Play the White Man: the Theatre of Racialised Performance in the Institutions of Soccer

Colin King

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> You know when I was at Wolves as a young player I was
> known throughout the area as the first black player to get into
> the team. It was a time when people thought we couldn't
> tackle, we couldn't play in the cold - and then along came
> big, bad Bob Hazel. During training one day the ball went out
> of play and nobody wanted to get it. And then one of the
> white players looks at another of the white players and
> laughs, saying 'Go on Bob, play the white man'.[1]

This quotation is taken from an interview I conducted with a prominent black footballer from the eighties. In that two hour session, he talked about the pressures to conform within the culture of professional football. He spoke of the expectations of his white colleagues - captured so perfectly by the 'play the white man' jibe, and about the stress of having to operate in a exclusively white male environment: the expectations to 'go drinking with the lads,' the racial abuse from the crowd, and the ignorance shown by white coaches and managers. He told me many painful stories that I myself, as a black sportsman, recognised.

I could hear the sadness and hurt in his voice as he recalled the 'white man' jibe. This could have been read and understood in several different ways. On one level, 'playing the white man' means doing what white working class players have traditionally had to do in football. Yet this should not detract from the fact a process of racialisation is taking place: in order to belong, you have to behave like white players, or at least act on 'their' terms. The casual racism of the 'play the white man' taunt captured something integral to the experiences of black men involved in professional football. What is interesting about the invitation offered to Bob is that it exposes the implicit whiteness that defines what is normal, routine and expected in the culture of the sport. In this paper I intend to focus on the unspoken rules which this remark highlights, and on the consequences for black footballers and coaches who are operating

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[1] Interview, October 1997.

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within a culture where they have to 'play out of their skins' in order to succeed.

Bob spoke about being the only black person in the team, and about the jokes and banter on the way to an away match. He described an incident which took place just as the coach was about to leave, when the physio told him to pick the kit up and put it in on the bus. He said the whole bus went quiet, and the white players and white coach turned towards him. He stood up and looked at the physio, and said in a very calm manner: "I didn't become a professional footballer to do the job expected of a apprentice."

The demons of this incident still haunt him: he appeared angry and upset during the interview. He had realised that, despite his efforts, he had been typecast as the aggressive, difficult 'uppity nigger' who would take no shit. This was a common problem in the dynamics between black and white players at the time: assertion on the pitch was associated with the failure to comply with the caricature of the submissive, happy go lucky black male. It was not clear whether this physio was acting out his own feelings of black men being inferior. What was clear, however, was that Bob was not prepared to play to this form of whiteness.

This was reinforced when we talked about being a black player in the white cultural settings and traditions of English soccer and the pressures to assimilate to succeed. I had asked him a question about what it was like to be one of the first black players in English soccer. He looked at me as if the question was judgmental: his response suggested that the approach to placing black men in soccer has constrained itself to a notion of race that misses the love, excitement and pleasure in playing.

> It was wasn't about being the first black player or being a black player, I just loved playing football more than anything on this earth, so to me it was just about playing the game.[2]

[2] Quote from a black footballer, October 1997

This statement is symbolic, in that love is of the game is seen as more important than the performance of 'playing the white man', or resisting a form of whiteness. Despite the temptation to test how far black players in football are assimilated into the social world of whiteness (the food, clubs, drinking and going out with white women), this should not distract from the sheer excitement attached to playing. The danger is that whiteness or the 'playing of the white man' becomes associated with something that is objectified: in 'selling out', 'the coconut', Malcolm 'X, the 'house nigger' (Haley, 1965). Even when the black player succumbs to these acts of whiteness and is seen as complying with the white man's apparent perception of him, does this simply constitute a form of white-manning? Having interviewed a black player from the 1970s and 1980s, I wanted to find out if the trends and themes for black players in relation to the 'playing of the white man' had changed approaching the 21st century.

Throughout the many interviews I have carried out with black and white players, coaches and administrators, the metaphor 'play the white man' has been a useful analytical tool in examining the complex, contradictory and transient ways identity and representation is negotiated and acted out. The racial identities here are about playing roles, expectations and performances, whether it be on the playing field, in the coaching area, or the administration office. These are all places where dialogue between black and white people will lead to forms of inclusion and exclusion, and where cultural barriers are being constructed.

In this paper I am interested in looking at how the concept of 'White-manning' was used by T.K. Utchay (1933) to describe the embodied forms of whiteness and colonial control in Africa. I want to suggest that this can be applied to the social processes taking place in the interactions between black and white personnel in soccer. 'White-manning' is a type of technical term used to describe one of the strangest actions in existence. It is the name for a practice introduced by the white man, by which one white man thinks himself superior to another, not for any reason such as academic qualifications or financial means, but simply because he has a white skin. It is employed to 'describe the conduct of certain Africans who slavishly imitate the white

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man and go about despising other black men for reasons they do not know, just because the white man
does so' (T.K. Utchay, 1933: 432).

By analysing the interviews and through observations of actors in action (meetings, courses and conferences) I want to consider the concept of white-manning or 'playing the white man' as an insight into the way people make sense of their professional duties in the context of soccer. What does the metaphor 'play the white man' tell us about the personal experiences and difficulties in holding onto whiteness, and the implication for change, especially in relation to black players in their transition from playing into coaching, management and administration?

In the first part of the paper I want to look at the playing context, the field where the most polarised and stereotypical notions of the 'playing the white man' theme would appear to be most vivid. In talking to players, coaches and manager, I was to test how far the attachment to the physicality of the black body, juxtaposed to the rational, militarised orientation of the white coach, diverts and conceals the way the actors play into additional identities, represented by class, professionalism and the impact black players have had in the new cultural settings of soccer.

In the second part of the paper I am interested in comparing how these themes may change as black players move into the institutions of coaching, management and administration. I want to translate the language and the non-verbal communications used in the interpretations and constructions of whiteness, and to look at how this leads to playing a more complex form of whiteness, by playing the anti-racist, which may assume the identity of a blackness and will have important consequences for how 'playing the white man' is then reconstructed.

In the third and final part of the paper, through a participant observation study in relation a coaching course I attended, (UEFA A Conversion course), I want to look at the ways in which footballers and course administrators, over a one-week period, exchange cultural formations through talk (Clifford, 1986), and how they perform both private and public forms of identity and representation that cannot easily be fixed to

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the essence of whiteness. What are the consequences for black players mirroring these performances of whiteness, in the way the Indians (Basso, 1978) copied and inverted the performances of the white Anglo-American?

Throughout these stages I want to examine what the performances reveal about the complexity of racialised identities, which cannot simply be seen within the generalisations of racial labelling, such as black players seeking identity in sport (Cashmore, 1982;1990; Carrington and Wood 1982). I also want to move away from an analysis invested purely in the status of the body (Hoberman, 1997), and look at its relationship to the mind. For this reason, I apply Fanon's (1967) notion of the mask, and locate football as a medium in which personalities may be perceived to be acting out myths, dependency, sexuality, conformity and control, and where men fail to examine the implications of their actions and what is at risk in the need to 'play the white man'.

The playing field and whiteness
The playing field in soccer is often seen as the place where rituals and performances are taking place that have become indicative of white male, working class hedonistic traditions. The transition from school into the youth team setting and eventual playing may be characterised by an adherence to cultural arrangements and a response to the authority ascribed to white coaches, managers chairmen and boardroom members. Most of these men will be from different regional, family and school backgrounds, but will share a commonality through colour, the physicality of 'whiteness.'

 It then becomes tempting to attach stereotypical 'white men' notions to these actors, along with assumptions about how they will behave in a given situation, thus reducing them to white artefacts. To them, the 'playing the white man' and the integration of black players thus becomes one dimensional: the complexity and diverseness of the acts and exchanges is therefore missed. This is problematical in many institutional cultural arrangements and is not specific to sport. What makes sport unique is how the relationship between the body and mind has been separated out.

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Following the work of Clifford (1986), who writes about culture as a complex dynamic, shaped by interaction, dialogue and the non-verbal ritualised forms of communication, I interviewed LF at his training ground, where there were many black and white players of different nationalities. The stereotype of the hard, white, cockney working class player seemed to have disappeared, to have been replaced by the training programmes, diets and diverse languages of a new global age.

I waited in awe as this black player came up to me. He spoke with the broadest and deepest cockney accent. Throughout the 45 minute interview, he talked openly about his earlier encounters with white coaches, who perceived him as laid-back - a title rarely given to white players who may display the same type of behaviour. I asked him whether he thought something happens to the culture of black players when they enter the settings of football, and was shocked by his immediate response:

> That's the thing that gets thrown at black players all the time. You get asked why you go out with white women. That's one of the ways that black people think our players are selling out. My answer is that I don't go out with people because of their colour. I go out with them because they treat me right. I get on with people whether they are red, green or black. As a community we always tend to put ourselves down. I have never lost my blackness or my identity and I will never will.[3]

I was shocked that my open-ended question, posed to allow this player to talk about how the negotiations on the playing field inform particular cultural relationships and expectations, had been interpreted by him as a way in which to use his relationship
with a white women to define how external forces (the black community) were constraining his racial identity and constructing him in a narrow way as black man. Black men in sport are faced with this dilemma, no matter how they perform on the field, how their minds and bodies are

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[3] Quote from black footballer, October 1997

exploited by the forces of soccer: their blackness is still judged by notions of the sexual, the family and their lives outside of soccer.

One of the reasons why this happens is the secret codes, closed shops and unwritten agreements between players that bind them together as players, independent of race and class. Analysing what 'playing the white man' actually means becomes difficult in these situations, and so performances are judged according to external activities.   The black players I interviewed rarely gave concrete examples of how they were forced to 'play the white man' on the playing field, talking openly only about the race chanting from the terrace. Even when overt and explicit examples were provided, such as being called a 'nigger', being told to fetch the ball, or being described in the polarisation as aggressive or laid back, it was difficult to determine the motives behind these comments made by white players and coaches.

Consequently, in determining whether black men in soccer are 'playing the white man' by reference to how they are expected to perform in relation to white stereotypes, it becomes important to deconstruct the stereotype and how it is made. This means talking to white players about their performances as white men in the
context of soccer and how they see black players reacting and taking on these expectations in and outside the context of playing.

I went to talk to a white player who was in the Palace Football team when the Chairman made the famous comments about the limitations of black players in cold weather, and the need for a few hard white men to get them through the winter. The player, who had retired from the game several years previously, talked about his strong friendship with many of the black Palace players in the team at the time as if he was he honorary white man, often going to their dances and clubs, or going shopping with them. This performance is reminiscent of the way in which Fishkin (1996) talks about how whiteness complicates blackness, and how the boundaries between the two become blurred. The player appear to be embarrassed when I asked how the comments made by the white Chairman at Palace had affected the relationships between the black and players at the club:

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Well I was there, and I remember the senior players like MB and IW – MB was especially upset at the time. We treated it as something Noades would say. My initial impression when somebody told me I thought what a prat, and that in a way he was just saying what a lot of coaches say anyway. It was definitely something that was said and the fact that it was brought up in the open made people think 'what a load of crap'. Noades highlighted it: even though he didn't mean it, it helped the situation.[4]

What this comment frames and highlights is the commonly held white man's construction of black players, which is permissible within the football setting. Noades is held up as the sinner: this blankets the way in which white coaches secretly think about the role of black players. This is not always conscious or as pronounced as we would like to imagine in the race economy of the black male body. The manager of the Palace team at the time, whom I met at an exclusive tennis club, talked very openly about his time at Selhurst Park, and the controversy surrounding the comments Noades made. He told how he got the best out of the black players, and reflected on his difficult relationship with the Chairman at the time. I asked him what he thought of the comments made about black players. He immediately went on the defensive, saying that he wasn't the one who had made the remarks: he then commented.

I don't know. He often said some very stupid things and would upset people for no apparent reason, and there were a number of lads who were offended at the time. But the black players we had at the club were natural athletes and had an in-built hunger for the game. They were from poor upbringings, not middle class backgrounds. Take this tennis club here today - there's not a coloured person in it. So there is still a part of society that they don't mix in well. But it's fair to say that black footballers do things with a bit of style, in a way a white person possibly wouldn't always do. They are always prepared to chance their arm, and maybe

[4] Interview with ex-Palace Player, April 1997

that's why they don't always make the best defenders.[5]

I remember leaving the interview thinking about the inherent problems facing black researchers in having to integrate into settings as the outsider just on the premise of physical differences. During the interview I could remember closing my eyes and, as Dubois (1903) describes the veil, having to stand outside myself in talking to this white man and hearing the ghost of Ron Noades speaking, albeit in a softer, more liberal and less offensive way. White men can thus refute the stereotypes surrounding black players and then reaffirm them in a more polite and more patronising manner.

The stereotype of the hungry black player from a poor working class background, athletic, quick but unable to operate in the cold can therefore still be seen to resonate in the culture of the playing field. There was another question among some white players: when the going got tough, could their black team-mates be trusted to stand with their white brothers and compete in a military style collective force, where they had to be seen and made accountable? When talking to a white Palace player about the impact of Noades' comments on black players, he talked bout the cultural performances involving black and white players in the playing field, as I asked him what it was like to play with black players:

> I can talk about the black players I have played with. There were not many other nationalities; there were a few Irish and a few Welsh, but they did not get the same treatment as black players, they used to get treated the same as us. But there was an undercurrent of thinking with the black lads that they were going to stick together. Perhaps they were a little group away from us and maybe they caused that themselves. They wouldn't mix generally and kept to themselves, and then the team would go 4 or 5 nil down and they would close ranks. That was hard for the managers and the other players to deal with and we quite resented that.[6]

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[5] Interview with ex-Palace Manger, April 1997
[6] Interview with ex-Palace player, April 1997

As this white player completed the statement, visions of Hoberman's (1997) analogy between sport and the military came to mind, simply in the way that white players are seen as having the control and intelligence to direct the physical qualities of the black athlete. This may been seen as corresponding especially to the second world war, in which black soldiers were placed at the front line without the correct equipment. This situation was now being replayed in the context of soccer: black forwards and wingers, who may not have the stamina, guts and spirit of their white male counterparts. By placing black footballers in this image, this player could be seen to be racialising the inherent qualities of white men which black players would need to emulate in order to become assimilated into the cultural expectations of the teams.

The comment gives no sense of the changing demands placed upon black players since their arrival in the game, and sets an inherent problem in that the codes, language and expectations are set by whiteness. I was fortunate to talk to the first team coach at Charlton Football Club, a team with a high number of black players which had received great praise for their anti-racist endeavours and the way they had dealt with racism both on and off the field. We spoke at great length at the training ground. The coach was an ex-teacher who had worked with different minority groups dealing with the complexities of trans-cultural issues in sport and its relationship to institutionalised racism. I asked him if things were changing in terms of the cultural experiences of players, and the implications for black and white players on the playing field.

> Well since blacks have come on the scene they had to break many barriers. They have almost come into the game as white men with black skins. They have had to adjust to the dressing room banter, the jokes and mickey-taking, through to the way they had to dress, act, and the social and leisure things. Consequently, their field of activities may have had to change to prove they are no different from the white man. Whether it was necessary or whether it was a perception is difficult to say, but in South London with many immigrates there would have been a blend of different cultures.

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With the younger players coming into the game having to conform to these traditions they have introduced some of their own background, which has led to a new culture at this club. We have a very informal and relaxed match day. The preparation is taken seriously and each player treats themselves as an athlete. We usually play black music and that is the influence black players have had in relation to the club during the last few years. During one of the games we forgot to take the music box and it had an incredible effect on most of the players. This seems to me to be one of the important ways African-Caribbean players have influenced the traditions of English clubs.[7]

Throughout this account, despite the unprompted reference to Fanon (1967), there is no clear sense of what it constitutes to follow the traditions of white players: black players or Afro-Caribbean players seem to integrate into forms of English traditions with no problems at all. Music, so prominently reviewed in the work of Gilroy (1987) as an important medium in the transition of black people into the cultures of British society, seems to be referred to as improving the performance, and the only real trans-cultural crossover taking place between black and white players. The first team coach, while presenting as sympathetic and insightful, represents a new 'playing of the anti-racist' on the field, and music is set up as the platform whereby white players can play the black man without any challenge or reference to the essential core and traditions of whiteness, which the black players will still be expected to adhere to.

When talking about 'playing the white man', it then becomes important to pay more attention to the accounts, images and order of white players. This has proved problematical given the taken for granted, assumed, invisible manner in which this is performed. During the many interviews with white players, many could not get into a mental process in which they could openly discuss and give clear examples of what it meant to be white, or to play white. I talked to a player at Luton Football Club who tried hard to reconcile this concept of being white and the implications for his life in and outside football:

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[7] ex-first team coach at Charlton Football Club, 1997

I don't know, I have never thought about being white, I am just an individual. My parents are from Ireland so I just think of myself as half-Irish and half English. I suppose I just think of myself as a working class lad who always wanted to play professional football, to have a drink with the lads, to have a good time and do the best I could in football while I have a career in it.[8]

This was as close I got to an in-depth, reflective notion of whiteness. It kindled a anger and impatience in me in the obscure and reluctant ways white men describe and portray themselves, seemingly able only to refer to identities of class and nationality. What was prominent in many of their accounts were the important notions of the family, drinking as social expression of the pressures of playing, and their identity as given in the way football is organised within the context of English society. The arrival of black players begins to test the realities of order, control, masculinity and professionalism, and this has become more contested as white players make the smooth transition into coaching, management and administration: the 'playing of the white man' takes on a new dimension.

Coaching, management and adminstration

You just have to look around you, you look at the Football Association and the clubs up and down the country and the people who are running them and you say to yourself, you know when my parents came to this country and there were signs in the windows that said 'no blacks, no Irish and no dogs' - well those are the people who are running football today.

This was the second half of the interview with the black player at his training ground. He had aspirations to go into coaching, management and administration. The anger and despair in his voice suggested that he may not fulfil the criteria to get in the white male networks that seem to govern entry into these positions. I listened to

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[8] Interview with ex-Luton Player, October 1997

him describe the experiences of older black players from the 1980s and the cultural sacrifices they were not prepared to make to assimilate and achieve the honorary status of the white man, or to mimic whiteness.

Unfortunately white men, their histories, egos and sense of self fail to always see and acknowledge the contradictory pressures placed upon black players. Fanon's (1967) sense of the colonial is certainly pertinent to a space in soccer in the ways in which black players are restricted to being children, to wanting to be white, to needing to integrate at the request of the white master. This may appear rather rhetorical, but identity and its formation in sports culture is often concealed under a colour-blind ethos, which becomes more questionable at coaching and management level with the ease in which white players make this transition.

A white male county officer in his 60s offered his thoughts on why there are so few black managers:

> The desire to play amongst Afro-Caribbeans seems to be much greater in my experience than against Caucasians and their white male counter-parts. I know the ethnic minorities do have their problems but there is a danger of seeing everything as based on race. A lot of English culture is not based on race, but on the history of being a people. With Afro-Caribbean people (I am not sure if their roots go back to the Caribbean or Africa), they would have assimilated into whatever they are in. Let me give you an example. Two or three years ago I was on a East London bus and I heard these three kids talking with an East End accent. I turned around and saw two of the boys were black - so you see they had assimilated. Afro-Caribbeans bring something to the English culture, and British culture gives something to the Afro-Caribbean culture. I think there is a danger of everything being regulated by race.[9]

In a very obscure way, this white man was offering a analysis of sport where race appears to have a double function. On the one hand, it is

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[9] Football Administrator, October 1997

important in the way people exchange parts of their identities cross-culturally; on the other, the assimilation into English culture and traditions remains the criteria for entry into management. In a similar way to the work of Roediger (1994) and Frakenberg (1993), whiteness becomes invisible, rational and distant, because English culture has nothing to do with race. The consequences for the transition from playing into coaching and management cannot be rationalised within the institution, because the individuals who occupy and dominate these positions cannot see themselves as racial beings, taking advantage of the privileges of whiteness.

Whitemen unfortunately have not been exposed to a series of stereotypes in which they are seen as savages with a dependency complex.   Consequently, whiteness is held and adopted so tightly that it prevents the ownership of being vulnerable, the ability to psychologically rationalise with the pains and inherent pressures associated with 'playing the white man'. In the context of sport where the additional identity of masculinity is so prominent, the ability to understand and reconcile with the subconscious and the pressure to deny one's feelings, means the adherence to playing the white man becomes fragile.

This is not an attempt to present white men in coaching, management and administration as inhuman, detached or rigid, or as devaluing anything which may threaten their unchallenged representation.

At a Coaches and Managers meeting organised by the Football Association, with many well known managers and coaches from the Premier League and the Nationwide League, I attempted to find out why black players have failed to make the transition to management. Some common responses are noted blow:

> BH, CH, JD: I can't understand it. Maybe it's an evolutionary thing, and as more black players retire you will see more going into management.

> TD: Maybe they feel more comfortable in their own backyard.

PF: Well maybe if you got rid of some of those fucking Italians there would be more opportunities for the coloured lads.

AM: Maybe it's got something to do with the old boys network.

RM: I don't know, maybe white players don't trust black people in management.[10]

There is an inherent tension here in how to treat these accounts in the dynamic of a black man asking prominent white figures about the absence of black players in management. It is not a matter of truth and what is authentic but about how the location and the context impacts upon the reflection, and the apparent lack of consensus amongst white personnel . It was an important exercise in finding out how much white mangers intuitively understand the experiences of black players, or whether their blackness becomes neutralised under the colour-blind notion of being 'just players'.

On closer reflection, there was something more complex and hidden taking Place: all these white men were assembled in one place and were oblivious of any collective identity that involved being white men. They were performing in relation to their own individual identity and sense of who they were as managers and coaches. It becomes too simplistic to place them under the public heading of whiteness and miss the quality and specific ways white men are constructing and negotiating their status with other white men.

The bar is the setting where acts of selling, promoting and even bull-shitting takes place. One evening I went to the bar and was asked by a famous ex-Tottenham manager if I wanted a drink. I felt honoured and impressed by the gesture and replied that I would like a pineapple juice, to which he responded:

You're joking - aren't you from the Caribbean? I thought you people could drink something much stronger.[11]

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[10] Football Management and Coaches conference, June 1998
[11] Personal Interview

I immediately felt I had failed to be accepted into this area of professionalism: drink and conversation seemed to play an important part in how men relax, talk and set up cultural exchanges. I looked around the room that night to see a table of Football Association management, a table represented by club managers, another table of unknowns just on the fringe, and a table of completely unknowns. This is where I was positioned, making critical political analysis of the football world.

This phenomena is not only particular to the world of white men in coaching, management and administration, but in relation to the low numbers of black personnel, it becomes difficult to judge how black players will integrate into this cultural malaise. Consequently, fantasies are entertained, some qualified by how white men are seen and experienced outside the context of soccer. Some of these fantasies became more apparent when I went to an event celebrating the achievement of black footballers. In the absence of white personnel, different stories began to emerge about how black players feel about their failure to move into coaching, management and administration.

There was nobody at this event who had successfully moved into coaching and management. Yet there were many illustrious black players from the 1960s, 70s and 80s, who had a range of stories to tell about their failures to break into the white, male dominated networks of coaching, management and administration.

> BH: I remember feeling really disappointed when the job came up at Cambridge, and Brendon applied and wasn't given it. If Brendon couldn't get a job, what chance do I and other black players have? I was so pleased when Viv got the job. People in football say it's about who you know. It just seems that black people don't know many people in football.

> LB: There's still racism in the game. They try to put different labels on it, but when it comes down to it, it's just fucking racism. In this business people are reluctant to put a black person in, and that's

because they don't really know the black manager. It only takes one or two people to say no. You look at the white managers who have had problems with drink and whatever, but that has never prevented them. You hear Jo Bloggs saying about a white person - 'we can't have him because he likes a drink, he likes a bet, but he's all-right he's one of us'. But if he's a black person, 'oh he likes a drink, he likes a night out.

KA: I think a high profile white player will have a easier chance of breaking into management than a high profile black player. There are younger chairmen who want younger managers, but the big clubs are still run by the old school. I don't care whether you like it or not - they still don't want a black man in such a position. It's the old brigade - they still look upon us as being second class citizens.

CD: It's about individuals. You can have a club that hasn't got one ounce of racism, but if you look below the people who are making the decisions you can have racism there. People still tend to think of people in authority as white middle class males, and you have to have a certain type of personality. And they look at black people as working class with a laid back personality.[12]

It is likely that many black players have been pushed into sport and may have neglected their educational potential. This is described very well in the work of Sewell (1997), who articulates the complicated ways black masculinity is dealt with by white schoolteachers. The footballers would have sold their labour as players to the highest bidder, the slave owner, the club chairman and boardroom members and, as demonstrated in the work of Szymanski (1997), would not have been paid at the same level as their white male counter-parts, even when they were out-performing them on the field of play. These white chairmen would have kept the cultural setting of the boardroom exclusive - a myth, a reality rarely open to the black gaze of professional footballers which makes their entry into these sacred domains ever more difficult.

Consequently, unless they manage somehow to gain access into the

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[12] Black Players Award, Birmingham, July 1998

closed domains of coaching and management, black players will begin to construct illusions about the whiteness of the coaching and management setting. From the quotes made by these black players, several important notions in relation to performance and identity and the artefact of whiteness become apparent, seeming to create a distinction between whiteness at the playing level, and the management and administration levels.

White men in the setting of administration are perceived as playing to a tight middle-class script, historically formed and objectified within the institution of administration. Board members and chairmen are then held up as being responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the systems and structures in football. Ironically, both black and white players can unite in displacing the problems of institutionalised racism onto these faceless and invisible white men.

Administration: does is seem to get whiter?

The statistics of the race breakdown of people currently in football administration reinforces the fears and suspicions of black players: less than 0.5 of people in football coaching, management and administration are black. As new and younger white men stake a place in the new corporate face of football administration, the language, codes and behaviour, traditionally seen and accepted as the old boys network, become reconstructed in a era of anti-racism - a new ideology which has resulted in a more complex notion of institutionalised racism in football.

In an interview with the Chair for the Commission for Racial Equality, it became clear that when living and working in institutional settings, whether they be soccer, social work or the private market, race and the complexity of racialisation place enormous pressures on individuals to play, deceive and act out processes that are unconnected to one's internal feelings. The fear of shame, disgrace, using the wrong words and being seen in the wrong place places constraints on the performances of soccer professionals, playing to blackness and whiteness in the most bizarre and unhealthy ways.

He offered me one of the most powerful and insightful appraisals of institutionalised cultures in and outside of football, and a personal analysis of what it may mean to 'play the white man' in the coaching and management settings of football.

> In terms of institutionalised racism, nobody tells you that they are discriminating against you: the culture of the organisation makes you know where your place is. As a black person, you have got to know that part of the British culture means that you're on your own trying to co-exist with a group of norms that you are grappling with. There are people within that world that will manipulate processes to suit themselves, who appoint people in their own images. You know that your face don't fit but you can't relate it to that institutional culture. There are values and norms that you see as reasonable that everybody has to comply with. White people are still at the top, white people still have the power. Most clubs know what they want, and it's about image and personality. Not enough black players have crafted this out. While all the corporate boardrooms in Britain are predominately white and male, what you will see emerging in boardrooms up and down the country are more Asians.[13]

This seemed to be an important analysis, which was not simply about the physicality of blackness, so well exploited in the playing field, yet made redundant in the white administrative structures. The issues of images and personality have become fundamental, converting the mind to accepting values, behaviours and attitudes as the essential core of these institutions, buying into performances that reflect a reified notion of whiteness. The positioning of Asians is crucial here: on one level they are projected as unable to play football, because of the stereotypes made about their cultural traditions. The culture in the field is unable and unwilling to adapt to accommodate to the needs of Asian Players.

These perceptions have a historical basis, as clearly analysed in the work of Fanon (1967), where the African represents the greatest threat

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[13] The Chair for the Commission for Racial Equality, April 1997

to the historical dominance of whiteness. This is disguised within the playing fields, where black men can be controlled under the symbolism of the ball, playing within a team. Yet once the black player leaves the field and seeks equality with his white brothers, equipped with quite distinct ideologies of the world and may even lead to a condensation of how whiteness has oppressed him, the fear of introducing differences is most tested, especially at the level of administration.

I wanted to test this theory out by talking to one of the chairman who has taken a lead role in dealing with anti-racism in football. Although there are four or five black players being coached by an all white staff team, there was not one black person on his board. He had invited me to lunch just before one his anti-racist matches, attempting to attract more black and Asian fans into his ground by the use of banners, posters, steel bands and ethnic food. I wanted to know whey black people had not moved into the boardroom. He replied:

> I don't know. It takes a lot of money and I don't know many black people with about £750.000 hanging around. The only person I know is Delroy, who owns the car showroom just around the corner from me, but he would have better things to spend his money on.[14]

This statement places money ahead of imagery, but the Delroys of this world are often held up as the only type of black man who may have been able to gain the finance required to get onto the board – and then by very dubious means. This quote is really more about how white people's perceptions of black people are held up as generalisations and become fixed in the imagination. Equally, Asians may be seen as conciliatory and so easily integrating into whiteness by a sharing of the same values.

There is something almost mythical or devious about the ways in which identities in football have become so fixed and indelible, and the mind has become so entrenched with how people should act: this has

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[14] Chairman of Charlton Football Club, October 1998

impacted upon the anti-racist movement in soccer in peculiar and contradictory ways. Compare these two quotes, the first from a mixed-race Asian administrator at the Football Association, talking about how the organisation responds to and accepts racial and cultural diversification, and the second from a white male in the 'Kick it Out Campaign', (Kicking Racism out of Soccer Campaign)

Personnel at the Football Association

I am from a mixed race background. People who have less ingrained views would have less difficulties in dealing with me because of my background than people from other communities. There are people in football who will appoint people from ethnic minorities because it will help them politically in terms of community schemes.[15]

Recruitment policy at the 'Kick It Out Campaign'

They couldn't employ two black people and there's no way they could have employed two white people. I felt it was important to have a white person to enable white chairmen to talk more openly. I felt they might have concealed some of their feelings in the presence of another black person.[16]

I contrast the quotes because they provide interesting insights into how individuals in different institutions, social and political contexts are making perceptions of themselves as racial beings, and what this sets up in terms of having to perform to work within these structures. This may be related to the many different ways
people in sport are understanding and taking their identities from outside, and how this is then marginalised and accepted in the professional context in which they find themselves.

This is not only the challenge to black people entering white institutional settings especially in relation to administration, as personified in the

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[15] Asian Administrator at the Football Association, April 1997
[16] White Administrator for the 'Kick It Out Campaign', October 1997

second quote by the administrator at the 'Kick It Out' campaign. Can white men be trusted to talk honestly
to other black men? Or can they only confide in an image that reflects themselves? This leads to the assumption that the physicality of being white is the most significant criterion in sports management. There may be many other values that are important to whiteness, such as political beliefs, social circles and other external identities and performances that become an intricate part of these institutions.

What this process fails to highlight is that in a sport involving a growing number of black personnel (especially on the pitch), the recent demands to confront inequalities have resulted in a growing pressure for white men to begin now to see black people in different ways, not just as sources of raw labour. Attention also has to be given to their culture. There is a seductive need in having to take on the identities of black people to play the anti-racist, or the guilty white male. I recently attended a function at Arsenal Football Club focusing on 'showing racism the white card', and was both amazed and angry with the number of white political figures now talking about how bad things have become for black people, and the need for white men to give up the privileges obtained through whiteness.

All the statements seemed linked and rehearsed. All the speakers had gained positions in football through their connections to certain clubs, particularly Chelsea. Tony Banks, now Minister for Sport, talked about the stereotypes of the 'cully hair', 'couldn't play in the cold' black player, and how he now employed a number of black people in his office. David Mellor proclaimed racism to be morally reprehensible, a cancer in society that needed to be dealt with in his role within the Task Force. Ironically, both of these men had endured cross party rivalry. Mellor was a prominent member of the Tory Party that instigated the racialised immigration legislation of the 1970s and 1980s; football now allowed him to publicise a new, moral angle on race.

The coaching field and whiteness

I wanted to end this paper on 'play the white man' by looking at situation

in which men from different cultural and racial settings, and from different places in the soccer world, will come together to compete for a qualification (UEFA A Coaching Badge), which is now considered to be one of the pre-conditions for entry into coaching and management. What makes it distinct from the qualification required for a role in administration is that judgement is based purely on performance, and the ability to organise coaching practices and apply some of the important theories in working with young people and adults. Although gaining the qualification does not guarantee a job in football, the structure and organisation of the course reflect a peculiar and traditional sense of whiteness, which is reflected in the locations and organisation of the course and a type of preconscious embodyment.

The courses are usually held on a yearly basis in the obscure and rural setting of Lilleshall, 30 miles away from any black community setting. It is ironic that many of the facets of that racialised order of apartheid still operate in the function and organisation of the course. Standing around the coaching field there will be 67 white men, and 5 black men. White tutors will delegate responsibility to the older white members of the course. The small representation of black players will look on, making very complicated decisions about how they will place themselves in these groups, and the consequences this will have for both their public and racial identity. They will gradually realise, either on a conscious or subconscious level, the complexity and diversification of language, and the different inter-relationships that exist between these white men, many of whom they may have been subservient to within their club setting. White players on the course, on the other hand, will appear to perform without consideration for their representation as white men: they may have the luxury being devoid of any racial conscience.

One particular incident illustrates the problems of assuming how talk informs identity and positioning, and the contradictory ways in which white men behave in coaching and management. During one lecture a leading figure from the administration of the Football Association was asking the group about good examples of time management and some of the important qualities in working with players. The room was filled with players and coaches from the Premier League and the Nation Wide

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League: just like a cagey right back, nobody wanted to commit themselves to a response that might embarrass them. There was a sudden small scream from the middle of the room, and a thin white man, in a white Aston Villa top, square glasses and intellectual gaze quietly answered:

> I think it is important to look at issues of culture. We have a lot of different players from other countries, especially Europe, and more and more from Africa, and we need to see how we can best support them and help them to settle into the club so that we can get the most out of them.[17]

There was a bewildered silence, and a reluctant agreement with the sentiments. The statement is an interesting account of how a new liberal sense of "blackmanning" is operating in the context of football culture, yet is camouflaged under the sentiment of integration, confusing the boundaries between Europeans and Africans. Ten hours later in the bar, surrounded by the same white faces who had showed respect for his comments in the morning lecture, this person stood up in the middle of the group of white drinkers, and told a number of jokes about players he was involved in coaching.

> This player was so thick - just like his lips (putting his tongue between his lips to emphasise the full lips of a black person). He's standing there in the shower with the biggest dick I have ever seen, and I am thinking he's going to trip over and do a pole-vault into the training group.[18]

CONCLUSION

This paper started with a quote from a black footballer from the 1980s on the problems faced in confronting and dealing with the traditional ways in which racism impinges upon and affects the performance and identity of black players in soccer. For black people, 'playing the white man'

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[17] Participant in Football Coaching Course, 1997
[18] Ibid.

means participating in soccer on other people's terms. It means being versatile, changeable and invariably context bound, and it means compromising your blackness in order to play the game at all.

The research I have carried out in the last three years into the problems facing black players in their transitions from playing into coaching and management has attempted to look at these issues in detail. As well as listening to the stories and experiences of black players, I have looked at white institutions, particularly in coaching and management and, to a lesser extent, football administration. I would suggest that the way white men create implicit rules for participation in these careers has implications for how black players attempt to negotiate entry into these professions. These cultural arrangements really define what it takes to belong in football. It is only by revealing these processes that we can begin to test how race mediates these differences and the true essence of what it may mean to 'play the white man.' Slavery is still here and cannot be used in the same way as it was used in the period that it controlled black people, it must be understood in a more complex and implicit way.

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