



**Education and employment inevitably get higher priority than sport in a poor country**

ceremony has been changed without notice and public transport to the Stadium has been commandeered for the athletes.

The mass of the population of Harare cannot even reach the Stadium, even if they could afford the entrance charge.

The show, as they say, must go on. Unfortunately, the start is delayed by half an hour as the Torch is caught in the traffic of Harare. When it does arrive, it has to be constantly re-lit on its lap of honour.

Disaster follows disaster, culminating in the failure of the public address system, thus precluding our listening to the swearing of the Games oath, the welcome of the President and the playing of the National Anthem.

My aim here is not to belittle or ridicule the quality of the Game's organisation. The events themselves were, as sporting spectacles, both competitive and exciting, with many outstanding performances by some of the world's finest athletes.

The issue here is that the event was staged very much to provide President Mugabe with the opportunity to reinforce his position as a major player in African politics.

He was only doing what generations of American Presidents had always done before him. Many African leaders, most notably President Kenyatta of Kenya, had taken full advantage of the supposed political capital that could be gained through associating with the country's athletic talent. Sporting heroes have long been regarded as valuable ambassadors on the world stage, providing a means to enhance a nation's credibility and status.

In Kenya, Kip Keino and Mike Boit were, and still are, legends. Their successes were seen as the nation's success.

For many new nation-states in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s creation of an identity was re-garded as important, so too the need to attract inward financial investment.

During these years the apparent progress of Kenya was evident. Sport was helping in the creation of an identity as well as providing its people with a common bond and so a sense of nationhood; essential in a society that was divided by long established tribal and cultural differences.

For President Mugabe an opportunity to enhance his personal reputation, as one of Africa's senior politicians was to be lost through the incompetence of the Games administrators.

The opening ceremony was a political embarrassment, a lost opportunity to paper over some of the cracks that were already in evidence in the country's economy and political system...."

To be continued at [www.play-the-game.org](http://www.play-the-game.org)



# African sport in danger

*Sport is in danger of becoming increasingly marginal in Africa's fight to survive.*

*Education and employment inevitably and rightly rank higher than sport, states one of Europe's most prominent experts of African sports, the British professor Terry Monnington.*

*Moreover, winning sport is becoming increasingly less valuable in a failing society.*

*Terry Monnington introduced his message by giving a first-hand account from All Africa Games 1995.*

Imagine the scene. I'm in the new National Stadium in Harare, Zimbabwe, waving my Kenyan flag, alongside my Kenyan host, a stadium funded by the Chinese in recognition of their support for the country's Marxist leader, President Mugabe. The year is 1995 and the event is the opening ceremony of the 6th All Africa Games.

This pan-African event was regarded by many as one more means by which modern Africa could express its common ancestry, celebrate the individuality of its multifarious cultural traditions, but also its unity.

19th Century colonialism brought much to the

continent of Africa, good and bad. But since the rush to independence since the 1960s, the new nations, their people and their political leaders have not only endeavored to establish sovereign states.

For many, creation of an African identity as an expression of common interests has become a priority and few African leaders have had the vision of President Nkruma of Ghana as to the importance and value of celebrating rather than apologising for Africa's cultural inheritance.

The history of the All Africa Games has been thwart with problems, most notably as a consequence of mismanagement and political exploitation. But in 1995 it was planned to be different.

President Mugabe is seated only a few metres away, eager to impress his guests with the expertise of the Zimbabwean people to organise a showpiece Games.

His guests include many African and international leaders and senior representatives of the International Olympic Committee and other supranational governing bodies of sport.

Unfortunately, there are not many other spectators in the stadium. The time of the opening

