of Japanese Soccer*, 298; S. Moffet and C.S. Lee, 'Political Football: old wounds are reopened as Japan and South Korea battle for the 2002 World Cup', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 23 May 1996, 44.

<sup>907</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 31 May 1996; *Chosun Ilbo*, 2 June 1996; Butler, 'Getting the Games', 52; Gordon, *Modern History of Japan*, 313.

<sup>908</sup> *Sakka Magazine*, 3 July 1996, 38-9; *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 June 1996; *Donga Ilbo*, 2 June 1996.

### (3) The growth and development of women's football in North Korea

Meanwhile, North Korea had been focusing on a different game: women's football first established there in 1986. A statement issued by Kim Jong Il in 1989 set out the regime's intentions:

*Recently the level of our women's football may have risen a little .... Last year, our female footballers competed against Chinese female footballers in China and I think that we can win an international match soon if we perform better. We should send our team to international competitions even though they have no chance of winning. We must dispatch the female footballers to the Asian Women's Football Championship and to another international tournament to be held in Czechoslovakia. We need to establish a women's football team within the Abrok River Sports Club.<sup>909</sup>*

North Korea's growing interest in women's football may have been inspired by China, where it had expanded rapidly across the country in the 1980s.<sup>910</sup> Moreover, the success of Yanbien women's football team in the Jilin province of China which was entirely composed of girls of Korean descent, may have also encouraged the North Korean leadership to view women's football as a promising sport. Yanbien had won the National Women's Football Invitation Competition in October 1983 and took the fourth place in the First International Women's Invitation Competition held in Guangzhou in November 1983 when eight teams (Japan, Singapore and six Chinese teams) had

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<sup>909</sup> 'With regard to developing sports: Kim Jong Il's statement in front of the figures of the world of North Korean sports, 2, June, 1989', 334-335.

<sup>910</sup> F. Hong and J.A. Mangan, 'Will the "Iron Roses" Bloom Forever? Women's Football in China: Changes and Challenges', 49-50,

competed against each other.<sup>911</sup> The North Korean women's national team had drawn 0-0 in a friendly game against Yanbien in 1988 and this performance against one of the strongest women's teams in China prompted Kim Jong Il's optimism.<sup>912</sup>

Chinese women's football came to be a role model for the North Koreans to emulate and at the same time a rival which they would have to surpass in the near future. When the Chinese women's national team played an international in Pyongyang in 1990, North Korean spectators and football pundits were impressed by the great potential of their national team despite a 2-1 defeat. Football analysts noted that North Korea was not inferior to China in technique and physical ability and that the only disparity between the two teams came from the Chinese footballers' greater international experience. Over 30,000 Pyongyang fans who packed into Seosan stadium reveled in the first international women's football match ever played in North Korea. It was reported that they particularly admired the determination of their female footballers who were on average ten centimetres shorter than their Chinese rivals.<sup>913</sup>

However, despite Kim Jong Il's rhetoric, it was not until 1993 that the North Korean leadership began to take the women's game seriously. According to Moon Ki Nam, then coach of the women's team, Chang Sung Taek, husband of Kim Jong il's sister, who oversaw North Korean football generally in the 1990s, took no interest in women's football. His attitude changed, presumably on the orders of Kim Jong Il, after the failure of the men's team in the World Cup preliminaries held in October 1993. When North

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<sup>911</sup> 'With regard to developing sports', 151-52; Fan Hong and Mangan, 'Will the "Iron Roses" Bloom Forever?', 50.

<sup>912</sup> Choi et al, *Football History of Ethnic Koreans Living in Yanbien*, 209.

<sup>913</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 16 July 1990.

Korea participated in the Asian Women's Football Championship held in Malaysia in December 1993, Chang telephoned Moon every day to check on all matters pertaining to the North Korean team.<sup>914</sup> It seems likely that the decision, announced in September 1993, to include women's football in the Olympic Games from 1996, was also significant.<sup>915</sup> It was no coincidence that South Korean women's football was re-launched at the same time on the initiative of Chung Mong Joon with the first women's championship, the formation of the first company team by Inchon Steelworks, a subsidiary of Hyundai, and the establishment of school and college teams with the support of the Hyundai foundation.<sup>916</sup> However, women's football was probably stronger in North Korea than in the South at this time. When the national teams met in the 1993 Asian Women's Championship, North Korea defeated their Southern sisters by 3-0, finished runner-up in the tournament and thus qualified for the women's World Cup finals to be held in Sweden in 1995. In the end they did not play in Sweden after the sudden death of the 'Great Leader'.<sup>917</sup>

Although this meant that North Korea excluded themselves from international competition for a brief period until 1996, the domestic league for women's football never idled and its talent pool continued to increase in years. The top-division of the women's football league, with eight teams participating, offered each team twenty-eight matches. Every sports club throughout the nation began to set up women's football

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<sup>914</sup> Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010.

<sup>915</sup> *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 21 Sept 1993.

<sup>916</sup> *Chukgu Gajok*, June 1993, 10-15; *Donga Ilbo*, 3 Sept 1993; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 3 Dec 1993.

<sup>917</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Dec 1993; *Joongang Ilbo*, 11 Dec 1993; Interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010.

teams and there was a steep increase in the number of female footballers in schools.<sup>918</sup> Thus, on their return to international competition at the Asian Women's Football Championship in 1997, North Korea could still demonstrate exceptional ability at the highest levels of the game, allied to strong domestic base and rising popularity. By finishing as runners-up to China, North Korea qualified for the 1999 World Cup as representatives of Asia.<sup>919</sup> A year later it was clear that the gap between North Korea and China – Olympic silver medalists in 1996 – was narrowing. China – North Korea's role model as far as women's football was concerned – only just managed to beat them (1-0 after extra time) in the final of the tournament at the Bangkok Asian Games. Now the North Korean women's team could look to the future with confidence. As their goalkeeper said after the match, 'We are much younger than them. We will win over China someday'.<sup>920</sup>

These remarks provide a way of understanding how the dominance of Chinese women's football was being eroded in the years around the millennium, despite their national team finishing as runners-up in the 1999 World Cup. During the late 1990s, a lack of new players taking up the game contributed to the problem of an ageing national team; the average age of the Chinese team that won the Asian women's championship in 1997 was twenty-seven.<sup>921</sup> There was a strong prejudice in China against girls taking up football and often parents were not supportive.<sup>922</sup> Significant funding from the government or from a major sponsor was required if the women's game in China was

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<sup>918</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 Jan 1996; *Chosun Ilbo*, 28 Dec 2001.

<sup>919</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 16 Dec 1997.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid*, 21 Dec 1998; *Donga Ilbo*, 19 Dec 1998.

<sup>921</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 19, Dec, 1997.

<sup>922</sup> Hong and Mangan, 'Will the 'Iron Roses' Bloom Forever?', 58.



to remain healthy and the national team successful, but this was not forthcoming.<sup>923</sup> The primary focus in China was on men's football which enjoyed financial assistance from the authorities and popular attention from the media despite the disappointing record of the national team.<sup>924</sup> Moreover, from the 1990s, as China developed a market economy, there was little chance of rescuing women's football which failed to draw large crowds and, consequently, failed to attract big commercial sponsors, thus denying the game the funding it needed to develop at all levels. These two factors contributed to a decrease in the number of both junior teams and senior clubs in Chinese women's football.<sup>925</sup>

In contrast, women's football in North Korea enjoyed parity of status from 1993 and was better supported by the state than most other sports. While many athletes in North Korean sport clubs suffered on account of inadequate nutrition, its international footballers were provided with one-and-a-half kilogrammes of meat per day, a significant favour given the food shortages of the late 1990s.<sup>926</sup> It was one of many privileges that encouraged girls to take up football. Moreover, when the performance of the men's team slumped in the 1990s, the North Korean women's game took its place as the team sport which had the greater potential for the party's propagandists as they sought to enhance the regime's image abroad while boosting the morale of their impoverished comrades at home. The Kim regime's support for women's football encouraged many girls to take it up and North Korea's finest young female athletes

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<sup>923</sup> Ibid, 52; Williams, *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football*, 95-96.

<sup>924</sup> Dong Jinxia, *Women, Sport and Society in Modern China: Holding up More Than Half the Sky*, London, 2003, 132, cited in Williams, *A Beautiful game*, 89.

<sup>925</sup> Hong and Mangan, 'Will the 'Iron Roses' Bloom Forever?', 59-62.

<sup>926</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 28 Dec 2001.

were lured away from other sports, such as track and field. As a result the number of high school and college football teams increased which in turn led to an expansion of the top division of the women's national league from nine to twelve in the early years of the new century. Moreover, women's football teams in North Korea did not need to worry about attracting spectators and sponsors to keep them afloat. Under the still highly centralized socialist system, state and party support would be forthcoming as long as women's football could help the propaganda effort by performing successfully, especially at international level.<sup>927</sup>

Youth combined with strength were instrumental in defeating China in the semi-finals of 2001 Asian Women's Football Championship. North Korea's three goals were scored by Jin Byol Hee, a twenty-one-year-old striker with amazing agility.<sup>928</sup> As the South Korean referee observed: 'The North Korean players ran tirelessly for ninety minutes ... They were more energetic than the Chinese side in which most players were in their late twenties'. However, it was not simply a question of the youthful North Koreans beating the ageing Chinese. The victory owed much to systematic training routines designed to develop physical strength. One of their training programmes was to run up mountain called Baekdu, approximately 2,750 metres, and the highest peak in Korea.<sup>929</sup> Thus they were following the example of the North Korean men's squad which had performed heroically and surprised the world in 1966. The result was that the North Korean women's team of the late 1990s/ early 2000s was a well-drilled unit noted for swift movement and tireless running, characteristics that earned them the nickname

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<sup>927</sup> D. Jung, *North Korean Sports and Heroes*, 269, 272-273.

<sup>928</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 22 Dec 2001.

<sup>929</sup> *Tongil Hanguk (Unification Korea)*, Mar 2002, 42-43, published in Seoul.

*Chollima*.<sup>930</sup> Such methods, of course, were also popular with coaches in South Korea.<sup>931</sup> It would be no exaggeration to say that running up and down mountains was a distinctive feature of Korean football.

These methods brought success as the North Korean women's team won the 2001 Asian Women's Football Championship, the 2002 Asian Games tournament held in Busan, South Korea and then the 2003 Asian Women's Championship for a second time in 2003. For propaganda purposes these phenomenal achievements were attributed to the 'military first' policy pursued by Kim Jong Il since the mid 1990s; *Nodong Shinmun*, the party organ described the women footballers as 'sports soldiers for General Kim'. The military connection was not merely rhetorical. Several members of the North Korean women's national team - including the leading scorer at the 2003 tournament - Lee Geum Sook, played for army club.<sup>932</sup> Kim Jong Il's 'army first' strategy meant that the military authorities were now closer to the top of North Korea's hierarchical pyramid than representatives of the Workers' Party.<sup>933</sup> It also meant that the policy of further militarization (incorporating a nuclear programme) was given priority and this has been described as an 'anomaly for a communist regime', and a 'tragedy' for the poverty-stricken people.<sup>934</sup> To rally support for the regime at home Kim Jong Il stressed the importance of the 'revolutionary military spirit' and, in this sense, North Korea's female footballers were important role models as the people struggled to cope with energy

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<sup>930</sup> 'Sweet Sixteen: Group C- Korea DPR', *FIFA World*, June-July 2011, 66.

<sup>931</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 26 Dec 1987; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 12 Dec 1985, 16 Apr 1990.

<sup>932</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 21, 22, Dec 2001; 27 June 2003.

<sup>933</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 18 Oct 1999.

<sup>934</sup> Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun*, 446.

and food shortages.<sup>935</sup>

While women's football in North Korea became a source of national pride and was eulogized by the regime, men's football failed to recover from the slump which had begun when the team had been disqualified from the 1994. When the men's team participated in the 1998 Asian Games, their first international tournament in five years, they were eliminated at the group stage. They failed to qualify for the final stages of the Asian Cup in 2000, despite six months hard training.<sup>936</sup> Underlying these repeated failures were severe internal problems which left North Korean men's football short of talent at the top level. As Kim's sports novel, *A Laurel Wreath*, shows, coaching in North Korean schools tended to concentrate on collective team practice at the expense of developing basic individual skills. The preference was for players who possessed physical strength; over-age players were frequently selected in order to win school matches.<sup>937</sup> It was a short-sighted policy that meant that North Korean schools football in the 1990s rarely produced players with the necessary skills to progress to a higher level in the men's game and this hampered efforts to compete successfully at international level.

Indeed, it could be argued that when the results of the North Korean men's team eventually began to improve it was because of the important contribution made by footballers who had learned the game in Japan rather than North Korea, such as Yang Gyu Sa, whose goal-scoring talent proved crucial in the Asian Cup preliminaries held in

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<sup>935</sup> Hak-soon Baik, *A History of North Korean Power*, Seoul, 2010, 685.

<sup>936</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 12 Apr 2000.

<sup>937</sup> Kim, *A Laurel Wreath*, 76-77.

2000.<sup>938</sup> While some players from the expatriate community in Japan had been drafted into the national team since the 1970s they had played only a supporting role.<sup>939</sup> From the late 1990s they were used more frequently to cover the gaps as the supply of home-produced talent began to dry up. By 2010, when North Korea qualified for the World Cup finals after a forty- four year hiatus, it was widely recognized that the two Korean-Japanese players Jong Tae Se and Ahn Young Hak were a central part of the North Korean team.<sup>940</sup> This was a fragile basis on which to build a national team, not least because players travelling from Japan for international matches needed both an identity card issued by the North Korean government before they could play and a Japanese re-entry permit to return home.<sup>941</sup>

Men's football in North Korea also had to contend with the emergence of basketball as a national sport in this period. As interest in men's football waned, basketball took off in 1997 as the number of basketball teams in schools and factories leapt to 130; a basketball tournament for young workers, high school and college students was set up in the same year.<sup>942</sup> Basketball flourished as both a popular and an elite sport. One of North Korea's famous sports clubs, Abrok River, founded a top-quality senior team named Taepoong, ('Typhoon') and other sports clubs followed suit.<sup>943</sup> Basketball soon gave North Korean boys a new hero and role model, Lee Myung Hoon, the tallest basketball player in the world, who changed his name to Michael Lee in homage to

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<sup>938</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 12 Apr 2000.

<sup>939</sup> Mu-gan Shin, *Jainichi, Soccer, and Identity*, Tokyo, 2010, 173-174; interview with Moon Ki Nam, Seoul, 18 Oct 2010.

<sup>940</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 2 July 2009.

<sup>941</sup> *Seoul Shinmun*, 2 July 2010.

<sup>942</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 29 Aug 1997; Jung, *North Korean Sports and Heroes*, 286.

<sup>943</sup> Jung, *North Korean Sports and Heroes*, 288; *Donga Ilbo*, 1 Oct 1999.

American NBA star Michael Jordan.<sup>944</sup> Though Lee's hope of playing NBA basketball were thwarted, this son of a coal miner became North Korea's most celebrated sports personality and was rewarded by the regime with a modern apartment in central Pyongyang and a spacious car especially designed for his 235-centimetre frame.<sup>945</sup> It is not surprising that North Koreans began to see basketball as potentially more rewarding than football, especially for young men.

The attitude of North Korea's political leadership was also important; from the mid 1990s, 'the Dear Leader', paid particular attention to basketball. According to a story attributed to a North Korean defector, Kim was advised by a former basketball player that the game enhanced one's brain-power and immediately ordered players in the national team to give lessons to his sons.<sup>946</sup> Whether or not this is true, the party swung into line. *Nodong Shinmun* published a poster explaining that basketball was a game for everyone, not just members of sports club.<sup>947</sup> A film entitled *Family Basketball Club* was produced in 1998 and a song, *Basketball is a Nice Game*, was popularized.<sup>948</sup> These efforts to promote basketball were linked to a government campaign to make North Korean schoolchildren grow taller at a time when their average height was decreasing, presumably due to malnutrition.<sup>949</sup> Thus, in this period, conditions were difficult for men's football in North Korea which had to compete with women's football,

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<sup>944</sup> *Kyungnyang Shinmun, Donga Ilbo*, 15 Aug 1997.

<sup>945</sup> *Chollima*, Aug 1999, 89; a popular magazine published in Pyongyang.

<sup>946</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 14 Oct 2010.

<sup>947</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 24 Aug 1997.

<sup>948</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 1 Oct 1999; Myung-ja Lee, *North Korean Movies and their Modernity*, Seoul, 2005, 163.

<sup>949</sup> Min-seok Ahn, 'North Korean People's Leisure Pursuits and Sports Activities', in Korean Council for Reconciliation and Cooperation (ed.), *North Korean People's Daily Life and Popular Culture*, Seoul, 2003, 66-67.

where the national team enjoyed greater success, and also with basketball, which now enjoyed the support of the 'Dear Leader'.

#### **(4) The 2002 World Cup and the two Koreas: 'Again 1966!'**

As co-host of the 2002 World Cup finals, it was important that South Korea should deliver on the promises it had made during the bidding process. However, this was not achieved easily. In 1997, South Korea was confronted by a severe financial crisis and the government was forced to go to the IMF for an emergency loan. This led to doubts as to whether the construction of ten World Cup stadiums was feasible.<sup>950</sup> It did not help that other countries were so keen to fill the gap should South Korea fail. An article in *The Times* in April 1998 headed 'Korean crisis opens door for England' reported that the South Korean Prime Minister was about to recommend 'that plans to build new stadiums for the 2002 World Cup finals, to be hosted jointly with Japan, should be abandoned'. It went on to argue that 'unless Japan ... feels in a position to host the World Cup alone, then a continuation of the economic crisis could oblige Fifa [*sic*] to consider alternative venues'. Lennart Johansson of UEFA was said to favour England an alternative venue.<sup>951</sup> Having just secured Japanese financial assistance to build the World Cup stadium at Suwon, such reports could only cause dismay in South Korea and raise anxieties about whether the prospect of co-hosting the event was slipping away.<sup>952</sup> Eventually, after much debate at the highest political level, Chung persuaded President Kim Dae Jung that the planned construction of ten new stadiums should go ahead even

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<sup>950</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 22 Nov 1997; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 10 June 1998.

<sup>951</sup> *The Times*, 7 Apr 1998.

<sup>952</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 18 Apr 1998; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 8 Mar 1999.

though this required the introduction of austerity measures elsewhere to make the funds available.<sup>953</sup>

Meanwhile, there were other logistical problems to be resolved regarding the staging of the 2002 finals. Chung Mong Joon pointed out that timing posed significant problems. June and July were the rainy season in Japan and Korea; the weather in September was more suitable but there would be a clash with domestic and international club competitions in Europe and South America.<sup>954</sup> The ensuing debate gave *The Times* a second opportunity to raise doubts about South Korea's capability to stage the tournament and to express again its doubts regarding the stadium construction programme. However, the English daily overplayed its hand by suggesting that Chung was raising the issue of the weather 'as an excuse to withdraw from co-hosting the tournament'. This provoked a strong reaction in South Korea forcing the British government to make a formal apology.<sup>955</sup> The issue of exactly when to stage the tournament was not finalized until a FIFA executive meeting in September 1999. South Korea and Japan had by now accepted that the tournament would have to take place outside the football season for Europe and South America and proposed a 25 May start, whereas UEFA wanted to delay the start until early June. In the end it was agreed to begin the tournament on 1 June, ten days earlier than the start of the 1998 tournament in France.<sup>956</sup> For many elite players with European clubs this was unfortunate as it gave them little time to prepare with their national squads after the end of their season.

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<sup>953</sup> J. Kim, 'Chung Mong Joon', 336-338.

<sup>954</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 25 July 1998.

<sup>955</sup> *The Times*, 23 July 1998; *Donga Ilbo*, 28 July 1998.

<sup>956</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 23 Sept, 4 Oct 1999.



With these issues finally resolved, the KFA turned its attention to selecting an experienced foreign coach for the South Korean national side. Its first preference was Aime Jacquet, who had steered France to victory in 1998 but he turned down the offer. The KFA then looked to Guus Hiddink, coach of the Dutch national team in 1998 and he took up the post with the South Korean team in 2000.<sup>957</sup> While Jacquet had already fulfilled his dream with the talented French footballers, Hiddink needed a success to restore his reputation after recent failures in the Spanish football league.<sup>958</sup>

It took some time for Hiddink to win over the South Korean public. There were sarcastic references to a typical 'Hiddink score' after the national team lost 5-0 to both the Czech Republic and France.<sup>959</sup> *Donga Ilbo* took a dim view of his leadership, comparing him unfavourably with Troussier, the esteemed Japanese coach, who did not take long holidays and was famed for his diligence. It feared the embarrassment of South Korea being eliminated at the group stages while co-hosts Japan seemed likely to qualify for the second round.<sup>960</sup> In early 2002, a poor performance by Hiddink's team in the Gold Cup competition held in the USA caused criticism to intensify. The former national team coach, Park Jong Whan, whose intensive training methods had helped the South Korean youth team to reach the semi-final in the 1983 FIFA Youth World Cup, took the lead:

*He (Hiddink) does not know South Korean football. Given the low individual skill level of South Korean footballers, he should have focused on building teamwork and devising tactics but he*

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<sup>957</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 23 Nov 2000; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 25 Nov 2000.

<sup>958</sup> Kyung-ju Kim, 'Hiddink', in KFA, *Korean Football Hall of Fame*, 278.

<sup>959</sup> *Hankook Ilbo*, 30 Aug 2001.

<sup>960</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 23 Aug 2001.

*has not even selected his players for the national squad yet.*<sup>961</sup>

The fact that Hiddink's girlfriend came to stay with him during the Gold Cup was used to suggest that Hiddink was not the right man for South Korean football. As the coach of one of South Korea's professional clubs pointed out, Hiddink's liberal attitudes did not match the Korean preference for abstinence and total dedication.<sup>962</sup> Even so, the dismissal of Hiddink, however, was never discussed seriously, since the remaining time to the World Cup was too short.

Despite this hostile atmosphere, Hiddink carefully prepared the national team for the World Cup finals in his own way. It took some time before improvements were reflected in results but Hiddink was addressing some deep-seated problems, notably the hierarchy within the national squad which favoured senior players and the preferential treatment given to players from Yonsai and Korea, the two predominant universities in South Korean football, when it came to team selection. Hiddink tried to break down barriers within the squad, urging his players to communicate with each other directly and without deference on the pitch, irrespective of their ages, in order to bring them together.<sup>963</sup> He was also prepared to draft in relatively unknown footballers such as Park Ji Sung if it was in the interest of the team.<sup>964</sup> He also made important changes at a technical level confidently unveiling his 'Power Programme' in March 2002 to be carried out under the guidance of a newly-acquired Dutch physical trainer. This was designed, not merely to enhance stamina but to minimize recovery time. It involved

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<sup>961</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 6 Feb 2002.

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid*, 5 Feb 2002.

<sup>963</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1 June 2002.

<sup>964</sup> *Munwha Ilbo*, 5 June 2002.

applying a scientific approach to players' diet and jogging and stretching exercises as players warmed down after training or a competitive match.<sup>965</sup> This programme was designed to facilitate the formidable pressing and running game that South Korea employed successfully in 2002.

It was also important for Hiddink to address South Korea's inferiority complex in relation to teams from Europe as little had been done to improve this psychologically disadvantageous situation. When Hiddink requested a pre-tournament friendly match against World Cup holders France in 2000, the KFA resisted, fearing a crushing defeat.<sup>966</sup> For South Korea to improve, however, such matches were necessary and at Hiddink's insistence a match with France was staged just five days before the 2002 tournament opened. Prior to this match South Korea had already beaten Scotland and drawn with England, results which helped the players to overcome their fear of European opposition.<sup>967</sup> South Korean confidence received a further boost from the team's performance against France, rated by some as the best team in the world going into the finals, even though the match was lost 3-2. 'Now we are able to compete with any team', observed Park Ji Sung afterwards.<sup>968</sup> The South Korean public was also feeling more confident as doubts about Hiddink's approach were dispelled. A South Korean football-loving professor reflected this mood in a post-match newspaper column asking if 'you [the French] have ever been astonished as much since the day of the French

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<sup>965</sup> Ibid, 24 June 2002.

<sup>966</sup> J. Roelfs, *A Tale in June: Be the Reds*, (trans.), Hee-seung Yang, Seoul, 2003, 135-137.

<sup>967</sup> 'The Coaches: South Korea Guus Hiddink', *World Soccer*, May 2002, 38; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 22 May 2002.

<sup>968</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 27 May 2002.

Revolution'.<sup>969</sup>

When the tournament began, the positions of South Korea and France were reversed. While the defending champions (without Zidane who was injured) did not reach the second round, South Korea exceeded all expectations by progressing to the semi-finals. The co-hosted World Cup finals of 2002 were the first in which teams from five different continents including Asia, Africa, and North America reached the quarter-finals.<sup>970</sup> This amounted to a serious and unprecedented challenge to football's traditional world order dominated by Europe and South America. Indeed, the early departures of France, Portugal and Argentina the surprising success of countries such as South Korea 'led many to talk of a new world order'.<sup>971</sup> However, although the world order was changing, it is important to keep a sense of perspective. Many elite players arrived in South Korea fatigued from the physical and mental demands of the European football season. The French mid-field warrior, Patrick Vieira, who limped through the World Cup, explained that 'it is impossible to be fresh after 38 [Premier] League games and 17 Champions League games'. This was also the view of Franz Beckenbauer and FIFA announced that it was to launch an investigation into the possibility of 'burnout' among the game's big stars.<sup>972</sup> Soon after the World Cup, UEFA responded to these concerns by abandoning the second league stage of the European Champions Cup in a bid to lessen the physical burden on top players in Europe.<sup>973</sup>

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<sup>969</sup> Ibid.

<sup>970</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 20 June 2002.

<sup>971</sup> *World Soccer*, July 2002, 3.

<sup>972</sup> *Guardian*, 18 June 2002.

<sup>973</sup> B. Glanville, *The Story of the World Cup*, London, 2010, 389.

In 2002, many technically-gifted footballers exhausted by a long season and tighter pre-tournament schedule struggled to match less skilful but well-organized teams; and it certainly did not help that the tournament started just sixteen days after the Champions League final. Fitness levels thus became the most critical determinant of success and failure. South Korea was what one might call the best 'running team' in the World Cup in this regard and had clearly benefitted from a long and intensive training camp. With fifteen of South Korea's twenty-three squad players attached to domestic clubs it was especially advantageous that the start of the K-League season was deferred until after the World Cup in the interests of the national team.<sup>974</sup> Unlike their European counterparts Hiddink's players were not subject to competing demands as the KFA, as always, put country before club.<sup>975</sup>

The physical strength and superior fitness of the South Koreans, who had not won a single game in their previous five World Cup final stage appearances, carried them through to the knock-out rounds where they won astonishing victories over Italy and Spain, two of the great powers of European football. However, these two victories were controversial and the old world order did not give way without protest. After being defeated 2-1 the Italian team smashed up the changing room in anger and claimed that they had been unfairly disadvantaged when Totti was sent off by the Ecuadorean referee. Conspiracy theories began to circulate and it was claimed that South Korea was a corrupted country.<sup>976</sup> FIFA President, Sepp Blatter, also criticized the referee for dismissing Totti, arguing that the incident did not justify a red card, 'bearing in mind

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<sup>974</sup> *Munhwa Ilbo*, 15 Jan 2002.

<sup>975</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 14 Mar, 6 July 2002; Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 845.

<sup>976</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 21, June 2002.

that the same player had already been booked'. So bitter were the Italians after their defeat that the Perugia club president sacked Ahn Jung Whan, the South Korean, whose 'golden goal' had decided the match.<sup>977</sup> However, there was more sympathy for the Spanish than for the Italians. Italy had played defensively after taking the lead and scapegoating the referee helped to take pressure off the coach and the players.<sup>978</sup> Spain, beaten by South Korea 5-3 on penalties, also complained about a crucial decision which went against them in extra time when a goal by Morientes was disallowed by the Egyptian referee after what video replays confirmed had been an incorrect call by a linesman.<sup>979</sup> As *The Times* noted, 'South Korea are in the World Cup semi-finals, but they do not deserve to be there .... The departure of Spain may force people to recognize that this is becoming the World Cup of historic mistakes'.<sup>980</sup>

Yet, despite these controversies, there was much to admire in South Korea's progress to the semi-final. It was the incredible fitness level of the team that initially attracted the attention of football pundits and journalists. This was so striking that '[It] would be subsequently suggested that their exceptional stamina might have had chemical origins, but none of their players failed a dope test'.<sup>981</sup> *World Soccer* claimed that the South Koreans played bold attacking football with an 'unshakeable belief in their own destiny' from beginning to end.<sup>982</sup> After the win over Italy, the Japanese novelist, Murakami Ryu, coined the term '*Dokonikudansen* football' to describe the way that South Korea played;

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<sup>977</sup> *Guardian*, 21, June 2002.

<sup>978</sup> Glanville, *Story of the World Cup*, 402; '1966 revisited', *World Soccer*, July 2002, 65; *Bangkok Post*, 20 June 2002.

<sup>979</sup> *Ibid*, July 2002, 68; Glanville, *Story of the World Cup*, 403-404.

<sup>980</sup> *The Times*, 24 June 2002.

<sup>981</sup> Glanville, *Story of the World Cup*, 393.

<sup>982</sup> 'Figo and co humbled by vibrant hosts', *World Soccer*, Jul, 2002, 40.

this roughly translated as a sporting version of the hand-to-hand combat fought by commandos.<sup>983</sup> As far as the South Korean media was concerned it was 'fusion football', a combination of European stamina and know-how with South Korean speed and fighting spirit.<sup>984</sup>

However the most surprising element of the South Korean phenomenon was the extent to which it was embraced by the whole nation. The host nation's run to the semi-final generated a football frenzy which some claimed was unprecedented in the history of World Cup football. 'Home fans always get the most support at a World Cup but Fifa [*sic*] officials ... say they have seen nothing like the events in Korea', noted one foreign press report.<sup>985</sup> South Korea's matches were watched by an estimated audience of twenty-two million, many of them wearing the red shirts of the national team and gathered in front of giant screens or electronic bulletin boards set up by local authorities in the streets and other public spaces.<sup>986</sup> As the multitude of street supporters who watched South Korea versus Portugal swelled to reach approximately three million, numbers viewing on television at home actually fell.<sup>987</sup> Large screens and electric bulletin boards were beginning to establish themselves as an alternative to television sets in broadcasting global mega events to the public.<sup>988</sup> They did not merely represent new media forms but expanded the concept of sport as a commodity. FIFA extracted significant fees for the broadcasting rights for public viewing of this kind and,

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<sup>983</sup> Sung-bin Whang, *The World Cup and Japanese Portrait, and Korea as the other*, in T. Arimoto and H. Ogasawara (eds.), *Soccer's Poetics and Politics*, Tokyo, 2005, 191.

<sup>984</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 6, Jun, 2002.

<sup>985</sup> *Bangkok Post*, 22, Jun, 2002.

<sup>986</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 2 July 2002.

<sup>987</sup> *Hanguk Ilbo*; *Segye Ilbo*, 16 June 2002.

<sup>988</sup> *Munwha Ilbo*, 14 June 2002.

as at the stadiums, only products made by official World Cup sponsors could be sold at public viewing venues.<sup>989</sup>

This new cultural phenomenon of gathering in public spaces to cheer on the national team was evident even before the tournament started. South Korean fans took the initiative at Gwangwhamoon in Seoul and 'Red Devils' fan culture spread to a wider public during the pre-tournament games against Scotland, England, and France.<sup>990</sup> The Red Devils took their title from the nickname of the South Korean team that had been so successful at the U-20 World Cup in 1983. Most of them were in their twenties and had sufficient experience of the internet to turn a cyber community into a real gathering.<sup>991</sup> The enthusiasm of these young fans combined with the success of the national team encouraged people to leave their homes and take part in what was, in effect, a street festival. Their enthusiasm and exuberance was largely tolerated by the authorities, even when they climbed on public transport vehicles to celebrate a victory, whereas public viewing in Japan was suspended for fear that it might lead to disturbances.<sup>992</sup>

There were spontaneity and conviviality in these public gatherings of the South Korean 'red army'. Although it was predominantly youthful it encompassed people of all generations, who just wished to join this once-in-a-lifetime carnival.<sup>993</sup> Though it could

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<sup>989</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 4 June 2002.

<sup>990</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 11 June 2002.

<sup>991</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 12 June 2002.

<sup>992</sup> Soon-hee Whang, 'Football, fashion and Fandom: Sociological Reflections on the 2002 World Cup and Collective Memories in Korea', in J. Horne and W. Manzanreiter (eds.), *Football goes East: Business, Culture, and the People's Game in China, Japan, and South Korea*, London, 2004, 150-151.

<sup>993</sup> *Seoul Shinmun*, 20 June 2002; *Munwha Ilbo*, 14 June 2002.



be seen as a manifestation of excessive nationalism in that 'people tended to regard being quiet or supporting in one's own way as inappropriate in this particular setting', a consensus emerged as to why South Koreans were pouring onto the streets in such large numbers.<sup>994</sup> Football had provided an opportunity for South Koreans to join together as they emerged from the aftermath of the IMF crisis of the late 1990s when mass redundancies and harsh austerity measures had dampened national morale.<sup>995</sup> Moreover, lurking behind the frenzied support for Hiddink and his team was a desire for political and social reform and, in particular, a desire for meritocracy over cronyism. Hiddink's selection policy – based entirely on performance and without regard to age and social status – had struck a chord, both in South Korean business circles and more widely.<sup>996</sup>

The World Cup phenomenon had a profound impact on the presidential election that followed a few months later. Chung Mong Joon's decision to run for president was much indebted to his soaring popularity after the World Cup success.<sup>997</sup> Although he would lose to Roh Moo Hyun in an opinion poll to decide the sole candidate of the liberal and centre-right parties, much of youthful enthusiasm associated with South Korea's World Cup fever was converted into political capital which Roh put to good use in his campaign.<sup>998</sup> The younger generation's growing confidence saw the use of the internet for social purposes which had been so evident during the World Cup extended into the political arena. A Candle Memorial Ceremony after two South Korean middle

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<sup>994</sup> Whang, 'Football, Fashion and Fandom', 155; *Seoul Shinmun*, 1 July 2002.

<sup>995</sup> *Segye Ilbo*, 3 July 2002.

<sup>996</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 9 June 2002.

<sup>997</sup> *Kukmin Ilbo*, 22 Aug 2002.

<sup>998</sup> *Segye Ilbo*, 25 Nov 2002.

school girls had been hit and killed by a US armoured car, was organised by young internet users in November 2002. Widespread anger in South Korea, when an American military court acquitted the soldiers involved in the accident, prompted many ordinary people to participate in a peaceful demonstration.<sup>999</sup> In the presidential election held in December 2002, Roh Moo Hyan, the progressive liberal candidate, was carried to victory on a wave of youthful support boosted by support generated through posting on the web.<sup>1000</sup>

The World Cup fever in the South could be sensed across the border. Since 1990, a North Korean regional sport and entertainment television channel, *Mansudae TV*, whose main audience was in and around Pyongyang, had broadcast some recorded World Cup highlights at the end of every tournament, but all matches involving South Korea had been banned.<sup>1001</sup> Yet, in 2002, the *Pyongyang Broadcasting System*, the state radio station, supplied details of a South Korean footballer's goal celebration after scoring the equalizer in the 1-1 draw with the United States; however, the fact that this match was part of the 2002 World Cup was not mentioned. The North Korean commentary on the goal celebration suggested that it illustrated 'anti-American sentiments' and the 'grudge' still felt in South Korea after one of their speed skaters at the 2002 Winter Olympics had been disqualified and missed a gold medal after impeding an American opponent.<sup>1002</sup> It seems that the fact that this incident could be framed within the general context of anti-Americanism persuaded the North Korean authorities to risk broadcasting the details. It should be remembered that President Bush had declared in

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<sup>999</sup> *Seoul Shinmun*, 7 Dec 2002.

<sup>1000</sup> *Munwha Ilbo*, 20 Dec 2002; *Chosun Ilbo*, *Seoul Shinmun*, 21 Dec 2002;

<sup>1001</sup> *Kukmin Ilbo*, 3 June 2002; *Chosun Ilbo*, 10 June 2002.

<sup>1002</sup> *Hanguk Ilbo*; *Bangkok Post*, 16 June 2002.

February 2002 that North Korea was part of the world's 'Axis of Evil'.

A few days later there was another significant breakthrough after South Korea's stunning victory over Italy when North Korean state television, *Chosun Joongang*, aired an edited, hour-long recording of the match. Though coverage had been edited to remove any close-up shots of the crowd 'that might show the affluence, individuality, and character of the South Koreans', it was explained that the 2002 World Cup finals were being held in South Korea and that the victory had raised the morale of the South Korean people.<sup>1003</sup> Perhaps surprisingly, the North Korean commentator supported South Korea after Totti was sent off. He commented on the controversial ruling: 'The referee correctly dealt with his [Totti's] simulation to get a spot kick'.<sup>1004</sup> Support from this unexpected source resonated amongst the South Koreans who were unhappy with claims that they had only won because of biased refereeing.<sup>1005</sup> As the Korean (and English) proverb says, 'blood is thicker than water', and it seemed that this was true. The South Korean media began to focus on ethnic commonalities. One Seoul newspaper observed that North Korea's victory over Italy in 1966 and South Korea's in 2002 had something in common: the distinctive features of both North and South Korean football were speed and stamina.<sup>1006</sup>

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<sup>1003</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 26 June 2002; *Los Angeles Times*, 27 June 2002; *Segye Ilbo*, *Seoul Shinmun*, 25 June 2002.

<sup>1004</sup> *South Korea versus Italy*, broadcast by Chosun Joongang TV, Pyongyang, 23 June 2002; This video source has been accessed at Information centre on North Korea in Seoul.

<sup>1005</sup> *Munwha Ilbo*, 1 July 2002.

<sup>1006</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 22, June 2002.

*Chosun Joongang* TV went on to broadcast three more of South Korea's matches and observed that the team's top-four finish was a sign that the domination of the World Cup by European and South American countries had been broken.<sup>1007</sup> Why did the North Korean regime decide to broadcast South Korea's games? To a certain degree the decision reflected the improving diplomatic relationship between North and South after summit talks were held in 2000 and an increasing focus on ethnic ties. It should also be remembered that increasing contact with the outside world and advancing means of communication made it very difficult for North Korea to block all news of what was happening in the South. However, it seems most likely that Kim Jong Il's regime had seized an opportunity to remind the people of the high point of North Korean football history. A published letter from the president of the North Korean Football Association to Chung Mong Joon noted that South Korea's victories had allowed all Koreans to experience the kind of pleasure that Park Do Ik and his team-mates had generated in 1966. The fact that South Korea had beaten Italy, as their Northern brothers had done thirty-six years earlier, meant that this was a very suitable occasion for arousing nostalgic feelings amongst North Koreans.<sup>1008</sup> The Red Devils lifted up cards with a special message for the Italians, spelling out a message that would have been welcomed in Pyongyang: 'Again 1966'!

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<sup>1007</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 29 June, 3 July 2002.

<sup>1008</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 24 June 2002; *Donga Ilbo*, 1 July 2002.

## (5) Conclusion

If it had not been for the machinations of FIFA's internal politics the 2002 World Cup would probably have been hosted solely by Japan. South Korea was fortunate in this regard. Events on the field of play were also important. If it had not been for the miracle at Doha which allowed South Korea to qualify at Japan's expense in 1993 their bid would have lacked credibility. As the 2002 tournament progressed South Korea continued to outmanoeuvre their traditional rivals and former colonial masters. Japan, playing a more sophisticated passing game, reached the second round before they were eliminated; South Korea demonstrating a tenacious will to win advanced to the semi-finals in front of the most enthusiastic home fans in the World Cup history. As *World Soccer* observed, 'While Japan held their World Cup, Korea hosted theirs'.<sup>1009</sup>

While some of football's traditional great powers underperformed in 2002, a failure that probably owed much to the extreme pressures of European club football, the unexpected success of a South Korean team comprising players of average ability re-emphasized the importance of fitness level and rigorous organization.<sup>1010</sup> Locally, South Korea's performance provided a people who had become dispirited as a result of the harsh economic climate after 1997 with an opportunity to celebrate in an exuberant fashion. Viewing South Korea's matches on large screens in the streets and other public spaces created a new culture of fandom and taught the 'World Cup generation' how to bring crowds together via the internet. This had significant implications both socially and in terms of politics and was an important feature of the December 2002

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<sup>1009</sup> *World Soccer*, July 2002, 3.

<sup>1010</sup> 'Co-hosts with the most', *Ibid*, July 2002, 11; Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid*, 356.

Presidential election. (It might be added here that the football frenzy of 2002 was focused entirely on the national team and did not carry over into the K-League where attendances boomed immediately after the World Cup but quickly dropped to more modest levels, as indicated by an average match attendance of 5,640 by October.)<sup>1011</sup>

The 2002 World Cup also offered the two Koreas a short space of time in which they could share their national euphoria and pride as one ethnic race, rather than as ideologically-divided rivals. The South's victory over Italy reawakened the unforgettable upset which Park Do Ik and his North Korean colleagues had inflicted on Italy 1966. Placards on display during the game reading 'Again 1966' showed that 'South Korea was willing to borrow from the greatest moment in North Korean sporting history' and a strong sense of *deja vu* was turned into a reality.<sup>1012</sup> Primarily because they were able to use it to remind their own people of one North Korea's greatest sporting achievements, the authorities in Pyongyang took a positive view of South Korea's victory over Italy and permitted judiciously edited recordings of its remaining matches to be broadcast on the main state-controlled television channel.<sup>1013</sup> This may, as the North Korean match commentator hoped, have generated a pleasant nostalgic effect.<sup>1014</sup> At the same time, it may have reminded North Koreans of the relatively poor current state of their men's football team, now marginalized by the success of the women's team at international level and the emergence of basketball as a mass sport.

An article in *La Gazzetta Dello Sport* satirized Italy's recurring Korean nightmare, '[Twice] a Korean team has stolen the [World Cup] trophy from us. In that sense, Korea is a

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<sup>1011</sup> *Segye Ilbo*, 20 Nov 2002.

<sup>1012</sup> *New York Times*, 19 June 2002.

<sup>1013</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 26 June 2002.

<sup>1014</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 17 July 2002.

single entity'.<sup>1015</sup> Indeed, the two victories over Italy in 1966 and 2002 helped metaphorically to dissolve the border which had separated North and South Korea for so many years. However, the renewed sense of unity between North and South did not last long; it was rudely interrupted when Kim Jong Il's navy initiated a skirmish with its Southern counterpart in the Yellow Sea on the day of the third-place play-off between South Korea and Turkey. The consolation final began with a moment of silence for the South Korean who had lost their lives.<sup>1016</sup> However strong their ethnic and cultural links the two Koreas remained trapped by the ideological conflict from which they had sprung in the early 1950s.

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<sup>1015</sup> Cited in J. Spurling, *Death or Glory: the Dark History of the World Cup*, 180.

<sup>1016</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 30 June 2002; *Hankyoreh Shinmun*; *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 1 July 2002.

## **Conclusion**

Over the course of the twentieth century, from the Japanese colonial period via the Korean War to the end of Cold War, Korea has been completely transformed. Football has played its part in this process especially when social and political transition influenced by internal and external pressures took place. Its role and its social and political significance have varied over the years as times and circumstances have changed. At different times, the Korean people have either played or watched football for a number of reasons – because it offered a way of asserting independence, because it offered a vehicle for national or regional pride, because it offered economic advantages to employers and encouraged sociability in the workplace. However, it should not be neglected that many people in Korea have played or watched football for sheer pleasure and with great enthusiasm unmatched by any other sport, even baseball. Had the Koreans not taken to football in this way, it could not have functioned as an important cultural indicator of their experience, at first in a united but colonized country and later in an ideologically-divided country over the past one hundred years.

### **(1) Nationalism and Regionalism**

Nationalism was a key factor in ensuring that football became the most historically important sport in Korea. Under Japanese rule a strong connection was made between the practice of sport and nationalist sentiment as the Koreans began to resent the rule



of their masters and, at the same time, to realize that they should foster their strength to break away from the colonial shackle. One early indication of the widespread diffusion of sporting nationalism among the Korean public was the large number of young men's clubs being set up across the nation in the 1920s. These clubs attempted to imbue young people's minds with patriotism by way of promoting various sporting activities. In this process, modern sports, until that time largely the preserve of elite students born from affluent families, became more widely embraced by the people. Of the modern sports, football was the most suitable form for the clubs to adopt as their main game in that it required relatively little expense. Moreover, as a team sport requiring eleven players, football nicely fitted with the aim of promoting comradeship amongst the club members. Soon inter-club games were actively practiced. With the help of newly developed railway system, many clubs went on tour to other regions to play friendly matches. This grass-roots football boom led to the foundation of national tournaments held at Gyung-sung and Pyong-yang from 1921 onwards. Tournaments of this kind required playing to a common set of rules which were adopted in the various regional events that mushroomed subsequently.<sup>1017</sup> In turn, these regional events allowed sophisticated football sides from the cities to compete against each other but also provided opportunities for country football teams drawn from the rural areas in the locality of the host venue and often organized very rapidly on a scratch basis.

Football was a useful medium for Koreans to express themselves as a nation because it was one in which they enjoyed a dominant position over their Japanese rulers. It is not surprising that any sport at which the colonized excelled tended to symbolize national

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<sup>1017</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football* (2003), 157.

resistance to the colonial oppressors. In Korea, during the colonial period some individual sporting heroes, such as Son Kee Jung, the Berlin Olympics marathon winner, and Um Bok Dong, the 'great king of cyclists', came to embody anti-Japanese sentiments through their sporting successes.<sup>1018</sup> However, it was football, with its immense following and large attendances, that provided Koreans collectively with a medium through which they could express their patriotic sentiment more effectively than through any other sport. It was crucial that there was no other sport in which Korean teams were able to compete as successfully against the Japanese particularly from the 1920s onwards.<sup>1019</sup> The Koreans enjoyed exceptional results in the prestigious football tournaments held in Japan: Soongsil Middle School from Pyongyang won the All Japan Middle School Football Championship in 1928; the Gyungsung team won the All Japan Football Championship and the Meiji Shrine Games in 1935; and Hamheung team won the Meiji Shrine Games two years in a row, 1939-40.

At the time, Japan's foremost national game was baseball. Japanese colonizers brought bats and gloves with them to Korea in the hope that baseball could be helpful in acculturating Koreans into the fabric of Japanese imperialism. A number of public schools under Japanese control in Korea adopted baseball as their main school game and state-owned companies such as the railway bureau and Siksan Bank founded baseball teams.<sup>1020</sup> Though it was led by Japanese expatriates, baseball in Korea was not their exclusive preserve. Quite a few middle schools and colleges set up by Korean nationalists or Western missionaries also had their baseball teams. However, baseball, a

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<sup>1018</sup> Lee, *A History of Modern Sports in Korea*, 103-104.

<sup>1019</sup> Podoler, 'Nation, State and Football: The Korean Case', 3.

<sup>1020</sup> Ok, 'The Political Significance of Sport: An Asian Case Study – Sport, Japanese Colonial Policy and Korean National Resistance, 1910-1945', 666; Yu and Lee, *From Gillette to Lee Young Min*, 183-184.

relatively more expensive sport than football to take up, had limited appeal as a sporting expression of nationalist sentiment. It prospered mainly in the south that on the basis of teams founded by the Japanese. The northern part of Korea, where Japanese cultural impact was rather weak, showed little interest in baseball.

While baseball was concentrated in southern cities, Korean football enjoyed more widespread popularity in the early twentieth century. Fierce rivalry between schools developed even in some parts of northeastern China where many Koreans – at first mainly northern poverty-stricken peasants and later those who fleeing from the Japanese oppression - had migrated since the late nineteenth century. Football's relatively popularity might be explained by the fact that the development of baseball skills in Korea relied heavily on Japanese assistance and on the contribution of Korean students who had experienced baseball at schools in Japan.<sup>1021</sup> Also, many Korean baseball players were employed in Japanese-controlled public companies or government offices.<sup>1022</sup> Thus baseball was a game that many Koreans associated with their colonial oppressors. This - along with baseball's economic handicap - prompted the Koreans to embrace football more eagerly as their national sport, especially as there were few Korean baseball successes to celebrate. In this respect the Korean experience differed markedly from that of another Japanese colony, Taiwan, where successes at baseball - notably the Kano team's runner-up finish in the 1931 Koshien Summer Middle School Baseball Tournament in Japan – had a symbolic significance and helped to build a sense

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<sup>1021</sup> The Graduates' Association of Sunrin Middle and High School, *A Hundred Year History of Sunrin*, Seoul, 2000, 741-742; The Graduates' Association of Joongang, *A Hundred Year History of Joongang*, Seoul, 2008, 624; Osan Academic Institution, *A Hundred Year History of Osan*, Seoul, 2007, 354.

<sup>1022</sup> Yu and Lee, *From Gillete to Lee Young Min*, 187-188, 193-194.

of patriotic confidence amongst the Taiwanese.<sup>1023</sup>

In contrast to baseball in Taiwan, Korean football in the colonial period was inextricably interwoven not with nationalism but with regionalism. As was often the case in other footballing nations, matches between neighbouring villages or towns in Korea during the colonial era tended to generate local rivalries that sometimes led to violence. In 1928, one match in the north-west led to a bloody brawl involving several hundred peasants from two rural villages.<sup>1024</sup> This was an indication of the growing enthusiasm for football and the intense passion that it could cause. However, football played in villages and small towns could not attract the large crowds necessary to sustain quality clubs capable of retaining top-level footballers and it was in the cities that the game became most strongly rooted. It was primarily at inter-city matches that football enthusiasts could express their local patriotism while enjoying play that demonstrated a high degree of skills. Of the inter-city rivalries that developed in the period, the most significant in a wider social and political context, was between the two biggest cities, Gyung-sung and Pyong-yang.

Gyung-sung was the centre on which all the Korean cultural and economic forces converged. The people of Gyung-sung who were relatively heterogeneous in terms of origin witnessed the rise of school and club football from the very early stage of the sport's development. School grounds and some other flat plots offered good places for the Gyung-sung public to play football, and many important football games took place

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<sup>1023</sup> C. Lin and P. Lee, 'Sport as a Medium of National Resistance: Politics and Baseball in Taiwan during Japanese Colonialism, 1895-1945', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24 (3), Mar 2007, 331-333.

<sup>1024</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 16 Feb 1928.

at the Gyung-sung stadium built by the Japanese authorities in 1925. The first national football tournament was organized in the capital city by the Chosun Sports Association in 1921. Football culture in Gyung-sung was thus supported by a well-equipped infrastructure which allowed it to develop as an elite sport in schools and academic institutions and while encouraging spectator interest in inter-city and national competitions. The two most prestigious private colleges in Gyung-sung, Yeonhee and Bosung sucked in most of the country's best footballing prospects. At the same time, Gyung-sung's economic affluence allowed the foundation of Chosun Football Club, which was said to be the best team in Korea in the late 1920s.

Pyongyang was another place in which modern sports could flourish. It was the most highly Christianized city in colonial Korea with many mission schools and churches which encouraged a variety sporting activities, not least football. The people of Pyongyang were largely unified by their attachment to Christianity, a homogeneity that was reinforced by a relatively loose social hierarchy, factors that helped to develop a strong sense of local identity. In addition, Pyongyang's thriving coal, rubber and textile industries relied on a host of manual workers, who were likely to require amusing entertainment, such as watching or playing football on their days off. In addition, there was in Pyongyang a deep-seated resentment of Gyung-sang-based centralism and this proved a powerful incentive to promote the rapid modernization of the community in order to keep abreast of developments in the southern capital. Football soon became the oxygen which kept Pyongyang's strong sense of rivalry with Gyung-sung burning. The Pyongyang YMCA set up a national football tournament in 1921, just three months after the first national tournament at Gyung-sung. Later, in 1926 the Pyongyang ACFC

began operating under the aegis of the Gwanseo Sports Association, an independent sports body outside the sphere of influence of the national sports organization which was mainly controlled by nationalists in Gyung-sung, political rivals to the Pyongyang nationalists. Although fighting for the same cause of Korean independence, they were very envious of each other's success.

Any match between the two rival cities had the potential to develop into a mass brawl involving partisan fans on the pitch, the charged atmosphere rendering these matches highly popular and profitable. Under these circumstances the Gyung-Pyong Football Championship was first organized in 1929, a magnificent sports spectacle which attracted large crowds, many of whom came to see a Pyongyang footballer, Kim Young Geun whose good looks in conjunction with his marvelous skill made him a magnet, not only for men but also women, particularly *Gisaengs*.<sup>1025</sup> From 1929 to 1935, Pyongyang generally had an edge over Gyung-sung in this championship with nine wins, five losses, and seven draws.<sup>1026</sup> Local interest in the championship was also higher in Pyongyang and large numbers of their fans would make the three-hour journey by train to Gyung-sung when the championship was held at Hwimoon or the Baejae school grounds and Gyung-sung Stadium.<sup>1027</sup> When the Pyongyang and Gyung-sung clubs were organized in the 1930s, many old boys' and regional young men's clubs began to give way to city-based clubs. As a result, the Tri-city Football Championship between Gyung-sung, Pyongyang and Hamheung and All Chosun Inter-City Football Championship were set up in 1938. The establishment of the Gyung-Pyong

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<sup>1025</sup> Park and Kim, *A Secret History of Korean Football*, 81-82.

<sup>1026</sup> *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, 4 Oct, 1994.

<sup>1027</sup> *Wolgan Joongang*, No, 178, Nov 1990, 475-476; *Chosun Ilbo*, 10 Nov 1998.

Championship in particular seems to transform Korean football into a competitive game amongst cities. In this period, the Hamheung club in the north-east developed rapidly owing to enormous financial assistance from its patrons and began to challenge the Gyung-sung-Pyongyang duopoly that had existed previously.

As far as football in the colonial period was concerned, the north of Korea, with Pyongyang its centre, almost constituted a football nation in its own right. This intense football partisanship was based on a strong sense of regionalism and was encouraged to develop by the successes achieved by Pyongyang or Hamheung in matches against Gyung-sung. A comparison might be made with Scotland where popular nationalism was channeled through football particularly through the relative success achieved by the Scottish national side in matches against England.<sup>1028</sup> However, the overriding concern for people from Pyongyang, who had immense pride in their football, was undoubtedly to establish a sovereign state for all Koreans, rather than an independent state of their own. To them, the great victory of Soongsil at Tokyo in 1928, as well as being a demonstration of their own capabilities was also a vindication of the oppressed Korean people's ethnic superiority over the ruling Japanese. Northerners in general and people in Pyongyang in particular attempted to promote their local patriotism within the Korean independence movement while wishing to take a leading role in achieving this ultimate goal. Football was a definite indicator that they were able to outperform the southerners amid the struggle for independence.

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<sup>1028</sup> R. Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History*, Oxford, 1989, 257-259; Holt and Mason, *Sport in Britain 1945-2000*, 134-135.

This regional battle in football was turned into a zero-sum national contest between capitalists in the South and socialists in the North after the Korean War. The last Gyung-Pyong Football Championship held in Seoul in 1946 was ominous. At the time the north was effectively controlled by the Soviet army and Pyongyang team honed their skills through some matches against Soviet army sides. After the championship they were not permitted to stay in the south and the victorious Pyongyang team was welcomed by a Communist Party led by Kim Il Sung. In the years that followed there was a corresponding development of football nationalism in the south.

The fires of South Korean football nationalism began to be stoked up in the immediate years following the civil war. This owed much to the contribution of footballers from the north, some of whom had crossed the border amid the chaotic distractions of the war and others who had been educated at colleges in Seoul during the Japanese period and later settled down in their adopted city after the liberation. Footballers hailing from what was now North Korea helped the South Korean national team to beat Japan in 1954, a win that ensured a place in the final stages of the World Cup for the first time in Korean football history. The qualifying fixture against the Japanese was the first international football match between the two nations and victory provided the South Koreans with reassurance that in football they were still stronger than their former rulers as had been the case in the 'domestic internationals' during the colonial era. It was also regarded as sweet revenge for being ruled by the Japanese, pervasive sentiments which were reflected in the nationwide warm welcome given to the team. Taking a firm stance on Japan, such as prohibiting Japanese footballers from entering into the country for the qualifying match, President Rhee was particularly happy with this sporting



achievement.<sup>1029</sup> However, the national celebration would have been impossible without the influx of northern talent, notably Choi Jung Min. It was ironic that South Korean football nationalism owed so much to them given the intense rivalry between the two states that was to develop later.

For a time football in South Korea looked set to prosper with the national team winning the Asian Cup in 1956 and 1960. The government even built a new football stadium to host the 1960 tournament, despite its financial difficulties at the time. Yet South Korean football was gradually entering a period of decline which was suggestive of its society handicapped by corrupt, weak governments and political instability. The regeneration of football from the late 1960s was instigated by the military regime headed by Park Chung Hee. In the wake of North Korea's stunning success in the 1966 World Cup, South Korea, where politics and society were steeped in anti-communism began to assign much more importance to their football. Indeed, it became something of a national obsession particularly after North Korea began to take part in the Asian Games and Asian Cup in the 1970s. With an annual international football tournament being set up to enhance the quality of the national side in 1971, The 'FC Korea' phenomenon became embedded in South Korean popular culture. In the 1970s a tradition began to take root with many supporters gathering in tea rooms to support the national team while watching important international matches on television. This culminated in crowds in the streets cheering in front of giant screens, as South Koreans regained confidence through the success of the 2002 World Cup tournament. Public interest in any domestic competition was now completely dwarfed by concern for the national team in

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<sup>1029</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 24 Mar, 1954.

international competitions, a trend that continued even after the launching of professional football in the 1983. The professional game in South Korea where attachment to local clubs is weak has been plagued by low attendances and little media exposure. Most of the stadiums purpose-built in South Korea for the 2002 World Cup became 'white elephants'.<sup>1030</sup> As the BBC has aptly observed, football in South Korea 'begins and ends with the national team'.<sup>1031</sup>

North Korea has undergone a general transformation since the Communist Party took control. However, it was in the post-Korean War period that a centralized and planned system established a sturdy substructure conducive to developing elite sports along Soviet lines. Many multi-sports clubs and youth sports schools were set up to produce 'state amateurs' for the international stage in the late 1950s. All sporting talents flocked into the clubs in Pyongyang and footballers followed this trend. This centralization of football resources in North Korea was evident in the composition of the national team for the 1966 World Cup: the twenty-two strong national squad all played for clubs in Pyongyang.<sup>1032</sup> The 1966 team, in this respect, might be the Asian equivalent of the Hungarian team in the early 1950s, albeit without the latter's sophisticated skills.<sup>1033</sup> The 'Magical Magyars' were the product of communist state's power focusing solely on making a good national team with all players on the national team being concentrated in a few clubs.<sup>1034</sup> North Korean football witnessed its high water mark in 1966, when

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<sup>1030</sup> 'Empty promise', *When Saturday Comes*, Jul, 2009, 38.

<sup>1031</sup> BBC, South Korea's hard to follow, 24 May, 2006. Available from: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/in\\_depth/49\\_85368.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/in_depth/49_85368.stm) [Accessed 31 Nov 2011].

<sup>1032</sup> *The Pyongyang Times*, 16 Jun, 1966.

<sup>1033</sup> Murray, 'Cultural Revolution? Football in the Societies of Asia and the Pacific', 144.

<sup>1034</sup> Lanfranchi et al., *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, 158.

reaching quarter-finals of the World Cup in England by beating Italy, a victory which was deeply imprinted on the minds of the people as evidence that North Korea's socialist economy and society were moving in the right direction. However, since 1966, football in the North has never regained the glory of their golden age, mainly due to political interference from the autarchic regime, purging many World Cup heroes from the football world and ordering the national team to boycott major international tournaments.

Football, which has been referred to as 'heavy industry of sports' in the military-centred Asian communist state, was a very useful propaganda tool for the Communist Party, since it was the most popular sport in the North and the success of the national team had a great impact on national consciousness.<sup>1035</sup> Yet in the early 1990s the Party's support for North Korean men's football, which was seen as underperforming on the international stage, gave way to official support for women's football. The decision to switch the main sport of the Party appeared to pay off. However, the success of North Korean women's football in the 2000s, including victory in the FIFA Under-20 Women's tournament in 2006 did not seem to give the wider public as much hope or self-esteem their men's football had done in 1966. Setting aside the gap between men's and women's football in popularity, any propaganda campaign utilizing football was by this time unlikely to win the hearts and minds of North Koreans, who were in extreme poverty from the 1990s onwards and desperately needed 'bread' not 'circuses'.

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<sup>1035</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 9 Oct, 2006.

## (2) Internationalism and Globalism

The Cold War was rooted in fear of mutually-assured destruction with each of the superpowers committed to a strategic arms race where the aim was to counterbalance the nuclear weapons stockpiled by its ideological rival.<sup>1036</sup> As the dangers of open military conflict were so great a huge importance was attached to ideological warfare conducted via diplomacy and also through various cultural and sporting competitions to which enormous importance was attached. For the two Koreas, which were on opposite sides of the divide, football fitted neatly into the practice of Cold War politics. While North Korean football was in the ascendant from the early 1960s through to its climax in 1966 and a little beyond, South Korea avoided football contact – as at the Asian Games of 1974 - fearing that its team would be defeated and thus hand a propaganda victory to its ideological enemy. However, at the same time, the South Korean military regime lent its enormous energy to the development of football in order to catch up with the North during the 1970s and eventually attain football superiority over its rival in the 1980s. While a two-year international ban was imposed on North Korean football due to violent conduct towards a referee in the 1982 Asian Games, South Korea qualified for the 1986 World Cup. Since then South Korea has always succeeded at the regional preliminary stages of the world's premier football tournament. Now that South Korean football had improved there was no reason to avoid contact with North Korea

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<sup>1036</sup> J.L. Gaddis, *The Cold War: a New History*, New York, 2005, 262-263.

During the 1970s and 1980s, Korean 'derbies' at any level were keenly contested in a very strained atmosphere. A feeling of sporting rivalry between the North and South was very strong in this period.<sup>1037</sup> The people of both nations followed such matches with great interest and some footballers on both sides became household names as a result of an excellent performance in North-South contests. The fierce Cold War intensity of these football matches might be compared to the experience of West and East Germans when their national teams confronted each other in the 1974 World Cup.<sup>1038</sup> The difference is that the Korean Derby still takes place while the German Derby has never been held since 1974 due to East Germany's deliberate avoidance of a rematch against in order to preserve their historic victory of 1974 and, after 1990, to the reunification of Germany.<sup>1039</sup>

Changes in the international situation following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East bloc from 1989 encouraged the two Koreas to arrange football 'friendlies' in 1990 and to organize a Korean Unification Team for the Under-20 World Cup in 1991. However, this rapprochement did not mean the end of their intense North-South competition on the playing field, although the tension surrounding matches was somewhat alleviated, especially on the side of the South which could now approach such contests with confidence of a favourable result. Meanwhile, after a humiliating 3-0 defeat by the South in 1993, North Korea actively drafted in some talented Korean-

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<sup>1037</sup> U. Merkel, 'Sport, Politics and Reunification – A Comparative Analysis of Korea and Germany', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 26 (3), Mar, 2009, 423.

<sup>1038</sup> Spurling, *Death or Glory: The Dark History of the World Cup*, 149-159.

<sup>1039</sup> M. Hesselmann and R. Ide, A tale of two Germanys: Football culture and national identity in the German Democratic Republic in Tomlinson and Young (eds.), *German Football: history, culture, society*, Abingdon, 2006, 44.

Japanese footballers into the national team and permitted some North Korean prospects to gain experience by playing abroad.<sup>1040</sup> Their efforts to narrow the gap between themselves and South Korea partly bore fruit as shown by achieving one draw and a narrow defeat in the regional qualifying matches for the 2010 World Cup. Indeed, North Korea eventually reached the World Cup finals in South Africa.

For football in both North and South Korea, a commitment to internationalism was important. There were political and diplomatic advantages to be gained from sporting contact with other countries; also such contacts strengthened football culture and improved the tactical awareness and skills of Korean players on both sides of the border. For North Korea, football contacts with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe from the late 1950s onwards were crucial to the achievement of the 'miracle' of 1966, since they provided lessons in how to cope with the superior physical strength of European teams. The victory of the Pyongyang team over Moscow Spartak during their Soviet tour in 1961 was especially significant. It gave much confidence and pride to the North Korean footballers in that it was a win over one of the best clubs in the Soviet Union, the world's leading communist power.<sup>1041</sup>

It was also important for North Korea to cultivate football contacts nearer home. Indonesia, led by the leftist Sukarno, was the first South East Asian nation with which North Korea sought to establish diplomatic relations from the late 1950s. Sukarno fancied himself as the leader of the Third World and organized the Bandung Conference in 1955 to bring together the newly-independent Asian and African states under the

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<sup>1040</sup> 'Mystery Men', *World Soccer*, World Cup 2010 Collector's Issue, Summer, 2010, 108.

<sup>1041</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 27 Sep 1961.

political banner of 'neither Moscow nor Washington'.<sup>1042</sup> When the Sino-Soviet dispute was deepening in the early 1960s, North Korea increasingly needed new allies so as to be independent of the two Communist rivals. This prompted Kim Il Sung to participate in a multi-sport event for Third World countries, the GANEFO in Indonesia in 1963. Two years later, North Korea staged the Asian Football GANEFO and won the tournament.

During the years from its independence to the early 1970s, the scope of South Korea's football diplomacy was largely restricted to South-East Asia. South Korea participated in the Merdeka Cup in Malaysia and the King's Cup in Thailand in the late 1960s and invited many Asian nations to its own Park's Cup from 1971. The inauguration of the Park's Cup was partly influenced by the popularity of the tournaments in Malaysia and Thailand, where football was used for helping to strengthen nationalist sentiment. South Korea had already begun to take steps to develop the quality of its national football team by way of government-led schemes in response to North Korea's success at the 1966 World Cup. Participation in these tournaments was crucial to foster not only football skills but to strengthen ties with other Asian states, many of whom shared same anti-communist values.

Though the 1970s were a period of détente as far as the relationship between the two Koreas was concerned there was an element of competition in the way that each sought to establish good relations with as many countries as they could, capitalist or communist. Football played an important part in this competitive diplomacy. When North Korea established diplomatic relations with the five Scandinavia countries in 1973,

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<sup>1042</sup> G. Ford and So-Young Kwon, *North Korea on the Brink: Struggle for Survival*, London, 2008, 69. For Sukarno, see Adams, 'Pancasila: Sport and the Building of Indonesia', 302.

a team comprising some of its World Cup heroes played seven matches on a tour of Sweden and Norway.<sup>1043</sup> This prompted the South Korean government to recall its ambassador in Stockholm in protest, since Sweden was the first Western nation to fully recognize North Korea.<sup>1044</sup> South Korea attempted to improve its relations with communist nations through football in this period but with little success though a youth team was sent in 1975 to compete in the Prince's Cup in Iran, where they played against East European sides such as Poland and Hungary in 1975, the first football contact between South Korea with those countries.<sup>1045</sup>

It was however over the Middle East that the diplomatic warfare through football was most keenly waged. North Korea actively colluded with the Arab states to isolate their respective enemies, South Korea and Israel in the sports world. A North Korea ban on football contacts with Israel in the early 1970s helped to ensure the support of many Arab kingdoms supported North Korea. Support from Iran made it possible for North Korea to participate in the Teheran Asian Games for the first time in 1974. South Korea made its own overtures to Iran inviting the Iranian national team in 1971. With the rise in oil prices after 1973 and a construction boom in the Middle East leading to intense competition to win building contracts South Korea further reason to seek a closer relationship with the oil-producing countries in that region. The South Korean youth selects were sent to Iran in 1975 and the Iranian footballers paid a return visit to play in the Park's Cup in the same year. Lebanon also went to South Korea for this tournament despite the efforts of North Korean agents who worked in the Middle East to persuade

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<sup>1043</sup> Korea Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), *The Present Condition of North Korea's Sports Activities in Foreign Countries*, Seoul, 1973, 81-83.

<sup>1044</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 9 Apr 1973; *Maeil Gyungjae Shinmun*, 27 Apr 1973

<sup>1045</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 6 Mar 1975.



the Lebanese football officials not to stay away.<sup>1046</sup>

The football diplomacy conducted by North and South Korea was, at times, ambiguous and inconsistent for many reasons. The competitive nature of the most globalised game on the international stage means that winning an international football match tends to be a primary concern for many countries regardless of diplomatic necessities. For North and South Korea, as for other countries, international fixtures have often been played with little friendship and sometimes downright antagonism as teams sought to assert their national strength by winning the games. The Middle East nations, as mentioned before, were strategically very important to South Korea but also provided difficult opposition in advancing to the World Cup finals and Olympics. Moreover there was widespread suspicion amongst South Koreans that the Arab nations frequently bought off referees before crucial matches and this led to much unpleasantness whenever controversial refereeing decisions led to a defeat by an oil-rich country, especially in the 1980s. North Korea's relationship with China was far from comradely when it came to international football. When they played each other in 1979 in preparation for the regional qualifying round of the 1980 Olympics, it was pre-arranged at the North Koreans' suggestion, that the match should end in a 3-3 draw. Yet, when the match was played, the North Korean footballers made a determined effort to beat China, winning 4-3, a result that embarrassed the Chinese.<sup>1047</sup>

Memories of Japanese colonial rule tended to render any football match between either of the two Koreas and Japan fierce and bitter. Both North and South Koreans bore

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<sup>1046</sup> *Chugan Sports*, 21 May 1975, 15-16.

<sup>1047</sup> Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports 1885-2008*, 51.

grudges from the colonial era and in both countries much more attention was focused on winning over Japan than any other country. South Korea generally enjoyed dominance over Japan in international football to such an extent that its supporters came to expect victory on every occasion that the two teams met. If defeated by Japan the South Korean national team came under severe criticism. Even though Japan had performed well at the 1968 Olympics winning the bronze medal South Korea, its principal regional rival in football terms, held the upper hand in important matches between the two countries in the 1970s and 1980s. It was only after the J-league had been set up in 1993 that Japan began to match South Korea in international football. Although Japan defeated South Korea in a World Cup preliminary match in 1993, they failed to qualify for the final stage of the tournament, South Korea beating them on goal difference. However, a yet more embarrassing moment awaited Japanese football when it was decided that the 2002 World Cup would be jointly hosted by Japan and South Korea. This considerably disappointed the Japanese football authorities who had been convinced that they would win the right to stage the tournament alone. Coming after the International Olympic Committee's decision in 1981 to award the 1988 Games to Seoul rather than Nagoya this was regarded as a major setback for Japanese sports diplomacy.<sup>1048</sup>

The honours have been evenly divided in international matches between North Korea and Japan since the Korean War. For example, in the World Cup preliminaries, North Korea gained victories in the 1982 and 1990 qualifying matches while Japan won in 1986 and 1994. Outside these tournaments there were few football contacts though in

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<sup>1048</sup> Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History*, 204.

1974, during a period of détente, a North Korean club visited Japan and played a number of matches including one against the national representative team, winning them all. The purpose of this tour, however, was principally to advertise the achievements of the North Korean regime and to impress the many Korean exiles living in Japan and to foster a connection with them. At this stage, the North Korean football could still draw on the legacy of 1966, which remained a great source of national pride, and much effort went into the development of school and club football with a view to producing 'another Park Do Ik'.<sup>1049</sup> The search extended to Japan and North Korea began to select Japanese-based Koreans for internationals from the 1970s. By the turn of the century they were making an increasingly important contribution to its football.

The global diffusion had been a feature of modern football since the late nineteenth century. Thereafter interest in playing and watching the game spread to the populations of industrialized Europe, to countries in South America which formed part of Britain's informal empire of trade and commerce, and also to European colonies in Africa and Asia through the influence of missionaries and other cultural imperialists.<sup>1050</sup> However, the extent to which football had become a global game did not become truly visible until after the Second World War when FIFA witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of countries in membership as a plethora of new sovereign states emerged in the era of decolonialization. FIFA's World Cup, like the Olympic Games, provided an arena in which newly independent nation states, such as North and South Korea, could reshape and revive their national identities in the emerging new world order while announcing their arrival to a global audience by virtue of the via new developments in

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<sup>1049</sup> *Chosun Shinbo*, 19 Jun 2009.

<sup>1050</sup> Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism*, New York, 1994, 41-70.

media communication, primarily television. However, there was a structural problem to be overcome in that it was extremely difficult for the fledgling nation-states to reach the final stages of World Cup tournaments on account of the uneven distribution of places for the world's greatest football spectacle. Only in 1970 were Asia and Africa each allocated a place in the finals for the first time.<sup>1051</sup> When the number of finalists was raised to twenty-four in 1982, Africa and Asia were each granted an additional place.<sup>1052</sup> But it was not until 1998 that the most significant breakthrough occurred with five teams from Africa and four from Asia among the thirty-two finalists.<sup>1053</sup>

This increase in the number of participating nations for the tournament resulted from the political and economic aspirations of former Brazilian FIFA president, Joao Havelange and it helped to improve in football in Africa and Asia. The World Cup in 1966 had been the first tournament in which these signs of change were evidently detected. African countries had boycotted tournament the grounds that only one ticket to the finals was allowed for Asia and Africa. However, it was important that North Korea, an unknown outsider, made such a great impression, especially with their great games against Italy and Portugal and finished in the top-eight. The African boycott and North Korea's performance helped to make a case for reform and the dominance of European and South American countries within FIFA came under increasing pressure. It helped the African and Asian countries that a number of countries from South America who had performed poorly at the 1966 finals were also unhappy with the current

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<sup>1051</sup> Glanville, *The Story of the World Cup*, 186.

<sup>1052</sup> *Ibid*, 266.

<sup>1053</sup> *Ibid*, 381-382.

arrangements for the World Cup finals which they claimed favoured the Europeans.<sup>1054</sup> They expressed discontent over how the 1966 finals had been organized, believing that they had been disadvantaged by the selection of referees. Also, as Havelange, then president of the Brazilian Confederation of Sport made clear at the time, they were also angered by the controversial late decision to move England's semi-final match with Portugal to Wembley.<sup>1055</sup> Sensing that a wind of change was about to blow through world football Havelange began to campaign against the incumbent FIFA president, England's Sir Stanley Rous, and finally succeeded in replacing him in 1974, an event of great symbolic significance in the history of the world game. Havelange had built a powerful anti-European coalition by promising African and Asian countries more places at future World Cup finals. Though Havelange was subsequently associated with the more intensive commercialization of the World Cup and other FIFA competitions, he kept his word as far as Third World countries were concerned by allocating more World Cup finals places to them while also backing football development programmes and new tournaments in Africa and Asia via lucrative and sometimes controversial deals with corporate sponsors such as Coca Cola and Adidas.<sup>1056</sup>

As far as South Korean football was concerned, the two most important football tournaments were both connected with the Havelange's globalizing initiatives. The World Youth Football Championship set up in 1977 was used by FIFA to encourage the national associations in the football's under-developed regions by increasing the bidding opportunities for tournament hosting rights and offering them a showcase for

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<sup>1054</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 26 Jul 1966.

<sup>1055</sup> *Ibid*, 25 Jul 1966.

<sup>1056</sup> Lanfranchi et al., *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, 222-8; for Rous's view of these developments see Sir Stanley Rous, *Football Worlds: a Lifetime in Sport*, London, 1978, 198-203.

their football prowess. Indeed, South Korea's semi-final appearance in the 1983 Youth Championship provided the first meaningful opportunity to showcase its football to a worldwide audience. Though this was important the key factor was the fairer distribution of World Cup final places after 1982 without which South Korea would not have reached the final stages of the World Cup on four consecutive occasions between 1986 and 1998.

When it came to selecting the hosts for the 2002 World Cup, however, South Korea found itself in a new political situation within FIFA where Havelange's autocratic style had begun to create enemies, especially in UEFA. With Havelange openly backing a bid from Japan to stage the tournament, Chung Mong Joon was able to forge an alliance between South Korea and the European associations to work against the president. This is why the bidding battle between the two Asian nations was also viewed as a power struggle between Europe and Latin America. Thus the first co-hosted tournament was the product of global football politics. It also clearly showed that the contest to stage the finals was no longer simply a matter of deciding between bidding nations among the world's established football powers. The tournament that followed underlined this point when traditional world football powers fared relatively badly in the first World Cup held in Asia. With South Korea reaching the semi-finals and Africa, Asia and North America respectively providing three of the eight quarter-finalists – along with a number of unexpected results – it appeared that World Cup success was no longer the preserve of the big European and South American associations. In demonstrating that a new competitive balance between the different confederations had emerged the 2002 finals were historically significant in that they were a truly global football event.

### (3) Patrons

Unlike many football-loving African nations, Korean football in the early stages was little influenced by its colonizing power, Japan. It was missionaries who were more significant in establishing and sustaining disseminate Korean football culture through organizing school football teams and the activities of YMCA. Buddhism and some Korean local religions followed suit, but their efforts to foster football was rather insignificant compared with the role of Christianity. Korean nationalists also contributed by encouraging young men across the country to play football, seeing the game as a way of demonstrating independence from the Japanese. Football was widely reported in Korean newspapers often in terms invoking patriotic ardour. In addition, newspapers sponsored a variety of football matches and tournaments, exploiting football for commercial as well as patriotic reasons, even though they may not always have benefited directly from these initiatives. Meanwhile some wealthy Koreans with an interest in modernizing Korean culture, including sport, more generally, gave financial support to football clubs. Sometimes this had wider strategic significance as when Baik Myung Gon, the son of major landowner, bankrolled Chosun Football Club's Japanese tour in 1926 and good results were achieved against top-class Japanese teams.<sup>1057</sup>

Football in Pyongyang, where the most enthusiastic fans in Korea were to be found during the Japanese period, provides some useful evidence concerning the relationship between patrons and football. A broad spectrum of football patrons in Pyongyang including *Gisaengs*, mill owners, missionaries and local churchgoers helped to create the

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<sup>1057</sup> KFA, *History of Korean Football* (1986), 189-190.

Korea's foremost football city. It was a marked feature of Pyongyang football that so many teams based on churches and workplaces sprang up, reflecting the culture of this totally Christianized city with its growing industrial base centred on the rubber and hosiery. In the late 1930s the dominance of Pyongyang and Gyungsung in Korean football was seriously challenged by the rise of Hamheung. The principal financial supporters of Hamheung Football Club were a local entrepreneur, civil servant and surgeon, all of them well-connected with Japanese high-ranking officials. They were able to offer talented footballers jobs with a steady income. This gave them an advantage and was a major reason for Hamheung's success.

Since the Korean War, the development of North and South Korean football has been enormously indebted to the support from their respective governments. The fluctuating fortunes of North Korean football have been particularly dependent on the Communist Party's policy. The Party fully understood football's potential propaganda value and intervened to organize North Korean football systematically from the late 1950s with immense support from the military and police. Support from the state along with the experience gained by North Korea's footballers in their encounters with East European teams built confidence and were fundamental to what was achieved in England at the succeeding 1966 World Cup. When Kim Jong Il consolidated his power in order to be designated as the successor of his father in the 1970s, he took advantage of the popularity of football, one of his two main propaganda tools along with films. This entailed the foundation of the April 25 club, also known as the 'Cinema Football Club' which made successful football tours to South Eastern Asia and Japan in 1973 and 1974 respectively and reconfirmed the relatively high standard of North Korean football



compared with other Asian countries.

However power struggles within the party leading to political interference in football have marred further development of football in the North since 1966. Sometimes footballers were sent to labour camps or factories in the hinterland or border area and on occasions the national team was barred from participating in international competition on the order of Kim's family. As a result, men's football was weakened leading Kim's regime to switch its support to women's support in the 1990s where there seemed to be a greater opportunity for North Korea to make a mark in international competition. In a very short period, thanks to mainly traditional socialist forms of sponsorship, North Korean women's football reached Asia's top level. For the North Korean government this seemed the most effective way of promoting women's football and enhancing the skill of its players and in this sense it differed from China where development of the women's game was hindered to some extent by financial constraints. Indeed, North Korea stuck to the traditional socialist state-sponsorship model in striking contrast to Eastern Europe where commercial sponsors became involved from the end of the 1980s as clubs began to operate autonomously without intervention from the state.<sup>1058</sup>

In South Korea the popularity of football and the passions aroused by the national team encouraged political leaders to take the game very seriously. After the Korean War, the Rhee administration was looking for ways to bind the people together and football provided one obvious way of achieving this outcome especially after South Korea

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<sup>1058</sup> V. Duke and L. Crolley, *Football, Nationality and the State*, Harlow, 1996, 94-95.

football defeated Japan in a 1954 World Cup qualifying match and won the Asian Cup in 1956. Inspired by this success, the government constructed a football stadium for the 1960 Asian Cup at Hyochang Park in Seoul. This proved highly controversial, however, as many independence fighters, including Kim Ku, a Rhee's political rival, had been buried at the park. And the construction plan originally involved the relocation of their graves.<sup>1059</sup> Under the Rhee government, domestic football was entirely controlled by the military and became a cause of intense competition between rival commanders seeking to have the best team. Thus, in the 1950s and early 1960s, many talented players in search of recognition at international level career played their football and developed their skills while serving in the armed forces.

During the early 1960s, however, military football began to be edged out by company football. By this time, South Korea was experiencing a period of political instability after Rhee's presidency ended in 1960 and the coup staged by Park Chung Hee in 1961. The switch from military to corporate sponsorship was in line with the Physical Education and Sports Promotion Law enacted by Park's regime in 1962, which encouraged companies to develop at least one sports team.<sup>1060</sup> There were some state-owned companies' and government departments' football clubs, but the two most successful club sides that emerged, each producing many South Korean internationals, were run by private companies. Cheil Mojik was noted for attracting excellent footballers from other clubs run by companies with worse wages and conditions and Geumsung Bangjik had the finest pitch in South Korea.<sup>1061</sup>

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<sup>1059</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 11 Jun 1956; Podoler, 'Nation, State and Football: The Korean Case', 4-5.

<sup>1060</sup> Ha and Mangan, 'Ideology, Politics, Power: Korean Sport-Transformation, 1945-92', 221.

<sup>1061</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 20 Mar 1963; 3 Apr 1965.

After North Korea's sensational success in 1966, the government in the South accelerated its football promotion strategy. KCIA, an appendage of the regime organized a team, presumably on the orders of the leadership, and a relative of Park was given responsibility for the development of football as president of KFA. His main achievement was the establishment of a new league in which teams sponsored by various banks featured prominently. Bank football clubs could provide footballers with a more stable income even after their retirement by allowing them to become a bank employee. He also masterminded the inauguration of the Park's Cup in 1971 inviting the national teams of many other Asian countries to South Korea. With South Korea's Park's Cup and other Asian international football tournaments booming in the 1970s, the radio and television became critical in purveying international football matches to the South Koreans. This led to intensified competition between rival television companies for the broadcasting rights to international football fixtures. Major newspapers, which had been deeply involved in sponsoring football tournaments in Korea since the Japanese period, increasingly lost their influence on the football industry from this period onwards and focused instead on promoting the popular domestic high school baseball tournaments.

The Jeon government in the 1980s took full advantage to build on the economic development dating from the previous decade and football's ascending popularity. The professionalization of South Korean football in 1983 would have been impossible without a cluster of affluent *Chaebols* (conglomerates) along with Jeon's strategy of investing in sport which he saw as a useful medium of social control. Increasing international football contacts as South Korea tried unsuccessfully to reach World Cup finals in the 1970s eventually paid off in the 1980s when the South Korean youth team

reached the semi-finals of the World Youth Football Championship in 1983 and when the national team advanced to the World Cup finals in 1986, the first time in thirty-two years that a South Korean team had competed at this level. While these successes helped to underpin the regime live broadcasting generated huge advertising revenues for the media companies as football established itself as the most profitable sports content in an age of colour television. During the 2002 World Cup bidding campaign, South Koreans fully understood that losing the hosting rights to their arch-rival, Japan, would be a national disaster. It was for this reason that all available national resources were exploited to win the bidding contest. The battle against Japan for the 2002 World Cup unified the people across the political and religious spectrum. Broadcasting companies competed keenly with each other in inviting famous foreign clubs, such as Juventus and AC Milan, to play in Korea. Many *Chabeols* donated funds and supported the work of the South Korean bidding committee. Chung Mong Joon's Hyundai conglomerate, in particular, became very actively involved and was later rewarded when it was nominated as an official partner for FIFA's World Cup tournament. Like the South Korean government the corporations believed that they would benefit from South Korea's World Cup fever.<sup>1062</sup>

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<sup>1062</sup> *Joongang Ilbo*, 12 Jan 1996.

#### (4) The Korean style of play

In football, an awareness of variations in the way that different nations played the game developed with the emergence of international competitions from the early the twentieth century onwards.<sup>1063</sup> Competing styles were first recognized in Korea after the first Gyung-Pyong Championship in 1929. As discussed before, Gyung-Pyong players were noted for their highly developed individual technique, while Pyongyang played a high-energy game based on physical strength. However, whenever Korean teams were pitted against Japanese sides during the colonial period it was as if players from the north and south of the country played collectively with an emphasis on 'stamina and speed', as was observed in Japanese football circles after the tournament to select a national team for the 1936 Berlin Olympics had exposed them to Korean opponents.<sup>1064</sup> Fighting spirit and physical endurance were also seen as the other essential ingredients of Korean football. When Soongsil Middle School team won the All-Japan Middle School Football Championship in 1928, its robust fighting spirit was praised in the Korean daily press and singled out as the main reason for their success.<sup>1065</sup> A Chinese newspaper saw similar qualities in Korean football praising a star forward playing for a Chinese club for his tireless play after a tour of South-East Asia in 1930.<sup>1066</sup> This Korean football style further developed on account of the successful Hamheung club's intensive physical training methods in the late 1930s which included including mountain climbing, though the emphasis on stamina and physical fitness seemed to preclude sophisticated ball

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<sup>1063</sup> Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, 192-193.

<sup>1064</sup> J. Takeuchi (ed.), *Unofficial History of Japanese Football*, Komae, 1991, 194.

<sup>1065</sup> *Donga Ilbo*, 14 Jan 1928; 28 Jan 1928.

<sup>1066</sup> *Ibid*, 5 Sep 1930.

control and thoughtful passing.

For the South Koreans, this kind of discourse on their football style became commonplace in the 1970s when international football tournaments held in Asia increased and more international football matches, mainly between South Korea and teams from other Asian countries, were televised. Television viewers were able to see for themselves that while South Korea's teams were often superior in terms of stamina they were inferior in terms of skill. Superior stamina was usually sufficient to bring success against teams from South-East Asia but not against taller and physically stronger teams such as Australia who twice thwarted South Korea's World Cup qualifying ambitions in the 1970s. It was sometimes suggested that the Burmese football style based on an up-tempo passing game provided a model that South Korean football could emulate.

However, it was North Korean approach to the game, notably demonstrated in 1966, that South Korean footballers were able to copy more easily than any other football style. This had first been developed in response to the difficulties experienced when competing against taller sides in the late 1950s. The popularity of North Korean football particularly amongst the English fans in 1966 was closely related to their high work-rate on the field. Their courageous but sometimes naïve attacking football with chasing the ball all the time was made possible by their formidable speed and stamina. This had appealed because it provided a refreshing contrast with the cautious tactics employed by most of other teams at the World Cup. The creation of this North Korean style was much indebted to a long period of preparation designed to increase their footballers' endurance through intensive physical training, long-distance running and mountain

climbing. Speed was an important element of North Korean football style. It was an attribute which North Koreans were said to have in abundance and it was the injection of pace supplied by footballers originating from the north that had helped South Korea to beat Japan in the 1954 World Cup preliminaries.

It is notable that this football style was being fully developed during a period in which North Korea promoted its self-sustaining economy very eagerly under the slogan of the 'Chollima Movement'. This movement compelled the North Koreans to finish their allotted work as soon as they could. One of the symbols pertaining to this movement was the Chollima tractor. It had been originally imported from the Soviet Union but had been remodeled to demonstrate that North Korea depended on no other country in the economic sphere.<sup>1067</sup> Similarly, when their distinctive football style began to draw attention from a wider audience, the North Korean media was keen to exploit the situation for propaganda purposes with the *Pyongyang Times* explaining that the national team's great achievements in the 1966 World Cup were 'attributable to the tactical system best suited to the constitution of the Koreans'.<sup>1068</sup>

Over time, South Korea's approach to the game grew very similar to that of the North with much emphasis on building physical strength and endurance through long training where the regime, inevitably, included mountain climbing.<sup>1069</sup> It seems likely that the Hamheung team's obsession with climbing in the 1930s was especially influential in shaping a distinctively Korean style of play based on speed and endurance which was

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<sup>1067</sup> Lee, *A History of North Korea vol 2: The Juche Ideology and Solipsism in North Korean System 1960-1994*, 206.

<sup>1068</sup> *Pyongyang Times*, 11 Aug 1966.

<sup>1069</sup> *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, 2 Dec 1989; *Donga Ilbo*, 30 Nov, 1989.

taken up in both North and South Korea. Certainly, whenever South Korean footballers perform well in international tournaments, these two characteristics have been especially noticeable. It was the South Koreans' tireless and vibrant up-tempo tactics through all their games that led them to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals. South Korea, as an authoritative foreign observer pointed out after the match against Italy, exhibited 'extraordinary stamina and energy as they hassled and harried Italy at every turn'.<sup>1070</sup>

It is not an exaggeration to say that these qualities of 'speed, stamina and spirit' have featured heavily in the discourse offered by the South Korean media and that they have become deeply entrenched in the minds of the people as the distinctive characteristics of Korean football. In addition, a consensus has developed in South Korean football circles regarding the value of training programmes which are designed to develop the stamina required to achieve good results.<sup>1071</sup> This emphasis on indefatigable stamina was in line with the story that South Koreans liked to tell about themselves as they reflected on the progress made by their nation state which 'without raw materials and devastated by civil war had transformed itself from amongst the poorest and most ravaged in the world into one of the richest by dint of social organization, centralization and phenomenal hard work'.<sup>1072</sup> The military regimes which ruled from the 1960s through to the early 1990s were able to point to rapid development achieved by virtue of a labour force that possessed skill, initiative and stamina, just like former Manchester United's Park Ji Sung who was 'comfortable in possession, quick to the ball and plenty

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<sup>1070</sup> '1966 revisited', *World Soccer*, Jul, 2002, 65.

<sup>1071</sup> Hwa-sung Kim, *Korea is Football*, Seoul, 2002, 16.

<sup>1072</sup> Goldblatt, *The Ball is Round*, 845.



of indefatigable running'.<sup>1073</sup> The latter quality in particular echoed the perceived virtues of the Chollima Movement in the North.

Despite the tendency of football style in North and South Korea to converge, some important differences remained at least in the way that the game was perceived in the two countries. In particular, ideological perceptions of football styles were accentuated by Cold War politics and subsequent North-South antagonism in the period since the early 1950s. Thus, for the two Koreas, football style was often seen as being characterized by collectivism in the North and individualism in the South. For the North Korean media the collective, teamwork-based approach of their national side was a key factor when victory was achieved over their neighbours to the south.<sup>1074</sup> In contrast, the South Korean media was inclined to write off North Korean football for being monotonous and played by lifeless robots<sup>1075</sup> In reality – and setting ideology aside – North Korean teams were relatively superior in terms of strength and stamina whereas Southern footballers probably had superior ball skills.<sup>1076</sup> This became clear in the 'friendlies' between the two national teams in 1990 and the warm-up matches between the two national youth teams in 1991.

It has to be recognized that the erosion of unique national playing styles has been gathering pace since the 1980s, with greater freedom of movement for players and many footballers playing in foreign leagues being included the World Cup national

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<sup>1073</sup> *The Guardian*, 14 June 2010.

<sup>1074</sup> *Nodong Shinmun*, 16 Nov 1981; 14 Mar 1986.

<sup>1075</sup> *Kyungyang Shinmun*, 13 Mar 1974.

<sup>1076</sup> *Chosun Ilbo*, 8 May 1991.

squads.<sup>1077</sup> In addition, many expatriate footballers have been included in the national teams of their adopted countries, another factor contributing to the homogenization of national playing styles. It has also been argued that national styles increasingly have converged as a result of a 'search for more efficiency'.<sup>1078</sup> Thus the 'universal quest for results' may explain, for example, the cautious approach of the well-organized Brazilian side in the 1994 World Cup, which rejected spontaneity making it difficult to distinguish between a South American and European way of playing.<sup>1079</sup>

It could be argued that football in North and South Korea was relatively unaffected by these developments. There have been no expatriate players in the North and South Korean national team, with the exception of some Korean-Japanese footballers who played for the former. Moreover, with only a small number of North and South Korean footballers playing in foreign leagues, their respective national football styles developed in a way that owed more to each other than to influences from abroad. In this respect it is interesting to compare the recent development of Korean football with football in African nations which supply so many players to professional leagues in Europe. However, it could also be argued that the worldwide shift from entertaining to pragmatically effective tactics that rely heavily on 'pressing' and a very high work-rate are now aligned neatly with the way in which football has been played in both North and South Korea.

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<sup>1077</sup> Mason, 'When Was The First Real World Cup?', 10.

<sup>1078</sup> Lanfranchi et al., *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, 168.

<sup>1079</sup> Lanfranchi and Taylor, *Moving with the Ball*, 206.

Football in North Korea may have provided an extreme example of how a communist regime could exploit and at times abuse the game over the years in order to make propaganda and underpin the absolute dictatorship of the party and the Kim dynasty that dominated it. In view of this, there was very little space for North Korean football to act autonomously as a form of a cultural expression. However, despite the heavy-handed intervention of the regime, football has continued to be still played widely in North Korea and followed by the North Koreans with great enthusiasm. Arguably, however, the enduring popularity of football in North Korea suggests *some* degree of autonomy in that it has persisted in the face of somewhat inconsistent support from the regime. It could be also argued that the main effect of the successes enjoyed by North Korean football from time to time was to enhance the morale of the people and their pride in the nation rather than to generate loyalty to the regime, though this might have occurred incidentally.

In the context of enduring Cold War politics, it is unsurprising that the fortunes of South Korean football have been considerably influenced by the intervention of the state acting through various agencies. This was first evident when South Korea was under the control of a military regime from 1961 to 1979. Under the Park administration sport began to be regarded as very important as 'physical strength is national power' indicated. It was in this period that a 'super club', Yangji run by KCIA, was established, and an international football tournament, the Park's Cup was set up. Until the early 1980s, when entrepreneurs began to emerge as patrons of fully-fledged professional clubs, the South Korean state was directly involved in nurturing 'state amateurs' whom

they hoped would match the football successes enjoyed by North Korea.<sup>1080</sup> Even after the 1980s, it could be argued, the government remained active in support of the national football team, assisting indirectly to ensure that it is in a position to fly the South Korean flag world-wide in international tournaments. Under this dispensation, the interests of South Korean football clubs have been regarded as subservient to those of 'FC Korea'. Despite many contrasting features, it is an indisputable resemblance between North and South Korean football in terms of state intervention, although the former offered a more extreme case.

If there has been another enduring similarity between North Korean and South Korean football it has been in the style of play. For both North and South Korean footballers, chasing a ball for ninety minutes with speed and stamina has been far more important than passing, possession or individual skills. In the first half of the twentieth century superior speed and stamina had been important in defeating the Japanese rulers in many crucial football matches and the Korean approach to the game had been quite different from the more technically- oriented Japanese football style. This tradition was further accentuated after partition when both North and South Korea had no alternative but to rely heavily on the efforts of their respective workforces as they set about the task of the post-war reconstruction and prepared for ideological battle. In this competitive climate, a high value was placed on the virtues of hard work in both countries. What was seen as a distinctively Korean football style, with much emphasis on building strength so that opponents would eventually be out-run, thus reflected and epitomized the two Korean societies, both north and south of the border that divided

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<sup>1080</sup> Jin-seok Huh, *The Birth of Sports Republic: Sports Policy of the Third Republic and President of KSA*, Min Gwan Sik, Seoul, 2010, 91-103.

them from 1953 onwards. This tendency was accentuated because both North and South Korea were confronted with the problem of finding a way of competing effectively against teams from the established elite of world football, whose players tended to be well-built and more skilful in comparison with Korean footballers. In order to close the gap and achieve creditable results in international matches Koreans focused on arduous training systems designed to enhance the endurance of their players. When success was achieved, for example by the North Korean World Cup squad in 1966, the tendency to rely on these methods was reinforced. Thus it could be argued that the Korean way of playing was not merely the manifestation of an ethnic character but also a realistic way to gain international recognition via football.

Over recent years, and especially since the 1990s, there has been a gradual erosion of the Korean style, especially in South Korea. Greater exposure to European and South American football led to more awareness of the advantages of a passing game. In addition, the increasing number of South Korean footballers playing for European clubs, especially after the 2002 World Cup, meant that it became impractical to subject them to harsh training camps for lengthy periods. However, the idea of a distinctive Korean approach which has enabled highly-motivated, well-organized teams to develop the necessary endurance to overcome natural disadvantages and compete effectively against teams with more resources and superior technique still has its attractions. It is part of a shared cultural heritage embodying ethnic sameness which has survived in the two Korean nation-states, despite their troubled history and continuing uneasy relationship.

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## Appendix

### (1) Some key dates of Korean history

- 1910 The Japanese annexation of Korea
- 1919 The First of March Movement (An independence demonstration)
- 1945 Liberation from Japanese colonial rule
- 1948 The establishment of the two individual governments led by Rhee Syng Man and Kim Il Sung at Seoul and Pyongyang accordingly
- 1950 The Korean War
- 1958 The start of Chollima Movement in the North
- 1961 The May 16 Military Revolution led by Park Chung Hee
- 1967 The purge of the Gabsan faction within the Worker's Party in the North
- 1974 The assassination of the first lady by Pro-North Korean man living in Japan  
Kim Jong Il was appointed as the successor of his father, Kim Il Sung
- 1979 The assassination of President Park Chung Hee
- 1980 The Gwangju Democratization Movement
- 1981 The inauguration of President Jeon Du Whan
- 1983 17 South Korean officials were killed by North Korean agents in Burma
- 1987 The bombing of a Korean air flight made by North Korean agents
- 1988 The inauguration of President Roh Tae Woo
- 1990 South Korea established diplomatic ties with the Soviet Union
- 1991 North and South Korea joined the United Nations
- 1992 South Korea established diplomatic ties with China

- 1993 The inauguration of President Kim Young Sam  
North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
- 1994 The death of Kim Il Sung
- 1997 The IMF(International Monetary Fund) Crisis shook the foundation of South Korean economy
- 1998 The inauguration of President Kim Dae Joong
- 2000 The first summit talks between the two Koreas were held
- 2002 President Bush declared that North Korea was part of the world's 'Axis of Evil'  
Roh Moo Hyun was elected as President of South Korea with the overwhelming support of the young

## **(2) Some key dates of Korean football history**

- 1906 The first official football match was played  
(Hwangsung YMCA vs The Korean Sports Club)
- 1921 The two All Chosun Football Championships were founded at Gyungnung and Pyongyang respectively
- 1925 The Chosun Football Club was set up
- 1929 The Gyungnung-Pyongyang Football Championship started
- 1928 The Soongsil Middle School from Pyongyang won the All Japan Middle School Football Championship
- 1935 The interruption of the Gyungnung-Pyongyang Football Championship
- 1936 A Korean footballer played for Japanese national football team at the Berlin Olympics
- 1946 The last Gyungnung-Pyongyang Football Championship was held
- 1948 South Korean national football team participated in the London Olympics
- 1954 The first official international football match between South Korea and Japan was held  
  
South Korea qualified for the Swiss World Cup for the first time
- 1961 North Korean football team won Moscow Spartak by a score of 2-1
- 1963 North Korean national football team reached the final of GANEFO
- 1966 North Korea reached the quarter-finals of the England World Cup
- 1967 Yangji Football Club was founded in South Korea
- 1971 The foundation of President Park Chung Hee's Cup Asia Football Tournament  
  
April 25 Football Club was set up at Pyongyang



- 1978 The first Korean derby at senior level was played at Bangkok Asian Games
- 1982 The FIFA imposed two-year international ban on North Korea
- 1983 The professionalization of South Korean football
- The South Korean Youth team reached semi-finals of the FIFA Youth World Cup
- 1986 South Korea qualified for the Mexico World Cup in 32 years
- 1990 Unification Football Championship between North and South Korea was held
- 1991 A unified team played in the FIFA Youth Championship in Portugal
- 1996 The FIFA made a decision: Korea/Japan co-hosting 2002 World Cup
- 2001 North Korean women's team won the Asian Women's Football Championship
- 2002 South Korea reached semi-finals of the 2002 World Cup
- North Korean women's team won the Asian Games