

AN APPRAISAL OF THE KENYA MEN'S HOCKEY TEAM PERFORMANCE IN INTERNATIONAL FIELD HOCKEY COMPETITIONS (1956 — 1996)

J.M. ASEMBO*, M. ANDANJE AND W.W.S. NJORORAI*

*GAMES DEPARTMENT, EGERTON UNIVERSITY, P.O. BOX 536, NJORO, KENYA; KENYA NATIONAL SPORTS INSTITUTE, P.BAG KASARANI, KENYA

ABSTRACT

Although field hockey was introduced in Kenya at the beginning of the 20th century, her first major international competition was the 1956 Olympic Games held at Melbourne, Australia in which she was ranked 10th. The best performance by the Kenya men's team was at the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games where the team was ranked 6th and during the World Cup at Barcelona, Spain in 1971 where she was ranked 4th. Since then the team has not made much impression. The poor performance by the team is of major concern especially to a sporting nation like Kenya. Thus, the purpose of this study was to analyse the performance of the Kenya men's team performance in international competitions in the period between 1956 and 1996. A critical analysis indicated that, Kenya men's team performance could be classified into three periods: 1956-1971 (major achievements), 1972-1984 (mixed luck and decline in performance), 1985-1996 (worst performance and some revival). While the factors associated with poor performance in the 1972-1996 period included boycott of the 1976 and 1980 Olympic Games, other problems facing hockey development in the country are poor management and administration of the sport, lack of adequate modern facilities, inferior systems of play and lack of exposure for players. For field hockey to develop in Kenya, there is need for the development of coaching, administration and management of the sport. A clear talent identification and development ought to be instituted urgently. Further the local coaches need to update their knowledge in the sport so that only qualified coaches are employed to manage the national team.

Key words: Field hockey, performance, Olympic games, territorial competitions.

INTRODUCTION

Hockey was first played in Kenya at around 1900 mainly as a reserve game for the Sikhs and the Goan communities. Although later clubs were formed around 1918 to foster the development of the game, it was not until 1950s when competitive Hockey was played (Bhushan, 1988). Kenya first participated in the Olympic Games in 1956 when her men's Hockey team took part in the Melbourne, Australia Olympic Games and ranked 10th overall (Spencer, 1984; M'mbijiwe, 1987; Bhushan, 1988; Moore, 1988). Since that year, Kenya represented the Africa continent in virtually all the Olympic games that followed (save for boycotts in 1976 and 1980) until 1992 when the jinx was broken by Egypt and later by South Africa in 1996. The best performance by the Kenyan men's Hockey team at the Olympics

was the 6th ranking at the Olympic games at Tokyo, Japan when the only Olympic certificate in history was won while the worst performance was in 1988 Seoul Olympic Games, when Kenya was ranked last (Bhushan, 1988). In the early 1970s Kenya emerged as a force to reckon with in the World with her best performance coming out in the men's World Cup in 1971. Kenya was ranked 4th (beating giants of hockey such as Germany, Argentina and India) (Bhushan, 1988).

It has been observed that Kenya's team performance can be identified into three distinct periods:

1. 1956-1971:- A period characterised by major achievements
2. 1972-1984:- A period in which there was gradual decline in performance
3. 1985-1996:- A period when worst performance was recorded and later (1994-96) some improvement in performance.

The poor performances that have been witnessed at the continental and world level are of major concern. The Kenya's decline in performance in hockey has been attributed to several factors such as lack of finances, unqualified and unmotivated officials, poor selection of players to the national team, poor technical and tactical preparation (Asembo and Njororai, 1996), lack of exposure, poor tournament organisation, lack of clear talent identification and development as well as uncoordinated sponsorship (Spencer, 1984; Action, 1987; Njenga, 1989; Sports Action, 1995; Ayumba 1996; Odanga, 1996).

An analysis of the men's hockey team performance in international competition will necessitate the discovery of any factors, which have been positive or negative to the development of the sport in Kenya and possibly Africa as a whole. In this paper we analysed the Kenya men's' team performance in:

1. Territorial competitions
2. Indira Gandhi Gold Cup Tournament
3. All-Africa Games
4. Africa Cup of Nations
5. World Cup Hockey Competition
6. Olympic games hockey competition.

TERRITORIAL COMPETITIONS

Kenya participated in its first territorial competition in 1959 when she made its debut in the Rahim Jivraji Cup (an East African tournament). Kenya emerged the winner by beating Zanzibar (4-0), Tanzania (6-0) and Uganda

(1-0). It should be noted that in the same year, the India national team visited Kenya in June and played four test matches winning both matches (1-0, 2-0, 2-0, 2-1) (Bhushan, 1988). **Table 1** shows the performance of the Kenya national men's team in the Rahim Jivraji cup.

Table 1: The Kenya Men's Team Performance in the Rahim Jivraji Cup

YEAR	VENUE	BEST SCORE	WORST SCORE	POSITION
1959	KENYA	6-0	1-0	1
1960	KENYA	9-0	1-1	1
1962	ZANZIBAR	8-0	1-1	1
1963	TANZANIA	7-0	1-0	1
1967	UGANDA	6-1	2-0	1
1975	KENYA	4-1	1-1	1

Since 1975, no territorial competition has been held. A possible reason is the collapse of the East African Cooperation in 1976.

INDIRA GANDHI MEMORIAL GOLD CUP COMPETITION

Kenya has been a regular participant in this tournament since 1987 till 1994, after which it has not been invited. Table 2 summarises the performance of the Kenya men's team. Kenya's best performance in this tournament was the 4th position rating out of seven teams during the 1992 competition when it trailed India, New Zealand and South Korea. The worst performance was in 1988 when the team was ranked 7th out of 8 teams. Due to poor performance and lack of discipline of her players, Kenya was not invited for the 1995, 1996 and 1997 competitions. This has denied Kenya yet another important competition that could be used for exposure for her players.

ALL-AFRICA GAMES HOCKEY COMPETITION

During the Pan African Games Hockey Competition, which started in the year 1987, Kenya has always participated. Table 3 shows how the team has performed in the past. The winner of this tournament normally earns a direct qualification to represent Africa continent at the Olympic Games. This is why Kenya did not participate in the 1992 and 1996 Olympic Games.

Table 2: Kenya Men's Hockey team performance in the Indira Gandhi Memorial Gold Cup Competition.

TEAM	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
	N=7	N=8	N=8	N=6	N=7	N=7		N=6
INDIA	3RD	5TH	3RD	1ST	3RD	1ST	-	1ST
MALAYSIA	NP	6TH	6TH	3RD	NP	NP	-	NP
HOLLAND	1ST	NP	NP	NP	6TH	NP	-	NP
PAKISTAN	NP	1ST	2ND	NP	NP	NP	-	NP
S. KOREA	5TH	3RD	1ST	2ND	2ND	3RD	-	5TH
KENYA	7TH	7TH	NP	6TH	5TH	4TH	-	4TH
SPAIN	2ND	8TH	4TH	NP	NP	NP	-	NP
S. UNION	NP	2ND	8TH	NP	1ST	NP	-	NP
N. ZEALAND	6TH	4TH	7TH	NP	NP	2ND	-	NP
POLAND	NP	NP	NP	5TH	7TH	7TH	-	NP
JAPAN	NP	NP	5TH	4TH	NP	6TH	-	6TH
CHINA	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	5TH	-	NP
BELGIUM	NP	NP	NP	NP	4TH	NP	-	NP
EGYPT	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	-	3RD
S. AFRICA	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	NP	-	2ND

NP means that the team did not participate.

Table 3: Kenya men's team performance in the All-Africa Games Competition.

YEAR	VENUE	POSITION ATTAINED
1987	NAIROBI, KENYA (N=5)	1ST
1991	CAIRO, EGYPT (N=6)	2ND
1995	HARARE, ZIMBABWE (N=6)	3RD

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS HOCKEY COMPETITION

The Africa Cup of Nations Hockey Competition was played for the first time in the year 1975. Kenya was placed 3rd out of 7 teams (Bhushan, 1988). Table 4 shows that the best Kenya has ever attained is 2nd position. The winners of this competition normally qualify for World Cup. Thus Kenya has not done well in this tournament. All the time Kenya has gone to the World Cup through Pre-qualifying tournaments.

Table 4: Kenya's performances in the Africa Cup of Nations

YEAR	VENUE	NO. OF TEAMS	KENYA'S PERFORMANCE
1974	ZIMBABWE	7	3RD
1983	TANZANIA	5	2ND
1987	EGYPT	6	2ND
1993	KENYA	5	3RD
1996	S. AFRICA	6	2ND

WORLD CUP HOCKEY COMPETITION

Since Kenya has never won the Africa cup of nation hockey title, she has never earned direct qualification to the World Cup tournament. The national team has had to depend on the pre-qualifying tournaments. It is not surprising that Kenya has only participated in the World Cup on two occasions (1971 and 1973). In the first World Cup held in Barcelona, Spain, Kenya national team surprised everybody by coming out fourth, losing in the semi-finals (Bhushan 1988). After two years, the second edition of the World Cup was held in Amsterdam. Kenya ranked comes out 12th after losing to Spain (1-4), India (0-4), W. Germany (1-2), Argentina (0-2), Malaysia (0-1) and drawing with Japan (2-2) as well as New Zealand (2-2). In the subsequent years, Kenya has failed to impress at the qualifying tournaments. Kenya thus missed out in the 1974, 1979, 1985, 1992, and 1997 World Cup competitions. After the team failed to qualify outright for the World Cup set for Malaysia at the Africa Cup of Nations in South Africa, it earned a chance to qualify during the pre-qualifying tournament held in Italy. The Kenya team failed to qualify when she lost to Poland (1-4), Switzerland (1-3), Italy (1-3), Scotland (0-2) but beat U.S.A (2-0) and Ireland (3-2).

KENYA AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES

Kenya opened its participation in the Olympic games in the year 1956 at Melbourne, Australia and subsequently represented the continent in virtually all the Olympic that followed until 1992 when the jinx was broken by Egypt. The best overall position Kenya has ever attained in the Olympics is the 6th position when she received the only Olympic certificate in the history of the African continent. The worst position is the 13th overall position at 1972 Munich Olympics. The worst score Kenya has conceded was during the 1988 Seoul Olympics when they were crushed 8-0 by Pakistan. The best score Kenya has ever received in the Olympics and World Cup was the crashing of Afghanistan 9-0 during the 1956 Melbourne Olympics in Australia. In the 1992 and 1996 Olympic games Kenya did not participate having lost the All Africa Games Hockey title to Egypt and South Africa in 1991 and 1995 respectively. Table 4 shows the performance of the Kenya team in the Olympics from 1956 to 1996.

FACTORS, WHICH AFFECTED THE PERFORMANCES OF KENYAN NATIONAL TEAM

Observers in Hockey fraternity have classified the performance of the National men's Hockey team in three distinct periods, i.e. 1956-1971, 1972-1984 and 1985-1996. In each of these periods the team either performed well or poorly due to the prevailing factors. It is imperative to identify these factors so as to strengthen the positive ones and to correct the negative ones.

Period Between 1956-1971

This period saw Kenya make her main achievements in the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games (6th ranking thus earned her only certificate) and in the first Hockey World Cup in 1971 (4th ranking having lost in the semi-finals). The strength of the national team in this period could be attributed to competitive Hockey at national and regional level. There were several locally sponsored tournaments in which local clubs competed at national level. At the East African regional level, there was a major tournaments (Rahim Jivraji Cup) in which Kenya always ranked first. It is also interesting to note that at this period the national team was composed of mainly the Kenyans of Asian origin. The players were skilful and thus could match the other nations who also emphasised skill play. In addition, the numerous exposure matches before every major tournament could have contributed to good performance seen in this period.

TABLE 5: The Kenya men's hockey team performance at the Olympic Games

YEAR	VENUE	BEST SCORE	WORST SCORE	POSITION
1956	MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA	9-0	0-2	10TH
1960	ROME, ITALY	7-0	1-2	7TH
1964	TOKYO, JAPAN	2-0	2-5	6TH *
1968	MEXICO CITY, MEXICO	?	?	8TH
1972	MUNICH, WEST GERMANY	2-1	1-5	13TH
1976	MONTREAL, CANADA	-	-	BOYCOTT
1980	MOSCOW, USSR	-	-	BOYCOTT
1984	LOS ANGELES, U.S.A.	6-5	1-4	9TH
1988	SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA	?	?	LAST
1992	BARCELONA, SPAIN	-	-	DNQ
1996	ATLANTA, U.S.A.	-	-	DNQ

*Kenya earned her only Olympic certificate in Hockey. DNQ = Did Not Qualify

Period Between 1972-1984

In this period the Kenya national team experienced a gradual decline in performance. The period also saw Kenya boycott two Olympic Games (1976 Munich and 1980 Moscow Games) due to political reasons. Although Kenya maintained her prowess in the Rahim Jivraji Cup (territorial competition), which apparently ended in 1975, the same can not be said about the Africa Cup of Nations and the Olympic Games competitions. Following Kenya's boycott of the 1976 and 1980 Olympic Games, her team was out of this major competition for a period of 12 years. It is therefore, possible that this long lay-off affected the team's performance. During the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Kenya could only manage position 9. Her junior side finished a poor third behind Zimbabwe and Egypt in the Africa Junior Championships in Morocco in 1984 (Spencer, 1984). The poor performance in this period could be attributed to lack of exposure at territorial and international level. On the East African scene, the Rahim Jivraj Cup has not been held since 1975. This period also saw the gradual 'Africanisation' of

the national team. The team was a mixture of Kenyans of Asian origin and the 'native' Kenyans. This changed the style of play from skill to mixed skill and physical centred play. This blend might have affected performance of the national team. Other factors, which have been cited include poor selection of the national team, poor training, and poor management and administration of the sport in the country (Spencer, 1984).

Period Between 1985-1996

During this period, the Kenya team experienced the worst performance in the history of the game. In 1985 the Kenya national men's team received three invitations to major international tournaments, which were to be used as build up matches towards the 1987 All Africa Games. The tour bore fruits when the team won the All Africa Games Hockey title thus qualifying for the 1988 Seoul Olympic Games. But in 1987 the team failed to beat Egypt in the 3rd Africa cup of Nations competition. As part of the preparation for the Olympic Games the team took part in the Indira Gandhi Memorial Gold Cup Hockey tournament in 1987 and 1988 but performed poorly by finishing last and second last respectively in the tournament.

During the Olympic games in 1988, the team was last in the Hockey tournament. The team's performance in the subsequent tournaments was not impressive. On the African scene the team lost the all Africa games Hockey title in 1991 to Egypt, Africa Cup of Nations to S. Africa in 1993. Further, the team could not win the All Africa Games Hockey title in 1991 and thus missed the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games. In 1993, the team could only manage a bronze medal at the 4th Africa Cup of Nations held at Nairobi, Kenya and thus could not participate in the 1992 World Cup. During the tournament, the players were physically fit (Wekesa et al., 1993) but were found wanting in the technical and tactical aspects of the game (Asembo and Njororai, 1996, Asembo et al., 1996 a, b, c; Njororai et al., 1996).

The squabbles in the Kenya Hockey Union (the body which manages the sport in the country) have been blamed for poor performances in this period. Others claim that the 'Africanisation' of the national team led to the sorry state of Hockey affairs in the country. The influx of Kenyans of African origin in Hockey changed the style of play from skill centred to physical centred since the players were not grounded in the skills of the game yet coaching still emphasise the skills. Another factor related to this is the financial support. Most of the sponsors of Hockey tournaments have been Kenyans of Asian origin, thus with the "Africanisation" of the game led to the pulling out of these sponsors. Thus players are exposed to only two tournaments in a year. In addition other factors such as lack of finances, less aggressive administrators, poor coaching, poor selection of players to the national team, less competitive league and less international exposure have been cited (M'Mbijiwe, 1987; Njenga, 1994; Odanga, 1995).

The period also witnessed some improvements in performance such as a silver medal in 1995 both in 6th All Africa Games Hockey competition as

well as in the 5th Africa Cup of Nations held in Harare, Zimbabwe and Pretoria, South Africa respectively. However the late 1996 saw Kenya perform dismally at the pre-World Cup qualifying tournament held at Calgary, Italy. The team was ranked 8th overall thus failed to qualify for the World Cup set for 1997 in Malaysia. The Lacklustre performance by the national team was blamed on lack of overseas exposure, poor coaching structure, inferior game plan, inexperienced and uninformed coaches and financial constrains (Ayumba, 1996; Odanga, 1996).

POSSIBLE REMEDIES

1. The Kenya Hockey Union (KHU) ought to ensure that many build up international matches are arranged for the national team prior to international competitions. The build up matches ought to be targeted to powerful Hockey nations such as Pakistan, S. Africa, Holland, Germany, India, S. Korea and Spain.

2. The coaching of the national team should be based on appropriate sport scientific principles and on the realities of modern Hockey competition. Refresher courses should be organised for coaches of the national team as well as the clubs. If possible experienced qualified foreign coaches be hired to manage the national team.

3. The KHU should strive to give the sport a national outlook by reviving the branches and sub- branches in the districts and provinces. Such decentralisation will enable the association to start talent identification and development centres, which are currently lacking. Further this will allow the KHU to ensure adequate co-ordination of the activities of the sport at grassroots level.

4. The KHU should look for ways in which sponsors will be attracted to Hockey so that there are adequate finances to run the sport in the country.

REFERENCES

- Action (1984). *Hockey: Olympic team prospectus*, August, p. 22.
- Asembo, J.M. (1995). Analysis of Field Hockey Injuries During the Dashmesh and Gold Cup Tournaments in Kenya. *AJPHERD VOL. 1 (NO. 1)*: 20-31.
- Asembo, J.M. and Njororai, W.W.S (1995). An Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Offensive Penalty Corner at the 4th Africa Cap of Nations Hockey Championship. *AJPHERD 2 (2)*: 159-172.
- Asembo, J.M., Njororai, W.W.S and Wekesa, M. (1996a). Analysis, type and effectiveness in passes at the 4th Africa Cup of Nations Hockey Championship. *AJPHERD* (In Press).
- Asembo, J.M., Njororai, W.W.S and Wekesa, M. (1996b). An evaluation of the preferred side of attack, crosses and counter attacks in an

- International Hockey Championship. Paper presented at the First Kenya Conference on Health, Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and Dance, Nairobi, Kenya, May 2-4th.
- Asembo, J.M., Njororai, W.W.S and Wekesa, M. (1996c). An evaluation of the technical-tactical actions during the 4th Africa cup of nations hockey Championship. *Journal of Education*, Kenyatta University. **In press.**
- Ayumba, S. (1996). Kenya's blow up World Cup chance. *Kenya Times*, **November 4th.**
- Bhushan, N. (1988). *Cheza Kenya*. Nairobi, Newsread International.
- East African Standard* (1995). The Hockey Association Sets up Youth Programme, Monday, December 18, 1995, P.2
- M'Mbijiwe, M. (1987). "Hockey players always bring medals home". In M'Mbijiwe, M. (ed.) *Kenya Sportsmen and Sports Women*. Nairobi: Afropress Limited, pp 23-25.
- Moore, C. (1988). *Discovering Hockey*. London: Partridge Press.
- Njenga, P. (1994). Official tells why fading Kenya flopped in India. *Daily Nation*, March 28th.
- Njenga, P. (1989). Big breakthrough in KHU. *Africa Sport*. April/May, p.27.
- Njororai, W.W.S., Asembo, J.M. and Wekesa, M. (1996). Analysis of selected match actions in a hockey championship. Paper presented at the First Kenya Conference on Health, Physical education Recreation Sport and Dance, Nairobi, Kenya, May 2nd - 4th.
- NOCK (1996). *Kenya 1996 Olympics*. Nairobi, Catskill Services (E.A.) Ltd.
- Odanga, E. (1995). Kenya on comeback trail. *Daily Nation*, Monday September 11th.
- Odanga, E. (1996). Kenyan team in financial problems. *Daily Nation*, Monday October 4th.
- Spencer, G.(1984). "The KHU has been pulling the wool over our eyes". *Action*, October, pp. 10-11.
- Sports Action*, March 1995, pp. 27-28.
- Wekesa, E.M., Asembo J.M. and Njororai, W.W.S. (1993). Preparation and medical care of the Kenya National Team at 4th Africa Cup of Nations Championship. *East Africa Medical Journal* **70 (11):** 671-677.