

# South African footballers in Britain

When goalkeeper **Wilfred Waller** turned out for Bolton Wanderers in March 1900, he began a tradition that would see South Africa provide more footballers to Britain than any country other than France and the Netherlands.

British settlers and military officers introduced football to South Africa in the 19th century. However, before the 1990s, white players and black players rarely met, and no black South Africans were signed by British clubs until 1956.

Next to play in England was **Alec Bell**, who joined Manchester United in 1903. Bell had Scottish parents and played for Scotland. He helped United win the League in 1908 and the FA Cup in 1909.

The first African team to play outside Africa was the Orange Free State Basotho Tourists, made up of black South Africans. They toured Britain and France in 1899, just as the South African War (the Second Anglo-Boer War) was about to begin. The conflict was between the British, who ruled most of South Africa, and the Boers of Dutch origin, who wanted their own independent homeland within South Africa. The Basotho Tourists were treated as figures of fun by the press – until war broke out, leading to a respectful curiosity as to which side black South Africans would take in the conflict.

In 1924, a white South Africa FA team (the 'Springboks') toured Britain. Liverpool signed several South Africans, after the Springboks beat them 5-2, including **Gordon Hodgson**, who became Liverpool's top goalscorer, scoring 17 hat-tricks.

From 1948, with apartheid (separate development) now official government policy in South Africa, football, like the rest of society, was under even greater pressure to divide along colour lines. Many laws were brought in to divide people.

World War 2 left Britain with a shortage of good footballers. Again clubs looked to South Africa for talent. Charlton signed 11 white South Africans between 1945 and 1959. They were cheap, because they were amateurs at home, so no transfer fees!

In 1956, Coventry City signed winger **Steve 'Kalamazoo' Mokone**, who became the first black South African player allowed abroad, after waiting 3 years for a passport while police investigated his anti-apartheid activities. One of his friends was the future Archbishop and Nobel Peace Prize winner Desmond Tutu. Despite a promising start, Mokone didn't settle at Coventry and the following season joined Heracles FC in Holland, where he became hugely popular. He found Europe a 'culture shock'.

In 1958, Mokone welcomed fellow South African **Darius Dhlomo** to Heracles. Dhlomo also found life in Europe very different. On his debut, he went missing shortly before the game, causing panic among his team. Eventually, he emerged from a cupboard wearing his football kit – in South Africa, blacks and whites could not change together.

During this troubled time, Gerry Francis signed in 1957 as a winger for Leeds United. Francis, who had African and Asian parents, played over 50 games for Leeds, scoring nine goals, before joining York City.

In 1961, Leeds signed winger **Albert 'Hurry, Hurry' Johanneson** from Germiston Colliers. Johanneson soon won over fans with his amazing skills. During the 1963-64 season, he was Leeds' top scorer with 15 goals, and in 1965 became the first black player to play in an FA Cup final. Albert was the first modern black superstar, but also a target of racist abuse, undermining his confidence. Tragically, he died a lonely, penniless alcoholic in a Leeds council flat in 1995.

From the 1960s to the mid 1990s, only a handful of South African footballers came to the UK. South Africa was banned from playing international football because of its racist policies, meaning players had few chances to show off their talents to the world. The country was banned from the Olympics and boycotted in many ways by other countries.

Among the few who came to the UK during the 1970s and 80s were **Colin Viljoen** (Ipswich), **Craig Johnston** (Liverpool), **Bruce Grobbelaar** (Liverpool) and the **Stein** brothers **Brian**, **Edwin** and **Mark**. Brian eventually played for England, while Mark played for Chelsea. All the Stein brothers spoke out against apartheid, and against racism in football in England. They were following a family tradition – their father, Isiah Stein, was an anti-apartheid activist, who served time as a political prisoner.

In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 26 years, as South Africa signalled its intention to abandon the apartheid system, and in 1992 FIFA lifted its ban. 1994 saw the first general election in which black people could vote, and Mandela became President, representing the African National

Congress. Also in 1994, Leeds signed **Lucas Radebe** from the Kaizer Chiefs and **Phil Masinga** from Mamelodi Sundowns. Radebe later captained both club and country. South Africa was once more able to play international football and players could travel more freely.

The power of sport to unite people across racial divides was illustrated when South Africa hosted, and won, the rugby World Cup in 1995 and the African Cup of Nations in 1996.

In the early 21st century, with **Quinton Fortune** at Manchester United, **Stephen Pienaar** starring for Everton and **Aaron Mokoena** captain of both Portsmouth and Bafana Bafana, South Africans again feature at the highest level in British football.



**2009**  
Stephen Pienaar plays for Everton in 2009 FA Cup Final.



**1999**  
Quinton Fortune makes 77 appearances for Manchester United from 1999 to 2006.



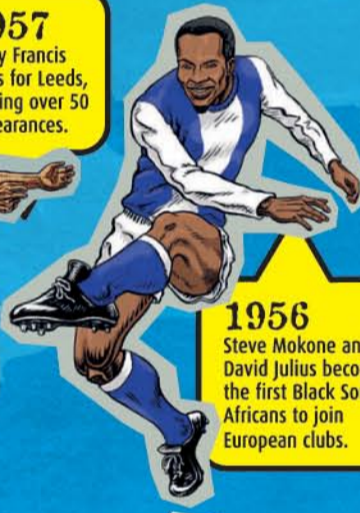
**1994**  
Lucas Radebe signs for Leeds United from the Kaizer Chiefs.



**1984**  
Black South African Brian Stein plays for England.



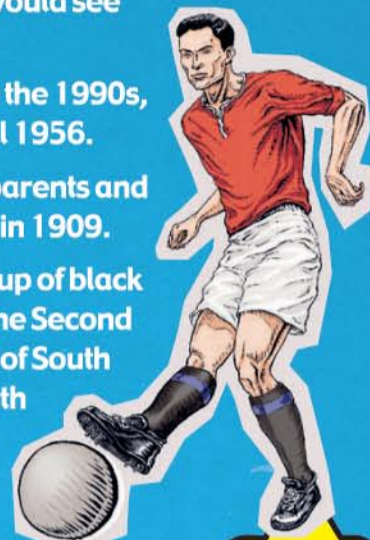
**1956**  
Steve Mokone and David Julius become the first Black South Africans to join European clubs.



**1957**  
Gerry Francis signs for Leeds, making over 50 appearances.



**1903**  
Alec Bell joins Manchester United. He helps them win the FA Cup in 1909'.



**1899**

Wilfred Waller becomes the first South African professional footballer, for Bolton Wanderers.



**1925**

Gordon Hodgson, 17 hat-tricks for Liverpool.

