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Games People Flay

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and New Guinea

December 21, 1970

Mr. Richard H. Nolte,
Executive Director,
Institute of Current World Affairs,
535 Fifth Avenue,
New York, New York 10017,
United States of America

Dear Mr. Nolte,

Every country seems to have its own peculiar games and sports, although followers of baseball, gridiron and "Aussie Rules" would probably resent the implication that there is anything at all peculiar about their sports. However, not all societies rigidly compartmentalise their leisuretime activities quite separately from their work, as we tend to do. Indeed, the Agarabi of New Guinea's Eastern Highlands seem, according to one well-known anthropologist, to have failed to distinguish at all clearly between recreation and procreation, or between the gamester and his game (in both senses of the latter term):

> "Adultery, sorcery, vengeance, intrigue, and the most exciting of all human sports, killing in open combat — and the subsequent annihilation of victims and (probably) cannibalism — were the pursuits that gave life its zest."

Under the combined influence of missionary and <u>kiap</u>, most of these traditional Papuan and New Guinean sports have fallen into some discard, and their place has been taken by the great international sports: athletics, basketball, cricket, football, gymnastics, etc. Now, one tends to think of these sports as the relatively immutable products of large international sporting confederations which set down fixed, culture-free rules according to which their games are played. But, as might be expected, the foregoing tendency, while generally correct in its assumptions, is not universally so. Quite a number of the best-known international games have taken quite strange culturally-influenced forms in Papua and New Guinea, so much so that this entire "Newsletter" is devoted to a study of the manner in which some of these sports have been adapted into Papua and New Guinea's cultural ethos once they have been exported there. The following is, therefore, intended as a modest contribution to the study of cultural transportation.

<u>The Colonial Sports: or, the Yawning Social Golf</u>

From the very beginnings of colonial rule, a (British) gentleman has been expected to be effortlessly good, albeit not too good, at games, especially tennis, golf, riding, shooting, and polo. As Marnie Masson observed when invited to play tennis at Government House in Rabaul

in 1921:

> "The correct thing is to play mild tennis — mixed — with frequent outcries, and drink beer and lemonade in between. ..."

— and one can only assume that much the same proviso extended, in both Papua and New Guinea, to the other sports too.

Even today, these same sports remain pre-eminently the domain of the expatriate, primarily because the equipment for them is so expensive, and their facilities are not open to the public, but are generally the property of urban, expatriate-dominated clubs. Papuans and New Guineans still play their part mainly as ballboys, caddies, stablehands, and the like. However, the times they are a-changing now, or at least the rhetoric is, as in the case of golf.

Golf has been played in the Territory since the 1930s at least. Indeed, many an airstrip has doubled as a golf-course at weekends, when fewer aircraft are expected. It has, however, remained an almost entirely expatriate sport until the present day, except for the annual "beano" at the Port Moresby Club, which was first held in 1932. On this one day of the year, generally Boxing Day, the Papuan caddies were invited to play a few holes with their home-made clubs of wood and iron-piping, and to compete for a range of prizes which had been donated by their masters. Afterwards, they were all awarded a meal of buns (of which they received nine each in 1932), jam, tinned fruit, biscuits, and ginger-beer, which was, they were told, "far more than the white men get when they play their competitions." At other times, they received threepence for an afternoon's carrying and ball-finding throughout the 1930s.

More recently, although the roles played by men of different colours on the golf-course have not changed, the attitudes of some expatriates have, as witnessed by the observation of the president of the Lae Golf Club in November that his club was "mono-racial in a multiracial community." It was imperative, he felt, that the club's membership be made more representative of the community if it is not to fold, although he was clear that he was not in favour of lowering admission standards, nor of opening the club to all. "There must be native members of the community," he felt, "who meet our requirements for admission to this club and who would like to play, or learn to play, golf," and he urged businessmen to find such people and to encourage them (financially, if necessary) to take up the sport. The president of the Port Moresby Golf Club endorsed his remarks, with the proviso that anyone who could buy a $50 debenture, pay a $20 nomination fee, and $36 a year thereafter, could already be put up for membership, if he dressed correctly and behaved properly (all on an average salary, in the case of Papuans and New Guineans, equal, at best, to only forty percent of that of an expatriate in an equivalent position, and often of only $13 per fortnight in the urban areas).

There are, as yet, very few members of a Territory golf club, although many Papuans and New Guineans have bought golf-sticks to use in putting competitions in their villages. Now that it is illegal to possess playing-cards in Papua and New Guinea (since 1965), one of the most popular gambling devices is no longer available to many people, and so it is not

altogether unusual to see feather-and-leaf-clad Highlanders gambling, instead, with the aid of golf-sticks and golf-ball.

From Being Game Enough to Play ...

Certain forms of archery and hunting have long been officially discouraged in Papua and New Guinea, as have dancing and feasting in some mission areas. The result has been the loss of a certain measure of zest and excitement in village life, the cause of the so-called "Psychological Factor", which, together with the introduction of foreign diseases and the indentured labour system, was thought to be an important cause of the putative decline in the size of the indigenous population in the early years of this century. The solution, Sir Hubert Murray thought, was cricket, which he felt to be "useful as relieving the monotony of existence" — a statement which only an ardent cricketer could possibly comprehend.

While more sober, moral anthropologists thought that Christianity, Education, Work and Play (all capitalised as the objects of serious Thought rather than Frivolity) should be encouraged, to reinvigorate the seemingly dispirited indigenes, the solution, according to the Papuan Government Anthropologist (F.E. Williams), was "Less Christ and more Cricket." The Reverend Charles Abel, who introduced cricket into Papua in 1895, represented that strain of thought among missionaries which perhaps came closest to a compromise. He was, he said, unable to "think black" or even "grey-brown", and felt it necessary to weed out some of the less desirable practices of the people of eastern Papua, although substitutes for them had, he recognised, also to be found:

> "Their own amusements are often vicious. You cannot take away the pastimes of a race and give them nothing in their place.... The spirit of prophecy was fulfilled when we transformed our spears into wickets, and our shields into cricket bats.... Most people will be able to appreciate our satisfaction, as we sit in the shade of the citrus trees sometimes after the day's work is done and watch the boys at cricket, with their wickets pitched on the very spot where, a short time ago, the stagnant water and oozing mud exuded vapours which poisoned the air."

When first introduced into an area, both cricket and football (soccer) have tended to be assimilated into the local culture. It is not so long ago that the people of Kiriwina, in the Trobriand Islands, were observed by one anthropologist to be using cricket as a substitute for warfare. According to H.A. Powell,

> "... these games are initiated by a formal challenge and parley, when the village leaders decide upon site and date. Preparations include clearing a site, making coconut frond bats and fibre balls, practising and making magic...
>
> "Early on the day of the match, the teams with their women and supporters proceed noisily to the field; all the able-bodied men of the village play, and for important matches neighbours may be recruited; teams of 40 or 50 a

side are not unusual. Two older men, one from each village, serve as umpires, to keep the peace and safeguard the interests of his own side; the toss is argued with a great deal of invective, and when the teams have been sorted out, the field is arranged. This is a simple though disputatious process: the captain aims at hemming in the wicket as completely as possible, while maintaining a mobile reserve of fielders to repel invasions of the pitch by the batting side. The first batsmen then come in through a barrage of jeers and threats.

"The batting order is, of course, determined by seniority in the village. Runs are scored in the usual ways and some effort is made to keep the score; but as the game gathers momentum it becomes impossible to tell whether one or other of the people rushing up and down the wicket happens to be a batsman: the carrying of a bat is in itself no criterion. At such times scoring a run becomes more like running the gauntlet. ... Batsmen are given out for the conventional reasons, plus one or two others. The umpires are appealed to, but in accordance with general native custom, the individual's decision is only acted upon if it embodies the general opinion expressed in public debate. This sometimes leads to compromise decisions, batsmen being occasionally given half-out. But with many others waiting to go in, senior batsmen who are felt to have been in long enough are sometimes hustled out by their own impatient juniors.

"Two wickets are used and, at least at first, overs are bowled from alternate ends. But as excitement and the effort of changing ends increase with the heat of the day, a tendency develops for the nearest man to bowl from the nearest wicket. This increases the confusion resultant from the activities of the fielders, who, being many, have individually only rarely to retrieve a ball, and pass the time in trying to distract and intimidate the batsmen by shouts, facial contortions, and threatening gymnastics. The approved bowling technique is to retire some twenty yards from the wicket and advance upon it with loud cries and considerable acceleration but to slow down in the last few feet as though about to begin again. The ball is then hurled suddenly down the pitch as hard as possible, in an effort to surprise the batsman.

"Early in the game, the target is the wicket; later on, however, a tendency develops to bombard the batsmen, direct hits being acclaimed by the bowler's supporters, but tending to produce invasions of the field by the batting side. Normally, the outfielders chosen and disposed for the purpose repel such attacks successfully; but when feelings are really high the game may end in a brawl."

On the other hand, football was not only assimilated into local society but officially encouraged as a substitute for warfare, and a means of releasing pent-up energy. In pre-war Rabaul, for example, it was illegal to play games except in gazetted areas of the town, although football could be played on an employer's land, if both he and the District Officer were agreeable. In eastern Papua, one Resident Magistrate was frustrated by the lack of vim and the unwillingness to bump one another that his players displayed, although he was hopeful — in an official report on his activities — that he would, in time, be able to see "skin and hair flying" in a match. Another magistrate felt that the occasional fights that took place in the course of a match were "a good sign, for they show that the players take a real interest in the game."

In the Madang District, as recently as the early 1950s, an anthropologist (Peter Lawrence) observed that football was played between teams, each chosen from a single security circle, and each "of nominally eleven men", in which the aim was to shame one's enemy by scoring quickly and then running off with the ball, or to play on to a draw if the players wanted to settle their dispute. However, rugby, a form of football which lends itself to all-in feuding rather more readily than soccer, has until recently been officially discouraged lest players suffering from enlarged spleens (caused by malaria) should be mortally wounded during the game. It required one of the Territory's first leaders of a nationalist political party, Albert Maori Kiki, to introduce Papuans and New Guineans to rugby as a formally organised game. But, almost inevitably, the people of the Eastern Highlands developed a game of their own, which they called "futbol", and which "was modeled loosely on rugby" (according to Kenneth Read), long before there was a national Rugby Union.

Rugby, as it is still played in some parts of the Highlands, may involve teams of thirty or more persons at times of crisis, and a given match may easily last for several days. Normally, the group that has inflicted a wrong upon its opponents prior to the game enters the field with a score of one in its favour, a score which the wronged team seeks to equalize with a goal. Not infrequently, the game degenerates into an all-in brawl, which terminates when the police arrive or when the respective teams somehow feel sure that honour has been satisfied and that the scores (in every sense) are equal. It is not unknown, too, for quite formally organised rugby union matches to develop into inter-group riots, almost by accident, as when, near Kainantu, not so long ago, more than one hundred spectators suddenly took to the field towards the end of a match. Not a few of them, it was later discovered, had happened to arrive to watch the match armed with sticks, clubs, and various weapons. The moral that was drawn from this incident by a local preacher was that those who played or watched sport on a Sunday should expect trouble, for which prison was but a secular retribution.

... to Playing the Game

While both cricket and football have tended to be assimilated almost spontaneously into the activities and institutions of traditional society, at least in the early days of "contact", they, as well as other sports, have also been more slowly and deliberately fostered in rather

more conventional forms, and for quite ordinary purposes, by expatriates. Indeed, a reader of The Papuan Villager, which was published by the government of Papua from 1929 to 1941 for the people referred to in its title (although more than half of its subscribers were Europeans in 1931), might have been forgiven for thinking that both cricket and football were not only healthy and enjoyable activities, but somehow morally improving. As the editor (again, the government anthropologist, F.E. Williams) explained in the patronising , didactic simplemindedness he mistook for Simple English:

> "Work is the most important thing. But when you are neither working nor sleeping, you can usually do what you like: that is your time of "leisure." And in your leisure you can play games. And they are very important too.
>
> "The white people know that it is very good for all of us to play some game, or to go in for some kind of sport. In Australia and the other white countries they have all kinds of games; some people like to try one, and some like to try another, but a man is very unlucky if he can't find something to play.
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> * * * *
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> "It is very much better ... to play a game yourself [than to watch others playing]. You may not play it well, and, perhaps, nobody will care to watch you; but it is really far more fun. The best thing about games is the fun you get out of them. They are good for your bodies too; for if you want to play well and win you must be very "fit," that is to say you must have hard muscles and a good wind. Then again they are one of the best ways of training character; and by that we mean teaching people to be keen and brave and generous, to help their fellows and to take hard knocks without losing their tempers or crying about it.
>
> "One of the best things that you can learn from the Europeans in Papua is how to play these games. You have your own games, but before the white men came Papuans did not know how to pick sides, to play one team against another, to stick to the rules of the game, and to play always to win. But nowadays there are cricket teams and football teams in this country who can do this; they get a lot of fun out of it, and it does them a lot of good."

One of the Reverend Abel's greatest ambitions was to take a Papuan cricket team to Australia, an ambition which was frustrated annually by the pressure of work upon him. However, his proteges did once play a visiting Australian international at Samarai, and even the sceptical editor of The Papuan Villager held Abel's Kwato team up as an example to the rest of Papua:

> "I do not expect [he wrote in 1931] Papua will ever send a Test Team of Papuans to Australia, though even that is not impossible in years to come. In the

meantime you can go on playing cricket, and it will be enough for the present if you can get together a Test Team from Poreporena [a village close to Port Moresby] or elsewhere to beat Kwato."

To spur the Papuans on, the paper preached the twin virtues of being "not only ... good cricketers, but ... good boys too," and printed a great deal of information about Australia's cricketing experiences against the England, South Africa, and West Indies elevens. When, in 1931, the West Indies (most of whose players were "dark-skinned men like you") lost the series against Australia, the Papuans were consoled with the observation that "unless they were very good cricketers the Australian Test Team would not trouble to play them [the West Indians] at all."

If Papuans were not yet able to compete in international fixtures, however, they were allowed — from 1929 on — to contest interracial matches. In 1929, a team from Poreporena played, and lost to, the all-white Port Moresby Cricket Club, while the Lieutenant-Governor placed the government launch at the Reverend Abel's disposal to bring a team of his best players from Kwato to play Port Moresby too. Again, the Papuans lost, although their "racial pride" was reportedly "awakened" by the match. They "realized," it was recorded, "that the spirit of a match which calls for accord with their opponents in a display of keen friendly rivalry on the playing field, naturally brings about manly and friendly relations in their daily contact with white people in the more serious vocations of life." Clad in long white trousers, long-sleeved shirts, and shoes, the Papuans' "exemplary conduct on and off the field afforded a great deal of pleasure to the white spectators." In 1930, Port Moresby and Poreporena played to a draw, and in 1932 the Poreporena village team lost to Samarai's whites. When Kwato defeated the Samarai whites in 1933 (as it had done in 1929), The Papuan Villager generously conceded that the white men had not had any practice, and were, in consequence, not as good as usual.

Quite apart from these annual interracial matches, cricket began to spread among the Papuans. If the British national character has somehow been moulded on the playing-fields of Eton, then Papua's began to blossom on the cricket-pitches of its coastal villages. The crew of the government launch Elevala, for example, played and defeated the Kikori station staff in 1929, an event the repercussions of which have been quite colourfully described by a clerk in the Kikori Resident Magistrate's office:

"And we told them crews to come up to our house to have some kaikai and smok. But they were ashamed, so did not come up to our houses. So they went down to Elevala. And then we send one boy to called them, and then they come up to the house. And then we give them kaikai and smok, and then we told them this place Kikori was best place playing for cricket. This three times game we wiond Aird Hill, and Vanapa, you Elevala. We best all of you. And then crews they said "Because we not practice every time so we can not play cricket well." So we told them not think abouted: we all Government boys."

Cricket pitches were built in many villages, and were opened with great ceremony by one prominent expatriate official bowling the first ball to another. In 1931, the Poreporena village team began to play against a team of half-castes from Port Moresby, and then defeated a team of house-boys by 167 runs. Teams played within their villages — the married men against the single in one case — and began increasingly to travel — by launch or lakatoi — both within their districts, and between districts. Friends wrote letters to each other, urging one another to "try hard and make 100. Don't make too much duck eggs ...". Prizes of tobacco (ten sticks) or silver spoons (six) were put up for a good score, and a feast was often held after the match. In 1932, one club even held "A Black-Letter-Day-Match" in honour of the man who had worked hardest to build the village cricket-ground, and had died shortly thereafter.

In 1933, one team held a feast in honour of its visitors and gave them £10-£15 worth of goods. Europeans sometimes helped to put on afternoon tea (with hired plates, cups, and cutlery) after a match, and films were shown before dancing and singing commenced (with a special permit to go beyond the curfew hour). Cricket became "the only game that ... [the Papuans] can play without trouble," although there was nearly a fight in 1935 when one team seemed likely to renege on its quasi-traditional exchange debt to another team which had previously presented it with blazers, coats, trousers, shirts, and other goods. Other teams exchanged sago, bananas, betelnut, woven mats, ramis (waist-cloths), and bows and arrows, after a match in more traditional style. In 1936, a special match between a Papuan team from Port Moresby and one from Hula, at Easter, was followed by a special cricketers' service in the local church, while, at Buna, in the same year, two racially mixed teams played one another. By the end of the 1930s, there were not only interracial matches (by Europeans and Papuans employed by the same firm, for example), and inter-district "Native Tests", but there were intra-village competitions too. In Port Moresby, eight teams played one another (four from a single village and one consisting of half-castes), and seven more played each other at Hula, all as part of a single competition. By 1940, cricket was no longer the great and wonderful white man's game that it had been in the early 1930s. It had, indeed, almost become coastal Papua's national sport.

However, cricket was not the only Western sport to receive a measure of official encouragement in pre-war Papua. Football, too, was widely played, especially in eastern Papua, where it was thought to be more popular than cricket. As The Papuan Villager sagely observed in 1930:

> "... you can't get really savage at cricket — at least not often; whereas at football you can get pleasantly savage, and, as long as you play fair, you do no harm."

In the absence of any clear seasonal patterns in Papua's weather, soccer could, like cricket, be played all year round — although, unlike cricket, it was often played in bare feet. In fact, the same touring team not infrequently played both games on successive days against its rivals.

By 1939, when The Papuan Villager held an essay competition on the theme "Why is Football a Good Game", soccer had clearly come of age. In the olden days, the winning essayist (a Papuan teacher) observed, the people of eastern Papua had used a football team as a fighting team, but

this was, of course, no longer the case. At his school, the pupils now worked hard, played hard, and prayed hard, in the best Anglican tradition. And The Papuan Villager no longer preached the virtues of cricket and football, but warned against over-indulgence in such sports: work should not be neglected by those who preferred to play.

Other minor sports in which the Papuans were encouraged to take part before the war were canoing and sailing (as crew for expatriate captains, or in inter- and intra-village competitions, sometimes with paying European spectators aboard), archery, and athletics. All of these activities received quite a deal of support from administrative officers in the districts, as a means of bringing their charges together in peaceful competition at Christmas-time or on other special public occasions (such as the Jubilee). Perhaps the most curious aspect of some of the athletics carnivals was the manner in which the fifty-yard leg races were divided into special sections: for small boys, adults, village constables, and village councillors, respectively.

Gambling

Gambling and watching are probably Australia's two most popular sporting activities: and the first, though widespread, has always been illegal in Papua and New Guinea, while the second has been discouraged — at least for Papuans. As The Papuan Villager explained in 1930:

> "Papuans have never got much money; but when they sit down to play they sometimes lose their heads, and they gamble away all they have. And when they have lost all their money they gamble with their belts and pannikins and ramis; and when they have lost all those, they borrow their sinabada's [that is, their European mistress's] spoons and table-knives and gamble with those; and then they get caught and go to gaol."

Curiously, however, the paper's moralising editor felt it worthwhile to point out, all too temptingly, that his readers "should remember, too, that the clever boys are the ones who always win" (underlining added). Papuans with money to spare were advised to buy a mouth-organ rather than gamble.

At least once a year, a horse-race was held near Port Moresby, and the expatriate population attended in their numbers. This sport, The Papuan Villager informed its readers, is sometimes called the "Sport of Kings":

> "This is because Kings are often fond of it, and usually have a good deal of money to spare for betting. It is not, as you might think, that the Kings ride the horses."

Very self-consciously, it then proceeded to explain why gambling on horse-races was in order, for Australians, while other forms of gambling, and all kinds of gambling as far as Papuans were concerned, should be illegal:

> "You may ask why the white men are allowed to make bets while the Papuans are forbidden to do so. The reason is that white people usually have more sense in betting than Papuans

have. They know when to stop, and don't throw away all their money. It is the same with strong drink. White men usually know when to stop; but Papuans might not know, and they might get up to mischief or cause trouble. That is why white men are allowed to bet and drink whisky, while Papuans are not."

In New Guinea, the miners on the Morobe goldfields were so eager for a flutter on the horses that, in 1933, they flew five good race-horses from Australia, set up a bookmaker, and bet more than $100,000 on a series of races.

Even today, most forms of gambling are illegal in Papua and New Guinea, although an official blind-eye is turned to the blatant prevalence of large-scale, organised betting by expatriates on Australian races (which are specially broadcast in the Territory on Saturday afternoons). Periodically, a picnic race-meeting is held for over-weight jockeys to compete in on horses that have temporarily been released from their farming chores on Highlands outstations. In Port Moresby, a handful of tired beasts pound up a dusty track, to finish somewhere out of sight, while bored expatriates — the men in suits, the ladies in sun-hats, the most fashionable Australian frocks, gloves, and nylon stockings — stand uncomfortably, perspiring, in a hot and barren paddock, awaiting the results of Australian races (for which some local gamblers act as book-makers). As recently as last year, the only Papuans and New Guineans who were present were the stable-hands.

But, if organised gambling has been effectively off-limits for Papuans and New Guineans, both morally and financially, throughout the Territory's history, it has been because the people of this country have so far done as they were told, and not as they were shown. For, where else in the world has there ever been an occurrence like the Mat-mat ["cemetery"] Double?

The Melbourne Cup is not just a national institution in Australia. It is of such overriding importance in the Australian scheme of things that, if an enemy were to attack Australia on the afternoon of the first Tuesday in November, when the race is run, no one would even notice until the results had been signalled. Many are the stories told about it, and the riders and horses who have become legends just through having won the Cup. But, perhaps its msot charming touch was added in 1936, when a bookmaker on the New Guinea goldfields ran a double on it, in which each bettor had to choose a horse and bet on it in combination with the name of a man on the goldfields who would be dead by Cup day.

Not a few men jokingly bet on themselves and a favourite. However, as the amount that had been wagered rose, and the odds grew, so the men coupled with the horses were increasingly chosen on the basis of careful medical research rather than humourous serendipity. The inquiries after their friends' health became less formal, the replies warier and seemingly half-hearted, until one evening (so the Pacific Islands Monthly reported) the bookmaker who had first suggested this novel form of gambling was approached by an old friend:

"'How much for Silver Standard and me?' asked [the old friend], as he poured water into his whisky.

[The bookmaker] considered him. Silver Standard was "hot," but [the bookmaker's friend] looked good for another half-century.

Just as [the bookmaker] opened his mouth to say 'Hundred to one,' [his friend] raised his glass. His hand trembled violently. Half the drink went overboard before the glass reached his lips. Fever!

'Fifty to one!' said [the bookmaker]."

Sport and Unity

The first international sporting event in which either Papua or New Guinea entered was an international air-race from England to Australia which was held in 1934. On this occasion, so James Michener reported, a man from Wau flew from Great Britain to Singapore before becoming involved in the local high life there, which caused him a delay of some six months. Even at the inter-Territory level, only expatriates took part before the war, as in 1934 and 1938 when Wau played Port Moresby at cricket, tennis, and golf.

Nowadays, the playing-fields of Papua and New Guinea are widely reputed to be the places where expatriates and indigenes (from many parts of the Territory) mix most freely. Indeed, even the swimming-pools have been desegregated since the early 1960s.

However, the standard of sport has risen so appreciably in recent years, along with an increase in the size of the urban and expatriate populations, that as popular involvement in modern sports (of almost every kind) has grown, so has the degree of indigenous participation been of late restricted by a new phenomenon: professionalism. While many Papuans and New Guineans have great natural ability at various games, few adult indigenes have ever had the benefit of consistent coaching in a single sport. Hence, as the clubs have grown, and the gate-receipts with them, so have professional athletes been brought in from overseas to play for local clubs — especially in Rugby League. It was, therefore, more than somewhat ironic that a prolonged riot (of several days duration) and involving probably several thousand Papuans and New Guineans should have been occasioned by an annual Queen's Birthday Rugby League match between Papua and New Guinea.

The 1968 match resulted, so the local newspaper alleged, in Papua's annihilation of New Guinea, which prompted Port Moresby's New Guinean population to wreak quite violent revenge upon the jeering Papuans. The fighting raged from the sportsfield through all sections of the town; more than one hundred people were arrested; a number were injured; and several were — so rumour had it — killed; and the annual Papuan Show had to be closed early because of the violence (in which, incidentally, both the police and expatriates were generally left alone); all for a predominantly professional game in which an entirely expatriate

team from Papua (representing mainly the wealthy Port Moresby clubs) had defeated a New Guinea team only two members of which were not white. Incidentally, the remark that sparked off the entire conflict was made by a Papuan woman, who said that New Guinea had lost because New Guineans ate too much sweet potato.

At the national level, Papua and New Guinea has competed at several recent Commonwealth Games, and also in the South Pacific Games. Curiously, however, the Territory's sportsman of the year is still treated as but one of seven contestants for the Australian national title.

Gradually, then, sport has become increasingly multiracial, and ever-more national, in character. Finally, in 1969, with the holding of the South Pacific Games in Port Moresby, national sport almost began to come of age.

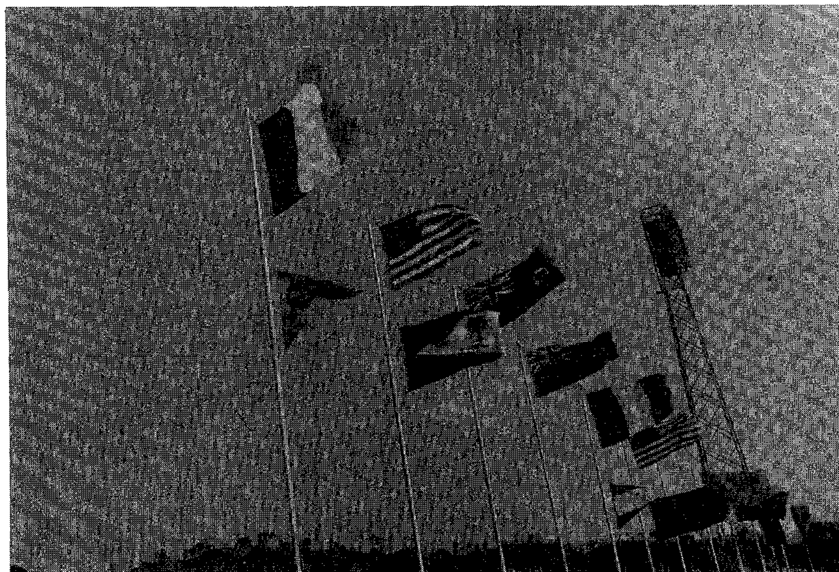
A singsing was held at Hanuabada Village, near Port Moresby, to raise money for the South Pacific Games Appeal.

The dancer at the end of the line is the Ministerial Member for Labour, and Member of the House of Assembly for Hiri Open, Mr. Toua Kapena.

People from all walks of life, and in all parts of the Territory, raised money to finance the Games. A new oval and a swimming-pool were built in Port Moresby. For the first time, the people of Papua and New Guinea seemed to be participating — most of them vicariously — in a single nation-wide event other than an election.

But it remains nonetheless true that national sport only almost came of age then, after an unsuccessful, parochially-inspired move in the House of Assembly to have the Games held in Rabaul rather than Port Moresby.

The South Pacific Games is in many respects the last great intercolonial durbar. Of the twelve competing countries, only two were independent at the time of the Games (mid-August 1969), although two more of them have since emerged from British tutelage. Many of the flagpoles held two flags, that of a particular South Pacific territory, and that of its European "mother" country. "God Save the Queen " was the official national anthem of fully four and a half of the competing countries, and the "Marseillaise"



The flags that flew on the opening
day of the 1969 South Pacific Games

of another three and a half (the New Hebrides is a joint French and British condominium). When Papua and New Guinea won an event, a makeshift flag was hoisted — a green field, with a golden bird of paradise in the top left-hand corner of it — and a strictly interim national song, the beautiful Motuan tune, "Papua", was played, in the absence of both an official national pennant and an anthem.

Opening day was moving: 15,000 people of all colours and nationalities crowded peacefully, cheerfully, into a single stadium, and thousands more on the hillsides behind, cheering their representatives, of whatever ethnic origin. But, as the Duke of Kent circled the arena, waving at the joyful throng, one could not help remembering that the large, publicly acclaimed parade by the combined police bands from all Territory centres on the previous Saturday had been more than a welcoming celebration for the visitors to the Games: it had been a message, too, for the many urban New Guineans who mistakenly believed that Papua and New Guinea would be rivals in the Games, and who had threatened to avenge their territory, in the streets, should Papua defeat New Guinea. Papua and New Guinea's police bands — unbeknownst to the charmed tourists, but not to the people of Papua and New Guinea — also double as regional riot-squads. Their music soothed many an antagonistic breast into calm acceptance of, and even enthusiasm for, the national cause.

Yours sincerely,

Edward Wolfers.

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