



CHAPTER 4

Rugby: schools, clubs and personalities

The first games of rugby in southern Africa were played in the 1860s in the Western Cape. Some ten years later the game was played in the secondary schools in and around Pietermaritzburg. The schools promoted the game and extended it into the adult sport and social worlds. Soldiers of the Pietermaritzburg garrison energetically supported the game, routinely entering teams in the leagues that were established as the sport entrenched itself. By 1920 the game had become the primary winter sport amongst white males in the colony. This was achieved despite the opposition of rival sports codes, particularly soccer.

Sport and masculinity

The impressive spread of rugby amongst white males can be understood at two levels. At the individual level its success can be attributed to the way in which boys responded to the challenges of adolescence, and adult males made sense of and experienced their male physicality. At the social level it can be understood as the result of conscious, collective strivings of groups and individuals who sought to realise a particular conception of society. It is clearly artificial to separate the private and public, and the above dichotomy is adopted only to assist in disentangling what are clearly interwoven threads, but which for the sake of analytical clarity need to be dealt with separately.

Sport 'is the central experience of the school years for many boys' (Connell 1983:18). In learning and participating in sport, boys develop a relationship with their own bodies as well as with the social world. These are in fact one and the same thing. Connell argues, for

example, that through sport, boys learn about power: the ability to achieve something even if opposed. They also learn skills, which involve operating 'on space or the objects in it (including other bodies)' (Connell 1983:18).

Elaborating on how boys learn to be male, Connell writes

The physical sense of maleness is not a simple thing. It provides size and shape, habits of posture and movement, particular physical skills and the lack of others, the image of one's own body, the way it is presented to other people and the ways they respond to it, the way it operates at work and in sexual relations ... The physical sense of maleness grows through a personal history of social practice, a life-history-in-society. (Connell 1987:84).

Sport provides the context in which boys measure themselves (literally and figuratively).¹ It is also the site in which certain masculine values are created, understood, disseminated, perpetuated, challenged. Sport thus becomes important for reasons beyond the game itself. '[I]t becomes a model of bodily action that has a much wider relevance than the particular game. Prowess of this kind becomes a means of judging one's degree of masculinity' (Connell 1987:85).²

In Natal the physical demands which the schools made on the boys (described in chapter 3), stressed being tough in body and mind. It was the schools also which 'made the man yet kept the boy' (Kirk-Greene 1987:81). In a similar vein, Michael Kimmel argues that sport is about 'remaining a boy and becoming a man' (Kimmel 1990:56). Sport was an avenue that stretched from school into adult life, taking an individual boy on a journey into adulthood that was marked by an acute awareness of body and its capacities. An effect of this journey was that being rugged, physically capable and fit served as the colonial template for masculinity. The emphasis on tough bodies had the effect, also, of preserving certain spaces as exclusively male.

For many commentators rugby is a violent game: it pits men in symbolic combat against one another, it gives vent to deep psychic male violence. Some of this general description is correct. Displays of violence are psychological in origin as well as being socially functional – serving to promote competition in organisations that would be limp and ineffective without them (Moon 1992:200). The violence also needs to be seen, however, in systemic terms.

The correspondence of violence and masculinity must be seen ... in terms of two interconnected factors: first, the existence of systems which encode differential power relations (boss/worker, priest/parishioner, doctor/patient), and second, the systematic recruitment of men to the most powerful positions. It is certainly the case that men are the custodians of social organisation in which violence is a functional component. But



Hilton College, First XV, 1903. Campbell Collections

the violence is primarily a feature of the systems, and it is the positioning of men with these systems that requires explanation (Moon 1992:196).

Yet there is another side to rugby. For many of the boys who participated, it allowed for physical expression and feeling which bordered on the sensual (Connell's expression (1983:18)). For some men rugby provided a social space, temporarily secure from the burdens of family responsibility and the demands of work. Sport could also give 'meaning and sharpness to lives which ... had little focus' (Adams 1990:37).

There can be no question that the sport of rugby was of great social significance in creating a gentry in the muscular Christian tradition. As James Mangan (1981) and M C C Adams (1990) show for the public schools of Britain, games (especially rugby) were integral to the athleticism which was so important a part of British upper-class masculinity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rugby (and being athletic) was also very important in

gaining jobs within the colonial service and, in general, securing old boy networks which were central to the project of the ruling class (and the ONFs) (Kirk-Greene 1987).

Other sports and challenges to rugby

The Midland settlers were 'sport-mad' and it was inconceivable for ONFs not to have an interest in sport. 'Prominent people' (all of whom were men) in Natal identified in the pages of *The Natal who's who 1906* generally included a full description of their sporting credentials. In the 1920s the importance of sport, if anything, had increased. Two volumes detailing the lives of 'famous men in southern Africa' (farmers, businessmen and politicians) focused on sporting accomplishments to indicate the full extent of their achievement (*Cape Times* 1929; *Cape Times* [n d]).

Before the advent of rugby, a number of other sports had dominated Midland outdoor life. Not surprisingly, hunting was very popular. For many farm boys, learning to shoot was part of growing up, an important rite of passage was shooting one's first bird or antelope (Alexander 1982:4). Hunting had been a major attraction to the earliest white explorers who had made their livings from the sales of tusks and hides. Into the 1850s and 1860s, hunting provided a living for some settlers, but as the years went by and game numbers dwindled, hunting became sport rather than profession (MacKenzie 1987b). There was much prestige in hunting and many a house in the Midlands still has the stuffed trophies of past hunts to attest to this. Hunting was the sport of the rural gentry and urban professionals and businessmen. It echoed grouse shoots in Scotland and colonial drives in India (Brookes 1992:11–13). Hunting, containing as it did, the dangers of the wild, the pleasure of communing with nature, and, importantly, mastery of firearms, remained an important sport throughout the period under discussion (MacKenzie 1987a).

A sport which gained enduring popularity was polo. Introduced by imperial cavalymen in the 1880s, the game spread rapidly in the white farming districts, first being played in the Midlands in 1887 (*Cape Times* 1929:77; Shaw 1971:42). As with hunting, polo emphasised martial skills. The ability to handle and manoeuvre a horse was not only a fixed part of British aristocratic expression, but in the colonial context it remained a major distinguishing feature between coloniser and colonised. A significant number of Indian army men took up farming in the Midlands, particularly around Mooi River, and their passion for the game established its appeal (and snobbery) in that area (Green interview 1992; Jonsson interview 1992). In thinly populated farming areas, polo remained a major sport, largely because it required only eight (four a side) to play, and because it was relatively cheap. While in the metropole polo

signified wealth, in rural Natal the cheapness of grazing, the availability of polo ponies and ready supply of labour (for grooms) meant that even farmers of limited means could play.³

Soccer was a sport which, unlike hunting, polo, cricket, tennis and croquet, was a direct rival to rugby. Soccer was played in Natal before rugby. While it later came to be viewed as a working-class sport, initially it had no clear class affiliation. When rugby began to be played, however, there was competition between the two sports codes over resources (players and fields) which was in time translated into the language of class. Rugby's progress was held to be a victory over working-class sport, working-class masculinity. (This will be considered in more detail below.)

ONFs, and rugby players in general, held themselves to be morally superior to the working class and to blacks. Soccer came to be considered a working-class, and black, game but most Africans at this time had no contact with urban life and the sport played there. The Africans with whom Midland farmers came into contact were for the most part still firmly attached to the land, its institutions and traditions. The homestead, chiefly hierarchy, patriarchal authority and the symbolic importance of the Zulu monarchy acted to limit the pace at which 'the modern' was incorporated into rural life.⁴ The merits of this situation were hotly debated in the colony: Should Africans be pushed along the road to 'civilisation', integrated into economic and social life, or should they be left to continue a rurally based, agriculturally independent existence? The debates were complicated by the need for labour, the fear of being culturally swamped or militarily attacked, the Christian mission of enlightenment, and so on. But on a day-to-day basis the white residents of the Midlands interacted with Africans. They were part and parcel of settler life. Despite being members of 'a common society with a shared system of meaning', Clifton Crais argues for the eastern Cape in a slightly earlier period, they were branded as pariahs. 'The black (was) ... the Other, a constant stranger and perpetual outsider' (1992:126). If Crais overstates the case, he does drive home the extent of the gulf separating white from black and, ironically, their mutual intertwining. Africans were constantly visible and contact with them, especially on the farms, could not be avoided. Segregation as a policy which left some land for the exclusive use of Africans could not answer questions about how to relate to Africans in the context of everyday life. While power inequalities, separate realms of authority and different worldviews helped to delineate spheres of interaction, the extent of African involvement in settler leisure-time activity was less clear. Rugby was a sport in which there was no black participation, yet in specific circumstances Africans were significant spectators, supporting particular teams with gusto. Africans working in schools, for example, took a keen interest in the sport and were incorporated into its lore.

At schools 'kitchen boys' followed the fortunes of the school's teams with much excitement and devotion. As early as the late 1870s we have evidence for such a following. After one of

Hilton's first rugby victories, the boys, it was reported, 'came galloping home, shouting and yelling when a kaffir, who had waited for them, told them that he knew they had won because of their voice and that if they had not won he would not have given them any tea. He also rather dulled their pride when he said that "a lot of high pasture bulls would run down any number of cows"' (Medworth 1964:88–89). In a later period at MC and DHS, the black employees of the schools developed Zulu nicknames for the First XV players and such was their influence that Zulu 'warcry' became included in the repertoire of rugby chants. It has not been possible to date this development and things differed from school to school. At MC, 'Jimeloyo-Ji' was a First XV warcry, being an 'emphatic statement of triumph'. At Michaelhouse, the use of Zulu praise songs was frowned upon as 'barbaric' and against the ethos of the school.⁵ Unlike in New Zealand where the *haka* was incorporated into the All Black routine, representative South African rugby was sanitised of indigenous influence.

The impact of subaltern culture could be closely monitored and limited at the higher levels of the game, but its influence beyond the playing fields was less easy to control. From 1905 onwards Natal began to award caps to its representative players, teams began to standardise their colours and an official blazer was adopted. Such icons become a standard part of the game, legitimating 'the differential distribution of power and status which lie at the heart of a modern society, as well as the cultural values upon which such a society rests' (Synott & Symes 1995:139). Mangan describes these as the 'dazzling symbolic trappings of both fealty and dominance' (Mangan 1981:161). The adoption of regalia fostered the spread of the game to new state schools, which attempted 'to mimic the tradition of heraldry (of older, public schools), to usurp its devices and place the imagery of the badge within its legacy' (Synott & Symes 1995:142). While the use of uniforms was designed to set rugby and its players aside as an elite, it was impossible (outside the confines of the game itself) to control who wore the uniforms. Discarded, lost or stolen rugby gear soon circulated far and wide. A rare testimony to this phenomenon is an account from around 1910 by Rhodesian adventurer Crosbie Garstin (1971:15–16):

A henchman of mine named August invariably wore three head-coverings, though his own pate was stout enough to blunt lightning. Next to his wool he wore a striped Venetian 'jelly-bag' (salvaged from a rubbish-heap in Plumtree), which was so holed it took him a quarter of an hour to find the right one to put his head through. Atop of that came a *Marlborough football cap* [RM's emphasis] (stolen from a bungalow in Umtali). Crowning these was a rimless straw hat (that had fallen out of a train), and the whole surmounted by a nodding white plume which he had plucked out of the tail of a dead and decayed ostrich.⁶

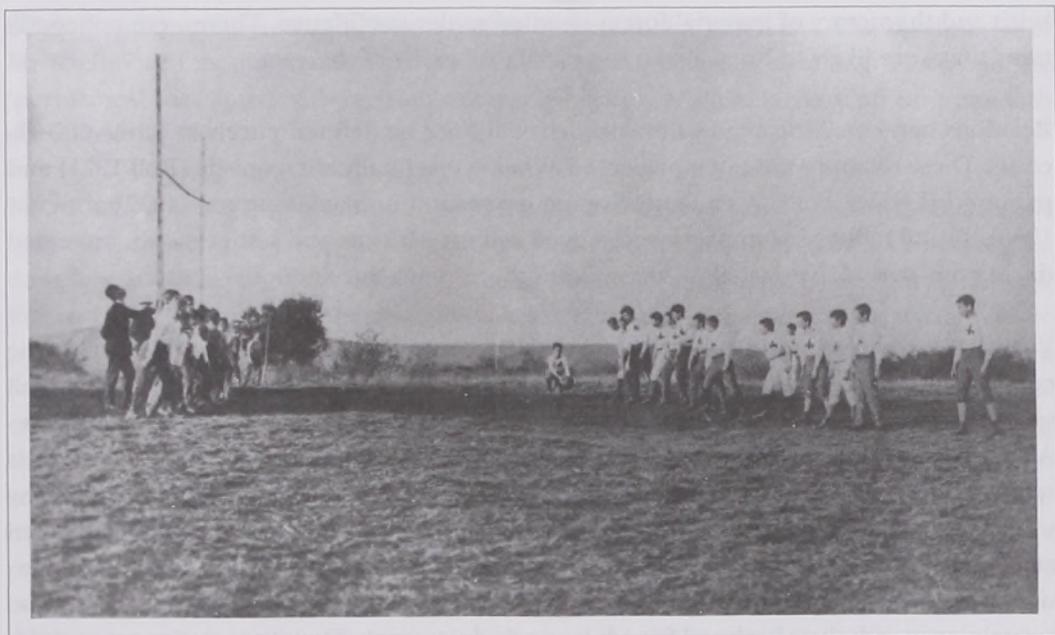
Here the once proud sign of sporting distinction was tumbled into uncomfortable symbolic union with other types of clothing. Never able to enter settler society as an equal, the wearer of the Marlborough cap, nevertheless, was able in his choice of headgear to disrupt the sartorial codes by which settlers regulated their social relationships. Rugby could be policed on the field and off, but how it was perceived and woven into popular consciousness was always unpredictable, and often disruptive.

Rugby and race 1870–1880

Rugby arrived with the second wave of immigrants, which included moneyed members of the middle class and men with public school backgrounds, seeking their fortunes. Many of these men were intent on creating an upper-class world for themselves and this coincided nicely with the aims of the early settlers.

There were a number of preconditions for the success of a team sport like rugby. Sufficient players and adequate facilities had to be concentrated in an area accessible to all concerned. In rural areas with low population density these conditions were seldom achieved (King 1987:45). But in schools (and towns) the necessary conditions for the success of the sport were easily met. It is thus not surprising that it was in the schools that rugby originated and took off.

The first recorded game of rugby was played in 1870 between Maritzburg College and Hermannsburg School of Greytown. Fifteen players on either side played for two hours in the town's Market Square (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:8). Two years later a game occurred between Bishops College (predecessor of Michaelhouse) and Hilton College in Pietermaritzburg.⁷ The small numbers of pupils, the lack of fields and the rivalry with soccer slowed the progress of rugby. In 1878 the game received a huge impetus with the arrival at Hilton of a new headmaster, Henry Ellis. Ellis had attended Rugby School in 1860. His 'conception of what a public school should be, or aspire to be, was firmly based on the Rugby tradition'. He made this connection by borrowing from Rugby the *fleur de lys* for the school emblem and the motto *Orando et Laborando* (by prayer and by work) (Nuttall 1971:15). It may well have been the case, as Tony Mangan has demonstrated at Marlborough, that the roughness of the early intakes of students demanded some form of sport to keep them occupied, to organise and discipline them and give positions of responsibility (Mangan 1981). From the start the headboy of school was *ex officio* captain of the First XV. But it was equally true that the ideology of class was an important aspect of Ellis's agenda. Hilton pronounced itself the producer of 'gentlemen' from the outset. While other schools switched from soccer to rugby from time to time, Hilton alone stuck to the rugby code.



Schoolboy rugby game, Hilton College, 1887

It is not easy to say when rugby first began to be played by adult men in Natal. The first evidence of the game at senior level comes in the mid-1870s. In 1876 George Moor, a member of the powerful Estcourt farming family which made its initial fortune on the diamond fields, presented a trophy for 'competition at football' between a team of Natalians and the 'Old Colony' (the Cape) to be played at Kimberley. Four years later games seem to have been played fairly regularly in Natal itself, but there was no league and little organisation to control or direct the game. Signs of its nascent popularity, however, were to be found in the first challenge match between Durban and Pietermaritzburg in 1880 (Meiring 1964:14).

The spread of rugby was interrupted by the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. The colony was caught in a panic and the local regiments were mobilised. The schools were themselves keen to contribute to the 'defence' of the colony and large numbers of old boys joined up. The schools had very close ties with the military through their cadet corps (see chapter 6). Throughout this period, military exploits received the same kind of attention and acclaim as did sporting achievement. Maritzburg College, for example, took great pride in the fact that an old boy (the son of the Colonial Secretary, Erskine) had been killed in the 1873 Langalibalele Rising. In the 1879 war the losses had been heavier: nine MC old boys and one Old Hiltonian (Haw & Frame 1988:68-69; Nuttall 1971:231). The war fuelled martial

spirit and the victory of imperial forces steadied settler confidence. These were not conditions that were likely to break down the racial exclusivity of the game.

Relations between African and white settler could not be defined purely in terms of bellicosity. These relations are often presented as being essentially antagonistic (Bolt 1971) and paranoid (Krikler 1993), frequently finding expression in black rape scares (Etherington 1988). Brutal military campaigns were waged against Africans and settler racism increased during this period. Nevertheless, there is another side to the story.

Virtually all children of white farmers in Natal spent many hours of their earliest years in the company of African maidservants. Many spoke Zulu before they spoke English. Virtually all spent their pre-school years in the company of black, exclusively Zulu-speaking, companions. An informant described the *umfaans* (young boys) as 'essential companions'. When it is remembered that the development of schools in Natal was slow and that until the 1890s many white children did not attend school or attended it for short periods only, it can be appreciated that the influence of these early experiences may have been very enduring (Alcock interview 1992).⁸ But it was very unusual for the sons of Midland farmers to prolong the close acquaintance with their boyhood friends beyond adolescence. Their trajectories out of childhood steered them in very different directions: the black children frequently became farmhands, their white comrades, landowners, professionals, employers.

The children played a variety of games: hunting rats, rolling rocks down mountain sides with the object of jumping them across the river at the bottom, rolling watermelons down steep hills while other boys armed with sharp sticks would spear them as they rolled past. Mealie cob fights were also popular (Braithwaite interview 1993; Christie interview 1993; Cross interview 1993). A contemporary source also records one of these games. A bulb, 'the size of an association football', is dug out of the ground and shaped so that it rolls nicely. The boys arrange themselves in a line down the hill each with a sharpened stick. The ball is then rolled down. The boy who sticks it moves one up the line, if all miss it, the last boy has to fetch the ball from the bottom of the hill.⁹ The lives of the white farmboys thus drifted great distances from the narrow paths of the English public school model cherished by their parents and settler society more broadly. Frequently their language was peppered with Zulu names and it was common for boys to give one another Zulu nicknames. Apart from the emotional attachment to and associations with the Zulu language, there were practical reasons too that Zulu names were used. As one of my informants, Derrick Braithwaite, pointed out, 'the Zulu had names for everything [rivers, for example. RM]. If you wanted meaningfully to communicate with them, you had to use and accept those names' (Braithwaite interview 1993).

Schoolmasters attempted to influence pupils in their choice of friends. The headmaster of Michaelhouse thought that heavy emphasis on English language teaching would end the 'pernicious' and 'apparently inevitable companionship (of white boys) at an early age with the kafirs'.¹⁰

Not all schoolmasters were so hostile to 'the influence of the kafirs'. Collectively their views spanned the spectrum among settlers generally on how exactly to obtain a balance in race relations that would best suit the conditions facing the local ruling class. Distinct from the view that social intercourse with Africans automatically corrupted settler society was a paternalistic position which emphasised the goodness of African society and nature. R C A Samuelson, a founding pupil of Hilton College and son of an Anglican missionary, was a powerful public exponent of this view. 'The human inhabitants of the land, in those days, were the kindly, cheerful, hospitable and friendly Zulus before they were contaminated, and their self-respect and pride destroyed by the seamy side of European and Asiatic civilisation, and before these had taught them selfishness.' 'They were cheerful, happy and healthy, and had a Roman's pride, and everywhere one could hear their men, women and even the children singing. They were unrestrained in their natural and genuine gleefulness' (Samuelson 1929:9,12).

Samuelson held up 'the Zulu' as something fine and manly, to be emulated. He 'knew all these animals by name, as well as the grasses, trees and vegetation' (Samuelson 1929:15). He was also blessed with a 'fine pride' and generosity. The editor of the Maritzburg College school magazine had a similar view on the 'unspoilt' Zulu, calling them 'a fine race in days gone by'.¹¹ But there was no unanimity on the source of corruption. Samuelson blamed European and Asiatic civilisation; the Maritzburg College writer blamed people of the ilk of Samuelson. The Zulu

... are fast degenerating, and the more Mission Stations that are put up the faster the Kafirs degenerate. The Missionaries teach them how to read, write, and spell, but they do not teach them to be civil and industrious. The Natives use their education mostly for forgetting people's names and passes in order to get drink. Their labour is getting dearer and scarcer every day.¹²

Changes in the political economy were accompanied by shifts in racial attitudes. White society increased in number, particularly in the last decade of the century; prosperity associated with the inland mineral revolution bolstered settler confidence. No longer was reaching an accommodation with Africans the top priority. Contempt for the local black population grew. This was undoubtedly fuelled by a number of clashes throughout the sub-continent between Africans attempting to retain their autonomy and independence and settler forces trying to subordinate them and force them into the cash nexus of the industrialising sub-continent. A writer in the Michaelhouse school magazine opined in 1905, for

example, that 'The chief difficulties in making them good Christians lie in the fact that they are naturally entirely lazy and extremely immoral, and horribly fond of being drunk.'¹³

White secondary school teachers may have differed on some issues but most agreed on two things: whites should stick together and Africans should be civilised. The men propounding these views were also the men advocating the sport of rugby. Hilton's headmaster, Ellis, for example, spoke of the duties facing the school:

... to weld into one harmonious people two alien races [Afrikaner and English. RM], a task the more difficult, perhaps, from the similarity of the stock from which those races came. Then, a native population, outnumbering us ten to one to lift from a state of barbarism and heathendom to civilisation and Christianity. An Asiatic population, equal in number to our own, to train to European habits of life and modes of thought without estranging their feelings or weakening their self-respect ... to preserve the energetic independence of our own rising generation in spite of the enervating influence of a semi-tropic sun and the competition of three continents. To keep unimpaired the faith of our fathers and our fathers' faith in its power to solve all the complicated problems of our national life.¹⁴

In practice, the creed expressed by Ellis and others was implemented in a way which stressed racial hierarchy and white supremacy. The generous attitudes of some missionaries like Bishop Colenso were overshadowed by a parochial meanness. In 1903 the prime minister of Natal, Colonel Albert H Hime, refused to allow members of the Natal Native Horse who had fought for Britain against the Boers in the 1899–1902 war to visit London for the king's coronation. He said that no 'members of the contingent would be spoilt by London girls, who were inclined to link arms with members of the black races' (Samuelson 1929:185). Criticising the view, Samuelson described the decision as 'short-sighted and ill-conceived', arguing that Hime 'should have been too ready to help to reward representatives of the natives, who had so nobly helped to uphold the honour of Britain, and through them, to attach more firmly and permanently to the Throne the love and respect of millions of natives' (Samuelson 1929:185). Hime had schooled in Britain, but his five sons went to Hilton and he was active in the affairs of the school. His sons were all keen and influential sportsmen. Arthur Hime played rugby and soccer for MC in 1882 before going to Hilton College. He represented Natal at rugby, captained the colony's cricket team, and was an executive member of the Natal Rugby Union from 1899 to 1905. He was related to T K Murray by marriage. He was given the following accolade in a collection (c1925) titled *Sports and sportsmen South Africa*: 'There is probably no name better or more widely known in the sporting annals of Natal than that of Mr A H Hime, whose influence on sport is reflected in practically all its branches' (*Cape Times* [n d]:328). His brother Charles played cricket for Natal, and represented Pietermaritzburg at rugby, soccer, tennis and golf. He chaired the Maritzburg Sports Association.¹⁵

The consolidation of rugby 1880–1900

The influx of imperial soldiers between 1879 and 1881 (to fight in the first Zulu and Anglo-Boer wars) was a vital factor in establishing rugby as an adult sport. The increase in competitive games leading up to the formation of a league in 1890 could not have happened without the soldiers, who provided not only the necessary infusion of players, but kept Natal in touch with metropolitan developments in the sport. The connection is clearly stated in one of the standard references to rugby in Natal.

In 1881 we remember it as Majuba year. The battle of the Majuba took place on Sunday, February 27, 1881, and less than three months later two rugby matches – one of which is fully reported – took place almost under the shadows of the famed mountain. ‘Officers of the Field Force’ faced ‘New Castle team’. ‘The game was rough (reported the local newspaper) but thoroughly good-humoured throughout, each team leaving the field with a respect for their opponents play and expressing the wish that another match may soon be arranged’ (Meiring 1964:18–19).

The future of the game was not always certain. By the mid-1880s disagreement with the UK Rugby Football Union’s rule change led to internal wrangling. Partially as a result of this, play became increasingly rough and lost spectator appeal. As one commentator put it, when players lost self-control to the point where they became ‘pugilistic, the game, whatever it may be, is bound to fill the spectators with a certain amount of disgust’ (Meiring 1964:22–23). Another factor was the exodus of fortune-seekers to the Barberton gold diggings. Many were from elite (rugby-playing) Natal families.

But the game picked up as important local dignitaries gave it their blessing. The governor, Sir Arthur Havelock, and his wife and family, and influential Durban businessman B W Greenacre began to attend local matches. The involvement of the Pietermaritzburg garrison became regular from 1887 onward. In 1889, for the first time, an ‘enterprising citizen’ offered a trophy to the winners of the inter-town contest. The match attracted two to three thousand spectators (at a time when the entire white population of the colony was under 45 000) (Meiring 1964:24, 27; Marks 1970:6).

The year 1890 was a crucial one. In that year the first adult club to play rugby rules only (Wanderers of Pietermaritzburg) was formed. Up until this time the attraction of soccer had been apparent as all clubs played both codes. In the same year, the Natal Rugby Union (NRU) was formed with three founding clubs: Wanderers, Savages, and Dragoons. Its president was Thomas K Murray, a Pietermaritzburg businessman and a member of the Legislative

Council for Klip River (northern Natal). The executive included the headmasters of Hilton and MC and a senior officer of the Dragoons, Major Thompson. Murray presented a trophy (the Murray Cup) to be played for, and for the first time an inter-club league was formed.

Murray was to be president of the NRU until 1904. His influence was great and it is important to understand what he stood for and whom he represented if we are to grasp the trajectory of rugby's growth. Murray was born in 1854 just outside Durban. He was one of thirteen children of A K Murray, who emigrated to Natal in 1849. A K Murray founded Pinetown and speculated in land, reputedly buying a million acres in the northern Transvaal.¹⁶ It was thus likely that T K Murray had some family money behind him when he grew up. He took his first step to fortune by travelling to the Kimberley diamond fields. He struck it rich and invested this, and possibly other family monies, in a 35 000 acre ranch in Swaziland. Subsequently he pioneered tin smelting in South Africa and set up, and sat on the boards of, many companies. He was an active military man, serving in the Langalibalele rebellion and the 1879 war. In the South African war he raised his own units, Murray's Horse and Murray's Scouts and was chief intelligence officer on General Buller's Staff. He was knighted for his services. In 1886 he was elected a member of the Legislative Assembly for the farming constituency of Klip River. Subsequently he was elected for Pietermaritzburg and served until his retirement. During this period he served as Colonial Secretary and Minister of Lands and Works. He lived just outside Pietermaritzburg on the farm, 'Cleland', which 'was a show place in the district' (Gordon 1984:42). He also owned some farms near Underberg. He was president of many agricultural societies, including the Royal Agricultural Society. He founded the Farmers' Conference (in 1891) from which, in 1905, the Natal Agricultural Union (NAU) developed. His influence spread beyond the economy, the military and representative politics. He was deeply involved in sport. As a breeder of thoroughbreds, he took a keen interest in horse racing and was, for a time, president of the Natal Turf Club. He was also Executive steward of the Jockey Club of South Africa. He captained the Maritzburg Cricket Club, participated keenly in bisley shooting and was vice president of the Maritzburg Athletic Club (*The Natal's who's who*; Olsen 1933; *Cape Times*, [n d]:412-413; Gordon 1984:38; Lambert 1986:175; McKenzie 1990:6).

Murray was also vice president of the Natal Football (soccer) Association. In 1890 he had been considering making a donation of a cup to that body, but realised that nobody was doing anything for 'the Rugby game' and therefore decided to donate the trophy to rugby. This immediately raised the popularity of the game. A league was played for the Murray Cup between five teams (including Hilton College and Weston Freezers (there were no Durban clubs)). As was noted at the time, these teams contained 'a large number of familiar family names in Natal'. Savages were the first winners of the Murray Cup. At the post-match celebration, 'the handsome trophy was filled with champagne and the health of Mr Murray and success to the Savages Club was heartily drunk, three cheers were given to the

donor'. Murray was revered in rugby circles. At the prizegiving, he was described as 'our father'. The speechmaker continued that 'it is to be hoped that he will live long to give us his advice and assistance in all matters connected with the Union'.¹⁷ Apart from the official influence he brought to bear, he also epitomised the male Natal settler. His success in all spheres identified him as a model of masculinity. He was chivalrous and hardy. He associated with the right people, he was wealthy, he was not tainted by public scandal and he put himself forward as a leader with a specific interest in advancing rugby.

There was nothing intrinsic to the game of rugby that caught and held Murray's attention. The game in the 1880s was very rough. A player in 1905 described the game then as being 'of a more heroic class than the game as now played. Kicking in the scrum, hacking at the least possible pretext and screwing an opponent's neck were common or garden incidents in the quietest game of rugby. Soccer was equally rough' (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:11). But by contrast to the mining settlements of the interior where soccer continued to enjoy wide support, the ONFs began to switch their support to rugby. As with the gentry of South Australia, they disliked soccer's popularity with the masses and sought to convert their soccer-playing children to rugby (Daly 1988:168). They sent their children to the major secondary schools where rugby was played and took the game into the adult world of sport from there. Many of Murray's political friends were rugby players and supporters of the game. There were additional class and race considerations. Soccer was played by the Natal gentry as well, but it was also played by the emerging white lower classes and by blacks. In the 1880s soccer was being played enthusiastically by Indian boys and waiters 'who would have spoken English and closely observed the mores of English working-class men' (Freund 1994:39). Soccer came to the towns, backstreets and open public spaces. As a sport it jostled for space, attracting the newly urbanised working classes and providing new leisure time opportunities. It had the capacity to produce 'familiar' from 'strangers' (Adler 1993:33).¹⁸ For a gentry attempting to seal itself off from blacks, soccer became emblematic of threatening, socially integrative forces within society. As it forged its class identity, so it took to itself the rugby code as an additional, racially exclusive, identifying feature.

In 1891 the NRU affiliated to the South African Football Board and was able to attract to the colony a British XV, the first overseas team to tour South Africa. Using its agricultural connections it secured access to the ground of the Royal Agricultural Society. Facilities were improved and finances put on a secure footing. The league was expanded into the interior, where a Mooi River team and teams from the York and Lancaster Regiment and Nottingham Road were entered. Senior rugby clubs began to raise junior teams. In the same year, the patronage of the governor, Sir Charles Mitchell, was also secured. Increasing space in the local press was devoted to the game. In August Savages played a representative Kimberley side. The local press was impressed by Kimberley: 'In general appearance and

physique the visitors looked the genuine article and their tactics showed that they knew the ropes thoroughly. Their three principal attributes seem to be speed, science and unselfishness.' In the same month, Natal was soundly defeated by the British tourists. The *Natal Witness* reported: 'The English team has come, seen, and conquered, the margin at the ceasing of hostilities being six goals (one from a penalty kick) and eight tries (or 25 points) to nil.' It reported further that the match was watched by 'the largest crowd ever to pass through the turnstiles. Nearly every grade of society was represented: church, state, bench and bar, army (not the Navy) and Auxiliary Forces' (Meiring 1964:34, 37, 39). The discourse now reiterated a set of themes and included images which emanated from and fed into the gender, race and class concerns of the Natal gentry. Masculinity, racial exclusivity and upper-class values of civility and propriety were its key elements. At the 1893 prizegiving, Sir Walter Hely-Hutchinson, Governor of Natal and patron of the NRU, picked out these themes.

I would like to say this, that the taste for sport, for athletic sport and exercise, which distinguishes our race has been one of the main factors in the success which has attended the exertions – whether in improvement at home or in colonisation abroad – of the Anglo-Saxon race. A distinguishing feature of sport is that it encourages friendly relations between sportsmen ... [and] sportsmanlike rivalry (Meiring 1964:46).

While there were dips in the forward march of the game, these were temporary. The exodus of young men and a number of the imperial units north to fight in the Ndebele-Shona rising (1896–97) caused a drop in the number of games played. In Durban, rugby was still not well established and Pietermaritzburg remained much stronger, administratively and competitively. But rugby's administrators began to institutionalise the game. The NRU was no longer just a means of controlling and promoting the game. It expanded its involvement into the social realm. In 1892 a 'soirée dansante' was held at the Forresters Hall, Pietermaritzburg, attended by 70 couples. A provincial identity was also promoted as Natal began to participate (initially with a notable lack of success) in inter-provincial tournaments (Meiring 1964:44–45).

We can learn a lot about the political place of the sport by examining the men who were in its organisational 'engine room'. The men who rose to the top of the NRU hierarchy came from two different social groupings. The first was made up of young, get-ahead, public school immigrants. The second were established ONFs. One example from each group will demonstrate their multiple and interconnected interests, their overlapping institutional memberships and their shared worldviews. C W P Douglas de Fenzi was born in Wiltshire, son of an Anglican minister, and was educated at Bedford, a public school. In 1881, aged eighteen, he emigrated to Natal. He was employed in the civil service and became active both in playing and administering the game. He was one of the NRU's delegates to the

South African Football Board in 1893 and became vice president in the following year. He rose rapidly in the civil service, becoming clerk of the Legislative Council in 1893. He subsequently served as secretary for the commission into the Glencoe Railway Accident in 1896, headed by an old Hiltonian, J T Polkinghorne, the colonial treasurer. Thereafter he sat as secretary on many government committees and commissions and in 1910 was clerk of the Natal Parliament. In addition he managed to combine a 'zealous' commitment to the military with dedicated service to the Anglican Church in Natal and to the Maritzburg Association for Aid to Sick and Wounded. He was also, as we shall see in chapter 5, an energetic freemason.¹⁹

Dr Archibald McKenzie, born in the farming area of Nottingham Road, was brother of Sir Duncan McKenzie, the leader of settler forces in 1906. He was an old Hiltonian (and therefore avid rugby player) and headed the Old Hiltonian Society in 1897. In 1899 he was elected as vice president of the NRU. McKenzie was proud of the school. Speaking at a 1910 prizegiving, he noted that old Hiltonians were 'to be found in almost every useful walk in the Colony, amongst the professions, amongst the legislators and even in the sacred circle of the Ministry itself, and in every walk of useful activity and industry, commercial or of whatever kind it might be'. He considered loyalty (to school, colony and monarch) and health to be very important aspects in the make-up of men. 'It was good,' he said, 'to see that the boys of today showed no falling off, either in physique, in learning, in games or in loyalty to the old School, he trusted that Hilton boys would continue to be known by their old high standards of honour.' In 1902 he elaborated on this theme. He 'attributed the high qualities shown by Old Hiltonians to the loyalty, manliness, and decision of character inculcated by the two headmasters of Hilton ... It might be said of Hilton boys that they were honest in their dealings, upright, straightforward, and manly.'²⁰

His views on race are less easy to access, but may be found in the drama surrounding the establishment of a black hospital in the heart of Durban's wealthy residential area in 1906. An American Board missionary doctor, James McCord, bought land and set about building a hospital on the Berea. He was vigorously opposed by the Durban gentry, amongst whom prominently were two other doctors, Sam Campbell (president of the NRU in 1914) and McKenzie. Pulling strings in the judiciary, including Natal's chief justice, they managed temporarily to stall the building (McCord 1957:127,130).²¹ McKenzie and Douglas de Fenzi were not exceptions. The NRU executive was filled with civil servants and public notables, many of whom had been to one of the rugby-playing secondary schools of the colony, most of whom had seen service in the wars of the period, many of whom had a farming background and all of whom subscribed to a view of masculinity which rugby promoted.

The class and gender contours of rugby

In the rigid class system of Victorian Britain, it has been argued that sports attracted like people and that 'class conciliation through sport remained fantasy rather than fact' (Speak 1988:61). Conversely, in a colonial setting, sport could weld men together across class boundaries. Jock Phillips describes how, in New Zealand, this was effected through 'mateship' (Phillips 1984, 89). In Natal, both processes were at work.

In the first decade of the century, sport became a class battleground.²² Changes in the political economy were crucial in explaining this development. In the cities, Natal's white workers were beginning to organise, primarily through trade unions and the Labour Party (Bizley 1989; Reid 1979; Van der Tang 1996). Schools took alarm. In 1914 Charles Smythe, former Natal premier, warned MC boys at their speech day

not to lay themselves open to the many dangerous and obnoxious doctrines, which were being taught today. He advised the boys to work well while they worked, and whatever they found to do to do it with all their might. When they were working they had not to be thinking of the time for chucking down their tools.²³

Rugby was used in this context as a binding force for a particular class, the ONFs. On the other hand, it was hoped that the game would prevent the swelling of the class of 'low whites'.²⁴

In general terms, rugby became the game of the ONFs and soccer the game of blacks and the white working class, but one must qualify this. In Natal, class divisions existed within a system characterised by a major racial divide. So while rugby players might want to stigmatise soccer as a working class pursuit, they had also to acknowledge that it too was a sport of Englishmen. On a more mundane level, many rugby players took an interest in the soccer leagues of Britain and many played both sporting codes successfully. For this reason, rival settler sports could not always or simply be presented as alien. After all, they facilitated white racial cohesion and reiterated metropolitan connectedness. This complicated the politics of sport in settler society. Furthermore, the class borders of the ONFs (at least in the nineteenth century) were porous. New members who made the grade were still admitted. Class mobility and entry into the ONF circle was still possible. Going to one of the single-sex boarding schools and playing rugby were among the entry points. It thus took a long time (beyond the period of this study) before rugby and soccer, although increasingly seen as competitors and mutually exclusive choices for sportsmen, were clearly divided into a white (ruling class) sport and a predominantly black played and supported activity (Couzens 1982).

In our period, however, the major development was the proselytisation of rugby among whites, regardless of class position. Initially efforts were concentrated on detaching whites from the game of soccer. Alternatively, whites who continued to play soccer were stigmatised. The former MC rugby player and coach, Aubrey Langley, called schoolboy soccer players 'soccerite thugs' (Jennings 1966:124). Sam Campbell called soccer a 'coolie game' (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:95).

The rural boarding schools, Hilton and Michaelhouse, tended to attract the sons of farmers and the capital's wealthy. MC, on the other hand, based as it was in the capital, attracted a socially heterogeneous band of scholars. In this environment, sharp class distinctions were made. As the headmaster put it, the presence of 'the upper class sons of planters ... was a liberal education for the lower class oppidans who flocked in from the town' (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:4). In this context particular class representations became current: upper-class boys came from the country, were hardy and athletic. Lower-class boys came from the towns and were soft. The majority of boys at Michaelhouse, for example, were described as 'the sons of farmers from Natal and East Griqualand, inclined to despise the softies from the towns' (Stiebel 1968:143). In a classic case of class bravado and inverted snobbery, the major match of the year, between the day-boys and boarders, at MC was described as being between the 'Gentlemen' (day-boys) and 'Cabbage Eaters' (boarders) (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:4, 19). More candidly, day-boys were called 'day farts' (Green interview 1992).

The 'upper-class' boys were generally boarders and dominated rugby playing at school. An association was rapidly made between class, masculinity and sport. Langley slated the day-boys.

Why should not the dayboys of our secondary and primary schools be subjected to regular athleticism as a function of their education? Oppidans as a body are looked down upon by boarders because so many of them are thewless creatures, with only a half-developed sympathy for the scholastic institution they attend (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:19).

Although the day-boy-boarder division was a sharp one, it was not impermeable. To be stigmatised as equivalent to a day-boy, one simply had to dislike rugby particularly or sport in general. In the 1901 edition of the school magazine, such boys were despised: 'There's the usual brood which aspire to higher things and waddle off to parade Pietermaritzburg with choice companions or to hold skeins of wool for their grandmothers' (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:19). And in order to give edge to these stereotypes, a tradition of inter-house rugby matches was established, pitting the weak day-boy houses against the boarding houses. On one occasion (in 1913) this resulted in a margin of 130-0!

The love of, and ability to excel at, rugby became synonymous with manhood. Conversely, those who had other inclinations were despised. Victor Stiebel, a pupil at DHS and Michaelhouse, and later a famous costume designer in the London art and drama world, described it this way:

South Africa in the early nineteen hundreds had little use for the Arts and to be born with an interest in any of them was to be born with a stigma as unattractive as a club-foot. This contempt for the imagination was one of the factors that encouraged me early in my life to plan one day to leave the country of my birth (Stiebel 1968:9).

There was punishment for those who did not fit the mould. Natal was 'fanatical in its enthusiasm' for rugby – 'this enthusiasm was shared by every man, woman and child – white, beige or black – dog, cat, bird, lion, zebra, antelope, giraffe, impala, buck, cheetah, warthog, wildebeeste, crocodile, elephant, hippo and rhinoceros'. One was obliged at school to share this enthusiasm by watching the first team rugby game. 'It was the duty of every non-player to demonstrate his loyalty to his school by bellowing from the bottom of his lungs. If a covey of prefects considered that our applause was unsatisfactory, after the visiting team had bathed and changed, been given tea and departed, we would be ordered to parade once more on the ruggier field where, toeing the touch line on the empty pitch, we would scream and yell until our superiors were satisfied' (Stiebel 1968:144–145).

It was held by the game's enthusiasts that rugby was the sport which uniquely combined team-discipline and opportunity to experience one's masculinity. Describing 'the violence and fury of that wonderful game', Bill Payn, MC old boy, DHS schoolmaster and Springbok rugby player, identified its appeal: 'I have always thought that the supreme joy in rugby is in running – running after a man who has got away and is threatening one's side with danger; running through the defence, or, best of all, running for your very life for the try line' (Jennings 1966:129,275). And at MC, rugby was held to be a 'powerful binding force in the school' (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990:11). Unless one abandoned selfishness, one could not advance. The team was stronger than the sum of its individuals.

Rugby offered to boys and men the opportunity to express a physicality in socially accepted ways which were at odds with the tight prescriptions that existed in other spheres. It provided a place where friendships could be established and social networks entered (Messner 1992). It was also a place where men could define appropriate behaviour. As White and Vagi (1990) have shown, this often included the use of misogynist and homophobic language and excessive verbalising and venting of emotion. It was therefore also a place where some boys could feel acutely out of place.

Rugby was a game which could threaten one's masculinity, make one feel inadequate, exclude and negate one. Yet, despite the obvious fact that not all boys would be good at rugby, it became increasingly the case that all would play it. This fostered a close association between class, sport and masculinity. It was not necessary to be good at sport to be manly, it was just important that one played. Who knows what psychological damage this did to boys who loathed the sport but were forced to play? Roy Campbell (son of Sam Campbell) gives us some inkling of the effect of this policy. Roy's brothers and father were 'quick-witted and quick-fisted, fine soldiers, great hunters and fishermen'. They 'loved nothing better than violent physical activity'. Roy, on the other hand, 'seemed to have been born out of place' and throughout his life experienced a 'deep unhappiness when he felt he was failing to live up to them' (Alexander 1982:5-6). He became a poet of international repute, but spent his life trying to prove that he was a man, by drinking heavily, challenging male authority, placing himself in physically dangerous situations. On the other hand, the insistence that the Midland schoolboy play sport created the fact of hard, athletic bodies, and gave physical demonstration to the claim that masculinity was about being athletic and hardy. In this regard it is significant to note how widespread was adult involvement in the game. In many other times and places, on reaching adulthood and leaving school, males give up team sports and graduate to other leisure-time activities (Connell 1983:22). In Natal, the importance of participation was maintained into adulthood, giving bodily expression to the colony's hegemonic masculinity.

Failure to endorse rugby as *the* sport was taken as treacherous, opening one up to class, race and gender (homophobic) insults. By contrast, people who played the game, even if they were not of the home region or class, became available for social inclusion. In 1904 a visiting Cape Town team, the SA College team (SACS), were treated warmly, even when they defeated most of Natal's top teams. The 'sturdy visitors' were complemented on their 'dashing and clever' play.²⁵ Similarly, those who increasingly came to watch the game were also considered to be associating themselves with a particular project. The NRU secretary announced his pleasure at the 'large and fashionable crowds who now fill the Grand Stand and surround the main oval at Lords on the occasion of an Inter Town match'.²⁶

The playing of rugby became an important part of social identity. For example, while the 'Afrikaner' was the enemy in the nineteenth century, he became a (white) fellow citizen after Union. While there were many factors facilitating this transition, the fact that rugby was a sport of the Afrikaner gentry (especially in the western Cape) did much to promote this (Grundlingh 1994). Over the period under discussion, an increasingly specific image of the rugby-playing gentleman was developed which was distinguished by its class focus and its associated prescriptions of masculinity. This was not specific to Natal. In New Zealand, participation by men in the South African war and in the All Black rugby tour of

1906 were used by the media to sketch a picture of masculinity which included physical superiority, courage, a special ability to 'rough it', self-confidence, resourcefulness, initiative and adaptability (Phillips 1984:85–86).

In a 1913 prize giving at Michaelhouse, Sir William Beaumont, Judge in the Supreme Court, urged that the personal qualities which the school should implant in boys were those 'admired in a man – rectitude, consistency, moral courage, kindliness, and consideration for others'. In this regard, sport 'helped the development of selfrestraint, generosity to opponents, and physical culture. Most of their greatest men had been good sports at school.' He continued with the comment that the British Empire was the greatest empire ever seen.

If they (boys) had the privilege of being members of that great Empire, that privilege carried with it a corresponding obligation, and that was to be true and loyal to that Empire, and they should do all that lay in their power to maintain it and to defend it in peace and in war. (Loud applause.) But there was not necessity to brag about that. He considered bragging un-English, and he hoped that they would put down any boy who bragged or boasted (*S Michael's Chronicle*, III (6) June 1913:10, 12).

On another occasion, the theme of chivalry was emphasised. 'There is in the circumstances of modern life far too great a tendency to push oneself at the expense of others ... I do not think this displeasing tendency is likely to show itself in boys brought up in this college.'²⁷ The generation of a set of common values and institutions (like rugby) meant that a remarkably cohesive social class was created.

The strenuous advocacy of rugby was also fuelled by gender worries. Relations between white men and women in the colony were changing. In Britain major feminist campaigns were under way from the 1880s onwards to give women better education, to gain them the vote and to reduce male sexual power over them (Fletcher 1980; Hearn 1992:116; Jeffreys 1984:22–44). At the turn of the century a suffragette movement was established in South Africa. It was a white middle-class organisation which took up the franchise issue at the expense of black people who were denied the vote (Walker 1990). Urban women formed the mainstay of its support. In Pietermaritzburg a branch was established in 1910. Its activities were in large measure responsible for white women getting the municipal vote in 1914. In 1916, Pietermaritzburg's first female councillor, Mrs Sarah Ann Woods, was elected (Merrett 1988:214).²⁸

Women may have wanted political rights and equality before the law, but this did not mean that they were unsupportive of their husbands and families (see chapter 8). ONF women backed their husbands and sons in the game of rugby. A newspaper reported in 1900

reported approvingly on the 'increasing numbers of spectators – of, I rejoice to say, both sexes – is an evidence in itself of the growing popularity of the game'.²⁹ Support from the touchline was consonant with the commitment of ONF women to the family. There was simply no question of wives challenging the patriarchal form of the family. 'Trust your Fathers, your Husbands and your Brothers to look after your Interests, and remember that "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the World"'.³⁰

So what did the ONFs have to fear from the publicly loud but locally ineffectual challenge to their authority? Not very much. The suffragette movement may have 'raised consciousness' but women only got the vote in 1930. Furthermore, there was little likelihood of wives breaking rank and crossing the racial divide. White women did not forge cross-race ties of solidarity (Beall 1982:129; Burdett 1994; Walker 1990; Walker 1992).

On the other hand, white women were expected to be chaste, obedient and loyal. As Cheryl Walker puts it, 'white women were custodians of "civilised values", icons to the ideology of racial superiority, to be revered, protected and firmly controlled by their men' (Walker 1990:321). Suspicion about sex (particularly between black and white) at this time led to the promotion of a creed which stressed that physical pleasure could (and should often) be found in sport, rather than sexual intercourse. Women were expected to foster a happy environment in which sport was promoted. This would assist them to avoid corrupting sexual temptation (Stoler 1989:649).

As the game became more public and obtained media attention, so it became part of media hype. And the form of masculinity it carried was increasingly legitimated. Rugby was presented as a game of the titans. While playing rugby assured social acceptance, to excel at it ensured immortality. The press gave prominence to skilful rugby players, granting them 'semi-divine status'. At the national level, the flowery reportage of the Australian novelist A G Hales on the first Springbok tour to Britain in 1906 refined reportage to an art.

(Marsberg) made himself pretty near football famous this day. Once, when his goal was in danger, he went for the ball in a lightning-like rush, snapped it up and was off like a wild steer into the bush. He fairly flew for a few yards and then they came at him. He put all his great strength into the task and went through them or over them like wind through a wheatfield ... One got the shoulder, another the outstretched arm and hand; round this one he dodged like a Johannesburg debtor doubling around corners (Greyvenstein 1977:42).

This view of masculinity was endorsed by the opprobrium showered on 'nonplayers, who are so through laziness or indifference, (and) are the least satisfactory boys in every respect'.³¹

The spread of rugby, 1900–1920

In this period, rugby was spread more widely through the colony and the number of teams playing increased many fold. No longer was Pietermaritzburg and its surrounding country districts undisputed champion or heart of the game. Durban teams began to inflict defeats on the inland teams both in the inter-town competition and in the premier Murray Cup. Even at school level, DHS switched from soccer to rugby and in 1910 inflicted a defeat on the near-invincible MC team.

In 1903 and 1905 the size of the league warranted the establishment of sub-unions in Durban and Pietermaritzburg respectively. As its administrative capacity expanded, so more attention was paid to promoting the game at local, regional and national level. Natal now regularly entered a team into the Currie (inter-colonial) Cup.³²

Despite the interruption of the 1906 rebellion, the game spread into small towns (Ladysmith and Weenen) where populations had hitherto not been sufficient to support a team. The distant East Griqualand team of Kokstad affiliated to the NRU in 1911 and touring teams were sent into the Transkei. The game reached the sub-tropical coastal belt of Zululand in 1921 (Thomas [n d]).

The fortunes of the provincial team became more significant. Local media gave much coverage to the team, its players and its results. Regional pride was staked on the performance of the representative XV. A major reason for this new emphasis was to be found in Natal's failure to retain some political autonomy in 1910. When South Africa was united, Natal's preference for a federal system was defeated and a union was established. But separatist feelings were still strongly expressed. In 1910 Natal adopted an official blazer and in 1912 succeeded in getting its first player, L Randles, selected as a reserve to the national squad. The strength of the representative XV and the efficiency of its administration were all held to reflect on the province more generally. With its rise in status, the sport now received special treatment. In 1910, for example, a British touring team played in Pietermaritzburg and the mayor requested businesses to close early to accommodate popular interest in the game and to ensure a sizeable crowd.³³ From this point on, administrators concentrated less on promoting the game inside the province and more on getting the best representative team and ensuring its best possible performance. And in this they appear to have been successful: in 1911 the Natal team was described as having 'showed most marked improvement, and the open game in which they delighted was very refreshing to a jaded football appetite' (*Cape Times* [n d]:157). A manager was now employed to coach the team while engaged in Currie Cup duty.³⁴

The First World War understandably disrupted the playing of the game. When it was over, the by now well-established dictum concerning rugby and war was repeated: 'players almost to a man ... gave themselves whole-hearted to the Empire's cause. Rugby players throughout the world have proved themselves second to none in deeds of courage upon the battle fields of Flanders, Gallipoli (sic), etc, and South African players have showed that they have been equal to the very best'.³⁵ Just three years after the end of the war, the first Springbok rugby tour to New Zealand, the premier rugby nation of the age, was undertaken. The game had reached maturity.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the NRU executive began to broaden its membership. Durban figures, particularly after 1910, began to come to the fore. The Siedle family, prominent members of Durban's shipping fraternity and excellent rugby players who represented Natal and South Africa, began to make an impact on the running of the game. But men from the Midlands remained influential.

Aubrey Langley was probably the most famous of all Natal's rugby figures from the late 1890s until the 1910s. He came to MC in 1897, banished soccer, built up the MC team until it was strong enough to win the Murray Cup in 1900. He himself was a powerful man and during his playing career represented many teams, including the representative Natal team.³⁶ He was a most competent referee, refereeing many an important game. In 1903 he was a member of the Maritzburg Sub-Union Executive. In 1909 he moved to Durban as DHS headmaster and within a year replaced soccer with rugby. He poached some of his former MC players and succeeded in defeating the MC first XV soon afterwards. By all accounts, it was his energy and commitment that installed rugby as the major winter school sport in Natal.

Langley was idolised by rugby players, boys and men alike. He also had a devoted African following who called him *Madevu* (moustache) or *Inkunzi* (the bull) (Jennings 1966:120). Yet there were many aspects to his make-up which, in retrospect at least, said something about what kind of masculinity was being promoted. We have two separate accounts of Langley from schoolboys who attended DHS in his reign. Victor Stiebel, a boy who was poor at games and particularly disliked rugby, described him c1916. He

was as gaunt and as highly-coloured as the school buildings. And tough, always carrying, metaphorically, in the hands that he clasped behind his back, a cane for beating. His head, on top of its neatly corrugated neck, was shaped like a coconut and possessed about as much expression – except for the eyes. Mr Langley's eyes were hooded, restless and bad-tempered. He was disliked and feared by the boys and I suspect by the masters too (Stiebel 1968:105).

Roy Campbell was not competent at games either. He offers the following opinion.

Langley, the son of a dour Calvinist missionary, was a tremendous personality. He was the queerest mixture of sensitive artist and stern disciplinarian. More than half the school would have died for him: and even I (who abominated him) was elated for days if I could accidentally earn a word of praise from him. He hated me with a deadly hatred from the beginning, not for anything I had done, but that my father (Dr Sam Campbell) had founded the Technical College, a soccerite school for poor children, where they could be educated free: thus cheating Langley of a mass of human material which might have been welded by his MASTERHAND ... He revelled and gloated in the misery he inflicted upon me (Jennings 1966:124-125).

Langley was a talented artist with water paints (his son was later a novelist of some renown), yet he was also cruel and vindictive. On one occasion he forced Roy Campbell, then suffering from a weak heart, to box against his best friend. 'Langley got furious when he saw no blood, and coming up quietly behind me, cut me across the back with his cane. "Fight,



The entire staff and pupil body of Maritzburg College in 1898. The three staff members on the left are A S Langley, Rev J D Stalker and R D Clark

you swine! Fight, you Technical soccerite! I won't have malingering in my school!" (Jennings 1968:126).

Langley's influence and reputation were not just measured by his actions. He spoke out powerfully and publicly about rugby. In 1908 he gave an address on 'The function of athleticism in education'. He argued that athleticism was important. 'The qualities developed on the football field were sound, for they held good under conditions of life and death ... the spirit of camaraderie bred of sport was always there to help under all conditions whether favourable or adverse. These different qualities had merged into a powerful manliness which was noticeable everywhere, and made them fit companions (sic) for their elders who saw service in the Boer War, and did so well there.'³⁷

The Rev John Stalker was a less flamboyant teacher. Like Langley, he was a master at MC, having arrived at the school in 1880. He was an Oxford graduate and keen rugby player, turning out for the MC first XV. In 1894 he nearly lost his job because the academic results of MC were so bad. Sir Henry Bale, MC old boy, advocate, member of the Legislative Council for Pietermaritzburg and shortly to be Attorney General and Minister of Education, came to his rescue. From this point on, Stalker did not look back. He became active in rugby administration and retired from the school in 1902. In 1903 he was treasurer of the NRU, and the following year secretary. His career is notable for at least two features. He associated with the political representatives of the Natal gentry and included amongst his friends the Hime brothers, particularly Arthur Horace Hime, Old Hiltonian and rugby player of renown. He was also a freemason and publicist for a number of settler causes. He favoured white land settlement in Natal and was fiercely jingoistic. In a pamphlet which his brother had privately printed in Scotland, Stalker wrote in 1902: 'For years, with growing impatience, they (Natalians) watched the increasing arrogance and tyranny of the Transvaal oligarchy in the expectation, rising at length to a certainty, that the time would come when the cup of Boer iniquity would be full and the Home Government be forced to reverse the Gladstonian policy.'³⁸

The third figure deserving of some attention was Captain W S Bigby, secretary of the NRU in 1902. He is a more shadowy individual. Bigby was a magistrate and military man. Later, as a senior member of the Attorney General's office, he gained fame amongst settlers in 1907 when he assisted in the prosecution of King Dinuzulu on charges of treason after the Bambatha Rising. His conduct in this case was so biased that Dinuzulu lodged an appeal against Bigby. The appeal failed, although the Court did concede that Bigby was prone to inappropriate displays of temper in his dealings with Dinuzulu and his counsel. It also later transpired that Bigby terrorised his own (African) witnesses in this case.³⁹

Despite Bigby's hostility towards the colony's blacks, at least the disobedient ones, he was

able to see the merits of 'the noble savage' and to evoke it for publicity purposes when the occasion demanded. In 1903 a touring British XV came to Natal. The NRU was galvanised into action. A British Team Entertainment Committee was established which then created a 'Zulu War Dance and Picnic Sub Committee', of which Bigby was the secretary. The highlight of the British team's visit to Pietermaritzburg was to watch 'a Zulu War-Dance'!⁴⁰

The spread of the game's popularity was apparent in the countryside. In many of the small Midland towns old boys from the rugby-playing schools raised their own teams to play the first XVs of their alma maters. In addition there were the annual games of 'Past' v 'Present'. These not only consolidated a class always threatened by geography and sparse demography, but it also ensured that generational conflict was accommodated within the confines of a sport which stressed teamwork. Sons might feel frustrated with their fathers, resentful of having to work the farm, aggrieved that elder siblings had gotten a better deal, yet rugby provided a code where the game eclipsed all. Here, before, during and after the game, the love of the sport and the affirmation of male physical power underscored that what they shared was their masculinity.⁴¹

Rugby had become a symbol of white male success, exuberance, athleticism, solidity. In this, it had succeeded in spreading hegemonic class and masculine values through the colony. Along the way, a distinction had been created between itself and soccer. The emphasis on racial unity amongst whites meant that since many white boys continued to play soccer in the towns, the denigration of soccer as working class activity was not absolute.

Notes

- 1 Adolescence throws up many anxieties for boys, for example attachment to mother, attraction to older boys, sexual attraction for other boys. These challenge self-conceptions of masculinity. Sport heightens these or allays them.
- 2 Connell's views are not unique in this regard. Pierre Bourdieu, for example, talks about 'bodily hexis' which 'is political mythology realised, embodied, turned into a permanent disposition, a durable way of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking' (Bourdieu 1991:13).
- 3 Polo also was a game in which prominent ONFs came together: the all-triumphant Dargle Club team of 1896-98, for example, included P D Kimber and Duncan McKenzie and E N Griffen, three of the most prominent farmers in the district (*Cape Times* 1929:80).
- 4 These ideas are developed in R Morrell, (ed) 1996. *The political economy and identities in KwaZulu-Natal: historical and social perspectives* (Durban: Indicator Press).
- 5 Personal communication with Skonk Nicholson, Woodrow Cross, Ronald Brookes, Pat Smythe and Tony Barratt.

- 6 For a superb analysis of the historical poetics and symbolism of such attire, see Comaroff 1987:191–209.
- 7 The Bishops College of Pietermaritzburg should not be mistaken for Bishops (Diocesan's College), Cape Town. Bishops College existed from 1872 to 1881. It was succeeded by Michaelhouse in 1896. In 1901 Michaelhouse was transferred to Balgowan (Nicholson & Wiblin 1990, 94).
- 8 The influence of such boyhood experiences is wonderfully examined by Ronald Fraser in his study of his childhood. Fraser, born of wealthy parents, became a left-wing intellectual. In trying to understand his past, he retraced, with the help of psychoanalysis, his path into adulthood. His boyhood years were spent in the company of working-class children, his parents being away from home for much of the time. For Fraser, the bonds made in those years were formative (Fraser 1984:79).
- 9 *S Michael's Chronicle* II (7) November 1906:11.
- 10 *S Michael's Chronicle* II (5) October 1905:5.
- 11 *Pietermaritzburg College Magazine* 1 (12) September 1902:17.
- 12 *Pietermaritzburg College Magazine* 1 (12) September 1902:17. Shula Marks notes that in the 1890s racial hostility was directed more at Indians than at Africans (Marks 1970:10).
- 13 *S Michael's Chronicle* II (4) May 1905:6.
- 14 *The Hiltonian* 2 (3) November 1902:13.
- 15 *The Natal who's who* 1906:92. For a fuller treatment of the Hime family, see R Morrell, 'The family man and empire: Sir Albert Hime of Natal, 1875—1903'. *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 18, 1998.
- 16 Anon, 'The Restless Murrays', [n d]:3.
- 17 KCM 89/3/B1, extracts from the Natal Press, 26 June 1890—7 March 1902. Transcribed by Alf Herbert, *Natal Witness*, 12 September 1890.
- 18 In the British context, Vamplew (1988) has shown how industrialisation changed leisure-time use, eventually propelling wage-earners into new team and spectator sports. In the South African context, Glen Adler has demonstrated how sport was effective in breaking down racial barriers within the black working class (Adler 1993).
- 19 CSO 1278, 1890/6636; *Natal Witness* 28 September, 1893; CSO 1452, 1896/126; I/MEL 111/2/9, PB 694/1902; CSO 1796, 1905/7210; CSO 1895, 1910/5334; *Natal's who's who* 1906, 56.
- 20 *The Hiltonian*, 7, 13, June 1910, 4; Hilton Archive, Old Boys Society Minute Book, Annual Dinner and Meeting, 3 July, 1897; *Natal Witness*, 14 March 1899; *The Hiltonian*, 1, 2, June 1902.
- 21 I would like to thank Alan Whiteside for drawing my attention to this reference.
- 22 A wonderful example of this is provided by the newspaper exchanges between Ralph Tatham and the *Cape Times* over a 1913 speech by Governor-General Gladstone congratulating the South African XV for its victorious tour of the British isles. Tatham accused Gladstone of 'Such impropriety (as) should engage the attention of every man in South Africa who values his liberty' (CAD, GG 1102, 23/279. Newspaper clippings from *South African News*, 5 February 1913; *Cape Times*, 6 February 1913). Ralph Tatham belonged to a very prominent Midland family. His betrayal of family values is discussed in chapter 9.
- 23 *Pietermaritzburg College Magazine* III (38) (June 1914):10.
- 24 *Pietermaritzburg College Magazine* III (26) (June 1908):24.

- 25 KCM 89/3, NRU Annual Report for 1904–5:83–85.
- 26 KCM 89/3, NRU Secretary's Report, 27 March 1909:119.
- 27 *St Michael's Chronicle*, II (14) June 1910.
- 28 The suffragette movement did not have widespread support in the metropole or the periphery (Callaway and Helly 1992, 80; Greytown Museum, File – Greytown People: Tatham, MV/2.).
- 29 *Natal Witness*, 28 March 1900.
- 30 Greytown Museum, File – Greytown People: Tatham, MV/2.
- 31 *The Hiltonian*, III (32) June 1911.
- 32 Natal first played in the Currie Cup in 1892. The Cup originated in the donation by Donald Currie of a gold trophy for the South African team that did best against the touring British team in 1888. Currie was described as 'a colossus in the shipping world'. He founded the Castle Line in Liverpool in 1862. He expanded his operation to the Cape in the 1870s and focused operations on South Africa. He merged his line with rivals, the Union Line in 1900 (Mitchell & Sawyer 1987:6).
- 33 KCM 89/3/B1, Natal Rugby Union Minute Book 6 March 1902–4 November 1919 (KCM 89/3) Meeting of 12 June 1910:138.
- 34 KCM 89/3/B1, Natal Rugby Union Minute Book, Meeting of 28 May 1911.
- 35 KCM 89/3/B1, Natal Rugby Union Minute Book, Special meeting of NRU, 30 May 1919.
- 36 Langley was also a passionate big game hunter who gratified his passion in the company of his brother and officer friends in the garrison. CSO 1872, 3095/1909, A S Langley to Colonial Secretary, 27 May 1909.
- 37 *Pietermaritzburg College Magazine*, III (26) June 1908:17–24.
- 38 Haw and Frame 1988:132; NT 86, T4003/190, note from Superintendent of Education, [n d].; PM 34, 1902/3397, Stalker to Hime, p1 of enclosed pamphlet.
- 39 AGO 1/9/32, A/1907; AGO 1/9/32, 21 A/1907; Marks 1970:147, 266. A reminder of the close similarity between the racial views and dealings of senior rugby men is to be found in the conduct of Arthur Hime, who was appointed to represent the interests of Cakijana, a prominent 1906 rebel. His client specifically requested that restraining orders preventing him from being in Pietermaritzburg and giving attention to his own defence be challenged. Hime refused to heed the request (Marks 1970:277).
- 40 KCM 89/3/B1, Natal Rugby Union Minute Book, Meeting of the British Team Entertainment (Sub) Committee of NRU, 22 July 1903; Committee Meeting, 7 August 1903:63.
- 41 *S Michael's Chronicle*, II (5) October 1905:30 It should be noted that these games also kept Natal's politicians and their families in the game. In a game at Michaelhouse in 1907, for example, A H Winter, the son of H D Winter (Minister of Agriculture), and the nephews of the Prime Minister, Sir F R Moor, were amongst those that played against the schoolboy First XV. *S Michael's Chronicle*, II (8) June 1907:20.