



1. IDLENESS AND OLD GOLD

1870—1886

In the seventies of the nineteenth century, South Africa was full of red-blooded young men and all of them were bored.

The attractions of the country lay out of doors and there were indeed few within—no public libraries, no theatres, no concert halls, not even museums except in two or three of the largest towns. The youth of the time found their own distractions in picnics, rambles, hunting and contests of skill. Their massive boredom was rarely relieved and they owed their enjoyments largely to themselves and to two resident institutions—the British military and civil authorities, and the public schools.

English regiments stationed in South Africa founded and established the notion of sport and physical exercise as a means of recreation and combating boredom. They also established the Theatre and the Turf; but, more important, they implanted the idea of team games. Cricket, rugby football, polo and gymkhana events were part of an English officer's background and at military camps at towns throughout South Africa, military and civil personnel spread the gospel among the local inhabitants.

By the same token, the first big schools for boys, staffed by English teachers—the Diocesan College (Bishops), Greys, St. Andrews and the like—made a policy of team games. The young men of the seventies and eighties, who left school to find their fortune in South Africa, were accustomed to enjoying their recreation in sport and athletics and went to elaborate lengths to establish them in the hinterland.

Organised games, hunting and some degree of local exploration occupied the leisure daylight hours but there were still the long nights. For the intellectually-inclined, there were Debating Societies and Mutual Improvement Clubs but for ardent youth, something more energetic was needed. Almost to a man, they took to music and gymnastics. Formal physical exercise with its costly equipment of rings and parallel bars, Indian clubs and barbells, and other impedimenta, was possible only in the largest towns but music could be arranged in the smallest *dorps*. Even the most impoverished, incapable of buying the instruments of a band, could boast its Glee Singers or its Choral Society.



Julius Jeppe



Jacob Swart



Gustav Sonn



David Pullinger

There were in fact few *dorps* so indigent that they could not mount a Town Band for festive occasions. Musical Societies, where at regular concerts and recitals, singers alternated with individual performers on various instruments, were an established feature.

The discovery of diamonds in West Griqualand in 1867 merely served to consolidate the pattern by which boredom was combated. New towns like Kimberley arose and the older centres such as Bloemfontein, Potchefstroom, Pietermaritzburg and Grahamstown and particularly those at the coast such as Port Elizabeth and Durban, prospered by the general influx. It became possible to organize competitive sport on an inter-town basis and long journeys by mule-wagon and stage coach and even by coastal steamer began to let off some of the young men's sporting steam. By the beginning of the eighties, team games organized by established Clubs, with their handmaidens of Music (sometimes confined to contributions to "Smokers") and to a lesser extent, Amateur Theatricals, were

firmly established wherever men congregated and they progressively flourished in the older centres, particularly Cape Town. Sport was not a cult but a necessity and the local boys learnt eagerly from the *uitlanders* posted to South Africa for military or administrative reasons. Such a one was Major Warton who was stationed with his regiment at the Cape during the eighties and, by his personal enthusiasm, greatly encouraged a growing love of cricket. He was abetted in his efforts by a true pioneer of South African sport, W. V. Simkins whose doleful appearance enhanced by a walrus moustache belied his passionate addiction to cricket and rugby. Billy Simkins first made his mark in the field of football at the Cape where, with the English international full-back, William Henry Milton (later Administrator of Rhodesia and knighted for his services), he had helped to establish the rules of Rugby in the late seventies. Undistinguished in the performance of either game though a fine oarsman, Simkins became by his zeal a leading figure in both Rugby and Cricket while still in his twenties. By profession a stockbroker, he had attained a reputation in the limited sporting world which led most paths to his door in the eighties.

The Cape claimed to have initiated and established many forms of sport and its sons duly propagated them elsewhere in the hectic times following the discovery of diamonds. One of the ardent protagonists of cricket on the Diamond Fields was the young William P. Taylor who went with his father from Cape Town to make his fortune and earned immortality by introducing Alfred Beit to Cecil Rhodes. While William toiled on the diggings, his younger brother James B. was sent to school in Natal and upon his return, concerned himself more with making his pile than sponsoring organised physical recreation. William on the other hand, made and forfeited several fortunes but never lost his love of sport in general and cricket in particular. There were many of his kind on the Diamond Diggings.

Outstanding among them was a young man named Jacob Swart who, born of pioneering trekking parents in Graaff Reinet in 1858, was sent to school in Sussex and there acquired the Englishman's typical love of sport. Jacob showed astonishing versatility all his life and as a schoolboy, attained great proficiency at cricket, 'soccer' football and athletics, winning prizes for the high and long jumps and for hurdling. Upon his return to South Africa, he went to Pretoria where, in 1878, he played club cricket and assisted in forming a Rugby Club. During a short stint on the Lydenburg Goldfields in 1879, he captained the local cricket and rugby teams (a fellow-footballer was the young Julius Jeppe) and won prizes at athletics. Back in Pretoria, he fought in the First War of Independence and upon the formation of the South African (Transvaal) Republic, continued his cricket and rugby careers, captaining local teams in matches against Potchefstroom, then a hive of sporting activity, owing to the previous British garrison. Through his father, who became State Treasurer, he came to know the Presidents Burger and later Paul Kruger, and the members of the Volksraad and Uitvoerende Raad.

In 1882, Jacob Swart went to Kimberley and joined the local brotherhood of sportsmen where he initially made his mark, being elected captain of the Rugby Club and its touring team. With his rather pinched face, flowing moustache and sad eyes, he somewhat resembled his Cape Town contemporary V. V. Simkins but both matched and surpassed him in activity in promoting organised sport.

Physical recreation was his life's passion and in Kimberley, despite his occupation's preventing active participation in cricket, he played and refereed Rugby and devoted all his spare time to administrative and executive work, including the formation of the Griqualand West Rugby Football Union of which he was elected president in 1886. He played a leading part in Athletics and served as starter and handicapper. As much as Billy Simkins was known at the Cape, so Jacob Swart was famed in the north as a prime protagonist of organised games. Every sportsman knew him but few could claim his expertise in performance and administration of all forms. Kimberley kept him until he was 30. Among the sporting confrerie on the Diamond Fields was a young athlete and outstanding footballer, David Pullinger who, by profession a mining engineer, played his rugby under the captaincy of Jacob Swart. They were close friends but when the news from the north became too tantalizing, Pullinger left and eventually found fortune at Klerksdorp.



Charles Alfred Oliver Bain – Johannesburg Pioneer

The Beaufort West Brass Band in the early 80's with its creator and conductor H. J. Hofmeyer, later mayor of Johannesburg in 1910 with his baton, in the centre, and on his right, wearing a cap, C. A. O. Bain



While red-blooded young men like the Taylors, Swart and Pullinger tended to seek fortune and adventure among the known diamonds and the unknown outcrops of gold in the Eastern Transvaal, there were others who found it along the more orderly paths of commerce and the Civil Service. Among them was a young man named Charles A. O. Bain who, learning his football and athletics at school in Port Elizabeth, was forced to join his failing father in a mineral-water factory at Beaufort West in the early eighties. Typically of his generation, young Bain helped to stimulate the torpid Karoo town into laying tennis courts and supporting amateur theatricals and the brass band founded by Harry J. Hofmeyr (who taught Bain to play the various instruments and later became Mayor of

Johannesburg) in which he himself played the cornet. To other *dorp* diversions, sporting and otherwise, Bain liberally contributed though pining for wider outlet. The mineral-water factory could not long detain him.

At the same time, Charles Christian Pietersen, having concluded his education at the Diocesan College in Cape Town where he attained caps for cricket and football, joined the service of the South African Republican Government in Pretoria where he found outlet for his sporting inclinations in the several clubs which already existed in the village capital. English games were widely played in the Boer Republics though few of the burghers had tried their hand at them.

Pietersen was a bureaucrat but Charles Llewellyn Andersson of the Cape Civil Service had adventure in his bones. His father was the famous naturalist explorer C.J. Andersson who first penetrated the mysteries of South West Africa and the central African deserts. Llewellyn himself, after education in Cape Town, journeyed north of the Orange River on a Government survey into native tribes and in the same year (1879) helped to erect the telegraph line in Natal which the news of the killing of the Prince Imperial by Zulus was made known to the world. Returning to Cape Town to more orthodox employment, he joined the Hamiltons Rugby Team (having Billy Simkins as a colleague) and played forward with distinction, being chosen in 1885 present Cape Town in an inter-town tourney. Teams of the day wore collarless jerseys, white knickerbockers which frequently failed to meet their long socks, and ordinary boots without lugs or other means of gripping the dusty grounds on which they played. They were moustached, whiskered and sometimes bearded and their managers wore high collars and curly-brimmed bowlers or, in less formal manner, blazers and panama hats with colourful *puggarees*.

In common with the young bloods of the day, Llewellyn Andersson was well acquainted with arch-apostle of Rugby at the Cape, Billy Simkins who, starting as a member of the Hamilton team, later became chairman of the South African Rugby Football Board from 1893 until his death in 1913. Anderson was also a fine oarsman and shone at athletics and gymnastic. He was typical of the high-spirited young men of his generation who demanded tremendous physical exertion and a delicious sense of exhaustion as an outlet for their superabundant energies.

Upon these young men there burst in 1885-1886 the news of fresh and spectacular strikes of gold in the Eastern Transvaal and large numbers of them upped sticks and made their way to Barberton where they suffered varying degrees of ruin. Among them were W. P. and J. B. Taylor; a young cricketer who came to be known as "Barberton' Halliwell; a Queenstown boy of twenty who had been sulking in commerce in England but who set up in the primitive mountainous *dorp* as a stockbroker under the style of Abe Bailey; a footloose and feckless Irish adventurer from King William's Town called Percy Fitzpatrick, and numerous speculators, dealers and stockbrokers from Kimberley. Even Alfred Beit came to see—after obtaining the advice of a Kimberley diamond mining expert in the person of a mature 30-year old named Lionel Phillips. Despite the precipitate nature of the terrain and the excessive exertions of their work, these pioneers immediately organised sporting facilities and proposed fielding competitive teams. Foremost among the enthusiasts was Abe Bailey who worshipped Cricket and the Turf with unexampled passion until the end of his days.

The Eastern Transvaal gold strikes were known to be unreliable and many spectacular Outcrops quickly petered out, ruining the gay blades who had rushed to the area to make their fortunes. Their wiser colleagues, remaining at home, congratulated themselves only briefly. Toward the middle of 1886 the presence of payable gold was established on the Wit Waters Randt in the Southern Transvaal and in September 1886, it was formally declared a mining area by the South African Republican Government. Fortunes could again be made. Throughout the length and breadth of South Africa, few of the red-blooded young men, *uitlander* or colonial, Jew or Christian, could resist the call.

