

Rosana Barbosa (2022) *Soccer and Racism. The Beginnings of Futebol in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, 1895-1933*. Anthem Press. London, 77 pp. (ISBN:9781785279249).

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Rosana Barbosa's third book *Soccer and Racism. The Beginnings of Futebol in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, 1895-1933* stems from an undergraduate course that the author taught at St. Mary's University in 2014. Barbosa is a History professor and researcher of the history and issues of migratory ties in Brazil. She is also the author of *Immigration and Xenophobia. Portuguese Immigrants in Early Nineteenth Century Rio de Janeiro* (2009), and *Brazil and Canada: Economic, Political, and Migratory Ties, 1820s to 1970s* (2017). Barbosa's two previous books therefore cover respectively, the nineteenth century Portuguese migratory movements in Brazil, and the migratory exchange between Canada and Brazil between the 1828 and 1978. In *Soccer and Racism*, Barbosa sheds an interesting light on how the history of Black people and Portuguese immigrants has been intertwined with the history of soccer in Brazil.

Soccer and Racism delves into the origins of *futebol* in Brazil and shows how its inception and subsequent evolution in the country were rooted in racist, elitist, and xenophobic practices. The research for *Soccer and Racism* was based on “newspapers and secondary sources mostly in Portuguese” (Barbosa, 2022, p. 1), covering the period between 1895 and 1933 and focusing on the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The book is divided into an introduction, three chapters, and an epilogue, which includes a summary of the research by the author herself, as well as offering a brief reflection on the relationship between soccer and gender. Because the book is aimed at non-experts on Brazil, the introduction provides the reader with a concise overview of the key historical events taking place after the abolition of slavery, including the increase in the migratory ties that took place between 1821 and 1932 in Brazil, which brought about 4.5 million immigrants to the country.

Drawing from a variety of documentary materials produced by football clubs, the Brazilian media, and public audiences, Barbosa’s study elucidates how the racism and socioeconomic barriers in the soccer community were not only the result of the discrimination of a post-abolition society, but also the reflection of an elite highly influenced by social Darwinism imported from Europe. This kind of barrier “[...] was seen as a model and European immigration as a tool for decreasing the predominance on non-whites in the population. Most Brazilians, like other nations in the Americas, were

led to believe that 'white was better'. Therefore, the elites praised the superior qualities of Northern Europeans and generally accepted the idea of 'Aryan superiority as a historical fact' [...]" (ibid, p. 3).

As stated in the book's foreword by the historian John Reid, Barbosa's approach falls between two of the most popular strands for discussing the role of soccer in Brazil. That of sport history, which is concerned with the reception, diffusion, and sociocultural evolution of a sport to a new location (DaMatta, 2006; Brown, 2014; Alabarces, 2018). And that of national history, which recognizes how sports can reflect the changes that occur to the national and political identity of a country (Barbosa, 2022, p. vii; see also: Wood, 2017; Wenn & Barney, 2017; Widener, 2017). Barbosa's research not only recognizes the potential of history of soccer in revealing deeper societal changes in the history of Brazil. It also reveals the sports ambiguous trajectory as an instrument of racialized oppression and change.

In the first chapter, Barbosa traces the sport's origins in Brazil, from the first known organized game in São Paulo in 1895 to the formation of the most influential clubs who started to professionalize the sport. British immigrants Charles Miller and Thomas Donohoe are present among the most prominent names in the history of Brazilian soccer. They organized informal soccer matches and had an instrumental participation in the soccer leagues, as well as the first tournaments in the early years of soccer in Rio de

Janeiro and São Paulo. This chapter is particularly important because it shows that the evolution of soccer in Brazil was also a game of connections. Miller's association to the British communities and to the Brazilian elite was crucial for the dissemination of the sport. On one hand, Miller enjoyed the support of the European communities that sought a way to celebrate their culture in the sport. On the other, he was backed by the enthusiasm of a young elite which saw the British sport as a way to distinguish themselves from the lower class, racialized Brazilians. Despite their differences, both these groups used soccer as an instrument to mark the distance between themselves and the groups that they considered racially inferior.

To expand the project of whitening the future of the country, both cities began sponsoring a variety of urban developments. These resulted in the mass-marginalization of dark-skinned Brazilians and a complete reconfiguration of both São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. A great deal of these urban changes—including the construction of tournament stadiums—were made with the support of foreign and domestic companies that saw clear potential for profit with the growth of the sport in the country. The interests of these foreign companies in profiting from the urbanization of these cities met the desire of the Brazilian-born elites to be perceived as equals by their European counterparts. The subsequent chapters of the book explore how clubs, leagues, and tournaments articulated

severe restrictions, segregating players that threatened the “white” and civilized image the country sought to project locally and abroad.

Chapter 2 emphasizes that, while Brazil never declared any formal policy of racial segregation, the Brazilian elite, the clubs, and even the government regularly raised barriers to prevent the addition of players of color in major teams and leagues of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro between 1904 and 1920. As noted by Barbosa, “the image of Brazil was a major concern for the decision-makers of the First Republic and the image they wanted to disseminate [and export] was of a white and ‘civilized’ nation” (ibid, p. 37). For example, in May of 1907, Rio’s Liga Metropolitana passed a resolution to completely ban players of color. The ban resulted in the dismissal of its only dark-skinned player Paulino de Souza. Due to the popularization of the sport, these restrictions became more subtle, progressively switching from color to profession, then to literacy. In another attempt to keep players of color from joining the teams and playing in the tournaments, the leagues tried to impose a restriction for players who performed any kind of manual labor. Barbosa does not provide further details or explanations to justify this progression, but she affirms that “[a]lthough no specifics were given, clearly the rule was designed to ban manual workers, who were largely dark-skinned individuals” (ibid, p. 28).

Additionally, the affiliation fees that players had to pay to the clubs also had a big part in the battle between the democratization and the restriction of soccer. The creation of Bangu Athletic Club, Botafogo Athletic Club, and the America Football Club around 1904 was a response to the clubs whose fees were almost five times higher, and whose club members were more elite and exclusive. The reinforcement of exclusionary practices continued solidly throughout the 1920s with the support of President Epitácio Pessoa and the Confederação Brasileira de Desportos (CBD). According to the newspaper *Correio do Amanhã*, Pessoa had offered financial support to the confederation to exclude players of color, as well as keeping the national team “white” for the South American Cup that would take place in Argentina in 1921.

Without a doubt, the severe restrictions and racial abuse imposed by the soccer community in Brazil made it difficult for, and even deprived, many players of a career in the sport. This scenario began to change between the 1920s and 1933, when soccer began gaining the status of a professional sport in Brazil. This change was in part driven by the creation and popularization of the Clube de Regatas Vasco da Gama, a club founded by Portuguese immigrants. In fact, the history of Portuguese immigration in Brazil (covered in the final chapter) is particularly important to understanding the nuances of racial relations in the country.

Even though Portuguese-born individuals made up between 15 and 24 percent of the city's population in the early twentieth century (ibid, p. 38), they were considered an undesired type of Europeans by Brazilians. The newspapers describe several episodes of animosity and Lusophobia towards Portuguese immigrants, who were perceived as illiterate and associated with poverty. Part of this negative perception was also due to its roots in the scientific racism that reinforced the idea of "Latin degeneracy" attributed to the Portuguese heritage (idem). With due proportion, the exclusionary practices applied to black soccer players were extended, in the form of xenophobia, to Portuguese players.

Barbosa's study is a great guide for those interested in how soccer came to be one of the strongest national symbols of Brazilian national identity. By presenting a concise history of the most popular sport of Brazil, this book constitutes a solid source for educators who wish to incorporate historical context to an introductory class on Brazilian culture. However, at times, the same conciseness is shown to be detrimental to the arguments presented by Barbosa. This is especially if readers are presumed to have an introductory understanding of Brazilian history and culture. In chapter 2, for example, readers might have benefited from more historiographical information and analysis to help them understand how the many restrictions imposed by the leagues and teams constitute racially motivated instruments of exclusion. Hopefully, Barbosa's project will be continued and expanded in the future. By acknowledging that the racism in soccer did

not end with its popularization, *Soccer and Racism* invites readers to think critically about the new mechanisms and discourses that are being used to reinforce discriminatory practices in the present as well.

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