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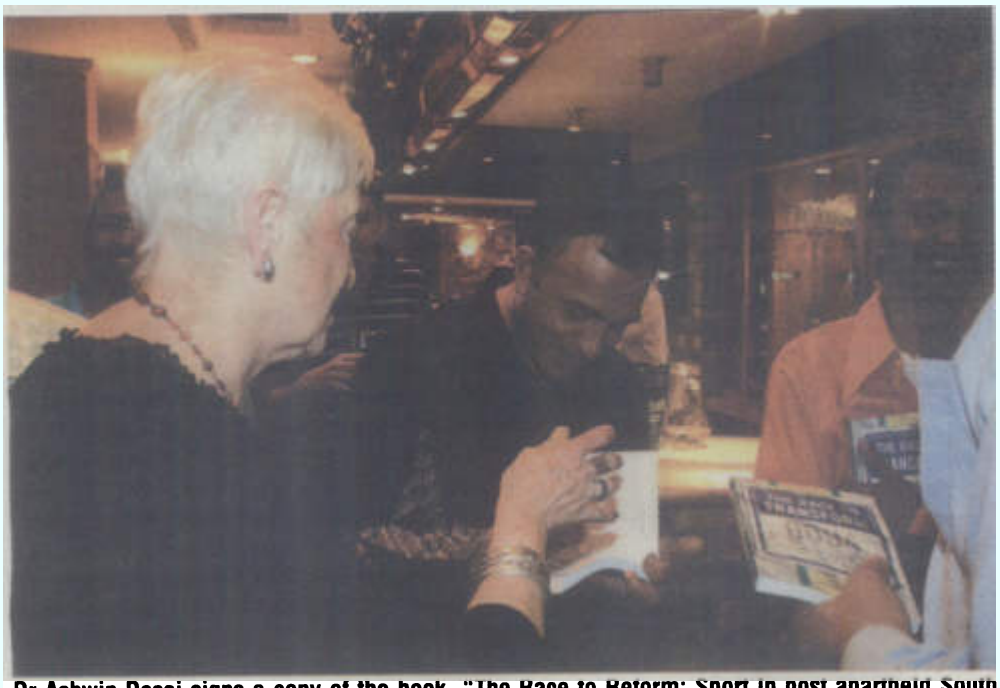
Sport book timeously launched



Dr Ashwin Desai signs a copy of the book, "The Race to Reform: Sport in post apartheid South Africa", which he edited. It was officially launched at Adams, Musgrave last week.

BY BARSHAN RANGAI
EXPRESS REPORTER

WITH the World Cup almost upon us, a new book that takes a look at sport transformation in South Africa received a timely launch in Durban last week.

The book, which explores how sport reflects matters such as inequality, race and the making of a common destiny, was edited by Ashwin Desai, with contributions by eight other authors.

It seeks to address how the state and sporting institutions have attempted to rectify the damage caused by apartheid, if the changes are reinforcing a form of class apartheid in sports and whether the current path is deepening inequalities rather than correcting the past.

Durban sports reporter and one of the eight authors, Zayne Nabbi, said, "The book has taken stock of where transformation is in South Africa. We have looked at our very divided background pre-1994 and we have thrown a line to the future and tried to access what has gone on since 1994. The book is a refreshing take on transformation. It's quite candid and we certainly hold no punches."

The book also addresses how the policies have changed and argues that there has been no trickle-down effect, with some gaining immensely from black economic empowerment while others have not, according to Nabbi.

"The book addresses these issues. Is transformation simply looking at the numbers in the national team or is it about putting in policies that are actually going to help the masses and the disadvantaged. We write it in a refreshing way and a way that academics and your man in the street can enjoy," Nabbi said.

Desai said, "When Zayne and I approached the book and its chapters we wanted to cut across and be very honest about who makes policies and what are the consequences of policies. One of the moving things for me in writing this book is how academics and consultants get involved in making policies, but they don't just see the effects of their policies. And it's like the Titanic: even if they see the effects they can't change course."

Desai said that although policies might be implemented with good intentions, "the road to hell is paved with good intention. For example, if you introduce a policy in KZN saying that every white club must have two black players, all those white clubs do is come and watch the Jaguars (a Sydenham-based rugby club), buy those players and put them in their club and then Jaguars do badly."

Desai said such policies were partly to blame for why some smaller clubs are struggling, as talent is taken away from them leaving them with poor results at the end of the season.

The book, which has chapters on different sporting codes, places an emphasis on South Africa's transition, how it has affected township sport and the debates and contestations that have become the story of South Africansport.

The Race to Transform: Sport in Post-Apartheid South Africa (HSRC Press) is edited by Ashwin Desai with contributions by Ahmed Veriava, Zayn Nabbi, Dale T. McKinley, Prishani Naidoo, Zanele Muholi, Justin van der Merwe, Goolam Vahed and Vishnu Padayachee.