

## CHAPTER 3

### Soccer as a Sport

#### Introduction

The Chinese soccer players arrived at the beginning of August 1923 to an Australia where soccer was still developing. From its earliest days towards the end of the nineteenth century until the time of the tour, soccer in Australia lacked any organisational structure. Even with the creation of a national body in 1911 and its replacement in 1921, soccer would still be evolving as it searched for an identity within the football sporting landscape. Having not been formulated as a sport in Australia until after the other football codes, soccer would be relegated to a minority sport by Australian rules and rugby union, with rugby league also becoming a force following its split with rugby union in 1907-08<sup>1</sup>. It would be through the Chinese tour that soccer finally emerged as a key player within this landscape.

Soccer was entering the battle for “sports space”. Sports space can be loosely defined as ‘based on an implicit - and therefore unexamined - assumption that in each society there is a limited amount of “space” for sports, and that once this “space” is “filled” by one sport, there is no room for other sports.’<sup>2</sup> Thus, in Victoria and the other southern States, Australian rules had “crowded out” the other sports, including soccer. This was the same in New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland where rugby union, and later, rugby league, became the predominant sports. Culturally, sports space refers to ground availability, playing stocks, spectators, media, and later to marketing and sponsorship.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Collins, "The Tyranny of Deference: Anglo-Australian Relations and Rugby Union before World War II," *Sport in History* 29, no. 3 (2009): 442.

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Waddington and Martin Roderick, "American Exceptionalism: Soccer and American Football," *The Sports Historian* 16 (1996): 31.

The matches against the Chinese, highly successful in these terms, threatened the established sports space of the other football codes.

The affect of the Chinese tour would leave a legacy that moulded the game of soccer for the future. Following from the successful, yet low-key, New Zealand tours of 1922 and 1923, the Chinese tour opened up soccer to a wider audience, and specifically to those who considered themselves entrenched as followers of the other codes. The tour would generate numerous successes, none of which were expected when the venture was proposed in early 1923. It would open the way for players from States other than NSW and Queensland to compete for positions to represent Australia against other countries. The tour would provide a group of investors with a way to show their entrepreneurial talents and in doing so create a new avenue of funding for the game itself. Finally, the tour would show the national body, the Commonwealth Football Association, how soccer should be run in the future.

### **Soccer in Australia pre-1923**

British immigrants introduced soccer to Australia. Its evolution followed a similar path to that which had been found in Britain with unstructured variants of the game visible until mid-way through the nineteenth century. Yet, unlike Britain, and New Zealand, there is little evidence of a public-school influence that directed those participating in football events to move in the direction of any specific code. Soccer, in Australia, did not emerge from its football foundations until the late 1870s.

The earliest known proof of football is Governor Macquarie's 1810 proclamation that Hyde Park, in Sydney, be designated for a number of sports, including football.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Douglas Booth and Colin Tatz, *One-Eyed : A View of Australian Sport* (St Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 24.

Examples of football at Sydney's Hyde Park Barracks can also be found in 1829.<sup>4</sup> Games were played under a variety of rules up until the late 1850s and early 1860s when Australian rules in Victoria and rugby in Sydney emerged as distinct forms of football.<sup>5</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, Australian rules and rugby union were the two football codes, yet the boundaries between the games were not just the method of play, but also geographical. In the State of NSW rugby was chosen as the primary sport of followers of football, while in Victoria, and most other parts of Australia, it was the new Australian rules variant. Eventually Queensland would join NSW as the second rugby State allowing for significant competition to take place between the two States and eventually against other nations. Australian rules, however, was to be without international interest and generally played only in the other States, although some Australian gold seekers did take the game to New Zealand in the early 1870s.<sup>6</sup> It was late in the century before soccer in Australia became a competitive sport.

Argument surrounds the date of the first official game of soccer in Australia. Until recently, historians assumed that the match took place on the afternoon of Saturday, 14 August 1880 at Parramatta Common in Sydney's West between King's School and an "eleven". That eleven, later to be called Wanderers, won the match by five goals to nil.<sup>7</sup>

Yet recent research has provided evidence of possible matches held before 1880 in

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<sup>4</sup> Mosely and Murray, "Soccer.", 214 (see intro., n. 11)..

<sup>5</sup> See Mosely and Murray, "Soccer"; Murray G. Phillips, "Rugby." in *Sport in Australia*, ed Wray Vamplew, Brian Stoddart and Ian F. Jobling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Nick Guoth, "Loss of Identity: New Zealand Soccer, Its Foundations and Its Legacies," *Soccer and Society* 7, no. 2-3 (2006): 187-207.

<sup>7</sup> see Wray Vamplew et al., eds. *The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press Australia, 1992); Anthony Hughes, "'Treated with the Utmost Courtesy and Kindness': The Trans-Tasman Soccer Tours of 1904 and 1905," in *The World Game Downunder*, ed. Bill Murray and Roy Hay (Melbourne: Australian Society for Sports History Inc, 2006); Richard Kreider, *The Soccerites* (Cloverdale, Western Australia: SportsWest Media, 2005).

Hobart, Brisbane and Sydney.<sup>8</sup> The first governing body for the sport in the colonies, the (NSW) English Football Association, was created in 1882. Other autonomous governing bodies emerged over the following decades, each with authority to organise the sport and its fixtures within their areas of influence. These bodies, at times, worked against each other and thus only rare inter-colonial or inter-state soccer fixtures took place.

In NSW and Queensland, rugby was not yet sufficiently entrenched to oppose the rise of soccer as a sport. However, in the other States, Australian rules was dominant. Thus by Federation, NSW became the prominent State in the sport of soccer in relation to quality and quantity of players available, and contested most of its representative fixtures with Queensland. Although the first recorded interstate match took place in Melbourne in 1883 between NSW and Victoria, it was a rare foray by NSW into the States where Australian rules was the predominant code. Soccer in these “lesser” States eventually came down to games within their jurisdictions and those contested with visiting warships.

In 1904 and 1905 NSW was involved in two series of matches, on either side of the Tasman Sea, with New Zealand. From the end of June to the end of July, the NSW team was in New Zealand to contest nine matches including two against a representative New Zealand side. Games were played on both islands, NSW completing the tour with a record of five won, two drawn and two lost. The following year, New Zealand returned the favour, travelling across the Tasman Sea to visit NSW. Of the eleven matches, six were played in Sydney, two in Newcastle and one in Wollongong. The two mining districts of Illawarra and the Hunter Valley, which included Wollongong and Newcastle

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<sup>8</sup> Damian Smith, "Timeline of Australian Football 1850 - 1899," <http://www.ozfootball.net/museum/index.php/timeline/176-timeline-of-australian-football-1850-1899>.

respectively, were strong centres for soccer providing numerous players of high quality. The New Zealanders were more successful winning six matches, drawing two and losing the other three. Some of the matches included high scores, an example being a six-all draw in Wollongong against South Coast. Neither Association was able to take advantage of the reciprocal tours to further the game of soccer, and the events 'were lost as part of popular memory'.<sup>9</sup>

### **National Association**

New Zealand was to play an important role in the development of a national governing body. In May 1911 New Zealand commenced correspondence, initially with Canada, and then with England, for a team from those countries to tour the Australasia region. Other sports, including rugby league and union, were involved in matches against England. For soccer, as with these other codes, 'beating the mother at her own sports became regarded as a sign of colonial maturity'.<sup>10</sup> The costs incurred for a tour would have had to be worn by New Zealand and Australian soccer authorities. At that time the amount was considered too high which thus provided the main stumbling block for such ventures. Yet, the idea of a tour by other countries, and the fact that the States in Australia were individually taking it upon themselves to seek out the English, led to discussions about formulating a body to govern soccer throughout Australasia. Following a letter from a soccer enthusiast in West Australia, a journalist in the *Referee* wrote 'Apart from the question of an English team, the immediate benefits from direct and more frequent communication between the State governing bodies cannot be over-estimated.'<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Anthony Hughes, 'Treated with the Utmost Courtesy and Kindness', 24-27.

<sup>10</sup> Wray Vamplew, Brian Stoddart, and Ian F. Jobling, eds. *Sport in Australia*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> "Suggested Australian Association for Soccer," *Referee*, 13 September, 1911.

The dreams of the journalist and the correspondent to the *Referee* were realised three months later when a conference of delegates from all States and New Zealand met in Sydney. The ‘Australasian Conference’ took place from Friday, 15 December 1911 through to Sunday, 17 December 1911. Towards the end of the event, it ‘was resolved that the time was opportune for the formation of an Australian Council or board of control’.<sup>12</sup> New Zealand already had their own Council and thus chose not to be involved. Within weeks a constitution was created and the Commonwealth Football Association (CFA) was formed. The CFA became the first association to represent a football code for the whole nation. Yet, the dream of the Conference, and of the CFA, to have an English team travel to Australia in the forthcoming years was never realised and with the advent of the First World War, the fledgling national body dissolved.<sup>13</sup>

Nearly a decade went past before the CFA would be re-formed. Yet, it would also be New Zealand that provided the impetus for such a development. In 1920, representatives from New Zealand again met with their counterparts in England to discuss the possibility of a tour to New Zealand.<sup>14</sup> The associations in NSW and Queensland were eager to participate in a similar venture and commenced discussions with England and New Zealand. Attempts were also made to bring about a tour to New Zealand by a representative team from these two Australian States. Yet, as in 1911, there was a belief that a combined voice representing all of Australian soccer would provide a stronger basis when discussing international matters.

In August 1921 a Conference was held in Melbourne at the Caledonian Club to discuss the re-formation of the CFA and other matters relating to interstate and international

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<sup>12</sup> “Football,” *The Mercury*, 30 December, 1911. For notes on the Conference, see also a number of articles in the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 15 December, 1911 to 18 December, 1911. The first Annual meeting was not held until March 1913.

<sup>13</sup> Mosely and Murray, “Soccer”, 217.

<sup>14</sup> *Referee*, 5 May, 1920, 12.

matches.<sup>15</sup> The premise for the Conference was similar to the 1911 event, the need to have a national body to negotiate an English soccer tour to Australia. The conference was successful in reconstituting the CFA, yet a number of its resolutions relating to interstate matches were significantly biased towards NSW and Queensland with the CFA having full powers bestowed upon them to administer international and inter-state fixtures.<sup>16</sup> In January 1922, at the first meeting of the CFA, Victoria and South Australia voiced their opinions of the choice by the national body to only send NSW and Queensland players to New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the two southern States refused to be part of international activities, opening the door for future Australian representative teams to consist of players from only NSW and Queensland. The first of these international events would be the tour to New Zealand in the middle of 1922.

In May 1922 a squad of 16 players, eight from NSW and eight from Queensland, travelled to New Zealand to contest 14 matches. The Australian team won nine, lost four and drew one. While those statistics look healthy, of the three international matches against New Zealand, they lost two and drew one. The first international by either country against another country's association was held Saturday 17 June 1922 at Carisbrook, Dunedin. In early 1923 New Zealand were invited to travel to Australia, and yet again Victoria and South Australia were not involved. New Zealand played 16 matches on the tour, including three internationals, of which they won two and lost one.

### **Australian reaction Chinese invitation**

When, in early 1923 Millard had sent his letter of invitation for a Chinese soccer tour to the New South Wales Soccer Football Association (NSWSFA), he had opened the eyes of the organisers to a new way of furthering the code in Australia. The NSWSFA passed

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<sup>15</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of the Commonwealth Football Association*, 16 August, 1921.

<sup>16</sup> *Referee*, 24 August, 1921.

<sup>17</sup> *Minutes of the Meeting of the Commonwealth Football Association*, 17 January 1922.

the invitation to the CFA. The concerns of the CFA in relation to the White Australia policy were noted in the previous chapter. The motives for the national body were twofold. First and foremost, it gave the Association another chance to publicise the game through international contests. Secondly, it allowed the chance for the Association to continue to 'mark time' until the eventual English tour would take place. The CFA believed that keeping the interest of the general public in the sport prior to an English tour was essential for the future of the game.<sup>18</sup>

The CFA was concerned with furthering the game, yet to do this they required funding. The Chinese tour provided an unprecedented dilemma for the Association. The previous New Zealand tour was self-funded and made a small profit. The proposed Chinese tour was an unknown, with promise, yet a venture with possible pitfalls. The CFA were hesitant in becoming part of the venture and awaited the options that may be provided by Millard. The initial terms Millard suggested were for a sixty and forty percent division of gate receipts, which was accepted by all except Victoria. This agreement was subsequently cancelled. Millard realised, without the New Zealand funding, he was unable to provide the initial financial backing to get the Chinese to Australia. Thus, Millard put to the CFA an alternative proposition 'under which the local authorities were required to finance the tour up to £2000'.<sup>19</sup> This too was rejected by the CFA and from that point official negotiations between Millard and the CFA were 'declared off'. The matter was sent back to the NSW(S)FA which put a decision to their meeting of 1 July 1923, held at Newcastle. The Committee decided that the 'cost of the tour would approximate £1760, and it was considered injudicious that the NSW(S)FA should

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<sup>18</sup> An English Amateur team did tour Australia in 1925.

<sup>19</sup> "Chinese Soccer," *Daily Guardian*, 7 July, 1923.



undertake the responsibility'.<sup>20</sup> Yet, not all was lost. A suggestion was put forward to create an Australian syndicate to provide the finances.

The financial considerations for an event of this nature and magnitude involved numerous parties and sources. As noted above, the primary concern was to get the touring party to Australia, and that was to be organised by the Australians through a syndicate. Prior to entry, the Australians would also need to furnish bonds to Customs for each Chinese member of the party, to guarantee that the visitors would return to China following the tour. This was completed prior to the departure of Millard and Shaw from Australia in October 1922.<sup>21</sup> In Australia, the syndicate would rely on gate takings to suitably provide for the touring Chinese. When interest was presented by other States and some smaller towns in New South Wales, guarantees were required of these other venues prior to acceptance of the Chinese to visit. The guarantees approximated £200 per match. Further, while the Chinese were abroad, their families would require an income to live on. Thus, a number of local businessmen in China submitted bequests to a fund, the 'Chinese Football Tour Fund', which by 28 July 1923 had amounted to \$3,364.<sup>22</sup> In Australia, the local Chinese also raised money to assist the players while they were on tour.<sup>23</sup>

### **Australian Tours Limited**

At the meeting of the NSW SFA in early July 1923 some of the delegates from the Association chose to form the syndicate, with the intention to take over from where the

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<sup>20</sup> "Chinese Soccer," *Sun*, 2 July, 1923.

<sup>21</sup> "Chinese Footballers," *Sun*, 19 October, 1922. An assumption has been made here that the initial provision of the bond by the NSWRL still held when the Chinese arrived.

<sup>22</sup> "Chinese Football Tour Fund," *South China Morning Post*, 28 July, 1923. It is unknown what the exchange rate from \$ in Hong Kong to £ in Australia was at the time, or how this money was divided up. Prior articles suggested that there was a need for up to \$7000.

<sup>23</sup> *Chinese Republic News*, 24 November, 1923. After expenses were removed, a total of £358/18/4 was raised.

old New Zealand venture had left off.<sup>24</sup> The syndicate included delegates from both the NSW and Queensland associations and eventually a number of other associations contributed.<sup>25</sup> The syndicate was soon replaced with a company, as the group wanted the risks limited to the amount of capital of the company.<sup>26</sup> Thus the company, Australian Tours Limited, was created. Its sole purpose was to assist with the finances in relation to the Chinese soccer tour.<sup>27</sup> The company was wound up following the departure of the team.<sup>28</sup>

The Chinese tour was a success in getting numbers through the gates. A total of 134,000 spectators witnessed the 24 games played in five States.<sup>29</sup> The Company, after all profits had been settled, finished with a credit balance of £1,336/11/6. This equates to an 88% return on the £1,500 initially invested. Of this, the Company chose to issue 41 2/3% (or £625) as dividends with the rest allocated to soccer sporting bodies.<sup>30</sup> The people who financed the project agreed that they would disclaim all intention to make any money and that they would only receive what they had paid into the pool.<sup>31</sup> Further, the constitution of the CFA stated that 2.5% of any profits made by soccer bodies of any representative fixture be delivered to the national body to be used for the furtherance of the game. As reported in *The Referee* of 23 December 1923, the Company declined to

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<sup>24</sup> "Chinese Tour," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 July, 1923; "The Chinese Visit," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 July, 1923; *New South Wales Soccer Football Association Annual Report for 1923*.

<sup>25</sup> Members of the Queensland Football Association were in Sydney in connection with the Third Test Team to play New Zealand.

<sup>26</sup> *New South Wales Soccer Football Association Annual Report for 1923*.

<sup>27</sup> Australian Tours Limited was registered in New South Wales on 12 July 1923 and incorporated a day later with only 650 of the prescribed 1,500 £1 shares sold. State Records NSW: CGS 12951, *Companies Packet, Australian Tours Limited*; Memorandum of Association and Certificate of Incorporation.

<sup>28</sup> *New South Wales Government Gazette*, No. 151, 7 December, 1923, p. 5766; Although this resolution was fulfilled and the money distributed, the company name was not struck off the register and the Company dissolved until 23 June, 1939. State Records NSW: CGS 12951, *Companies Packet, Australian Tours Limited*; Supplementary note.

<sup>29</sup> "Soccer Team," *Referee*, 23 November, 1923.

<sup>30</sup> *New South Wales Soccer Football Association Annual Report for 1924*, 3-5.

<sup>31</sup> "Australia Wins Soccer Test," *Referee*, 22 August, 1923.

recognise the parent body's claim.<sup>32</sup> Yet, in the eventual break-up of the remaining amount, following the payment of dividends, the CFA received £133/13/3, which is just under 10% of the remaining profits. The reasoning for this change of mind is not known. Of the residual, Millard received only £70 as an additional gratuity.<sup>33</sup>

### Chinese players in Australia



*Sydney Mail*, 8 August, 1923

On Monday 6 August 1923 the Japanese mail steamer *Yoshino Maru* berthed in Sydney. Amongst those who alighted from the steamer were the sixteen Chinese soccer players, their manager, and Millard. With the Chinese now on the civilised part of what was to them *Terra Australis Incognita*, the locals were required to construct suitable

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<sup>32</sup> "Chinese Soccer Captain's Farewell Message to Australia Through the Referee," *Referee*, 21 December, 1923.

<sup>33</sup> *New South Wales Soccer Football Association Annual Report for 1924*, 3-5.

competitive opposition. The selection process varied throughout the tour, not influenced solely by the political decisions of the NSW and Queensland Associations, but owing directly to distance and methods of travel available. The tour consisted of localised matches and the prestigious representative matches. While the local Associations chose the make up of the lesser matches, it was the CFA which selected the players for the internationals. The CFA chose to bring together a full Australian representative team, opening the selection process to include players from States other than New South Wales and Queensland. In adopting this strategy, the CFA created a larger player pool for future internationals. It also established a pathway for promising players of the lesser States, one that did not exist within the duopoly created previously by the NSW and Queensland Associations. Thus the other States would no longer feel 'left out', allowing them more fodder for their drive to etch out a place within the sport space dominated by Australian rules. For the first international against China, Tasmania and South Australia accepted invitations to provide players.<sup>34</sup> As the *Mercury* noted, 'For the first time in the history of the game in Australia teams representing the full strength of two nations will contest an International match'.<sup>35</sup>

The first Australian team to play China consisted of players from NSW, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia. Over the next three internationals, NSW and Queensland dominated the membership of the Australian team. When the Chinese travelled south and west, distance precluded many from NSW and Queensland to participate and thus team membership tended to include locals and those from the other southern States. In Melbourne an unofficial Australia v China match was held with players transported from NSW, Tasmania and South Australia to join the Victorians. The fifth and final international took place in Adelaide where NSW, Victoria and South Australia were

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<sup>34</sup> "Football," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 9 August, 1923; "The Chinese Team," *Age*, 9 August, 1923.

<sup>35</sup> "Soccer," *Mercury*, 17 August, 1923.

represented. Soccer was played in Western Australia, yet the organisers believed it was too far to travel, and the West Australians were considered unknown in quality. There were other problems in Perth that would be echoed throughout Australia.

When the opening match drew approximately 47,000 to the Sydney Showgrounds, the other codes felt threatened and chose to defend the sports space they had strived, over time, to build. In Western Australia, where Australian rules was the prominent football code, there appeared a hatred towards the other codes. 'In the view of the reported hostility of the NSW Rugby controlling bodies to the Australian game, it was tacitly agreed that, should the Chinese team visit Perth, no enclosed ground would be available for them.'<sup>36</sup> While soccer has no connection with rugby league, it was lumped in to the 'other' football code grouping that the Australian rules authorities despised. Australian rules did not want other codes to invade their monopoly of enclosed grounds.

Prior to the arrival of the Chinese soccer players, the NSW Rugby League (NSWRL) chose not to provide the usage of the Sydney Cricket Ground for the opening match between NSW and the Chinese team. Rugby league decided not to accede to the request for the ground, but to agree to a conference. A request for the ground by Australian rules for the NSW v Carlton match was also denied.<sup>37</sup> It was considered too late to make alternative arrangements for their own fixtures. The Showground struggled to hold the sizeable gathering leading to spectators trying to scale the fences<sup>38</sup> and the police halting the sale of tickets and turning thousands away.<sup>39</sup> The cricket ground was a larger venue and following the opening match, some papers discussed the matter. The *Bulletin* charged the rugby league authorities with 'rotten sportsmanship',<sup>40</sup> while

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<sup>36</sup> "Chinese Soccer Team," *Daily Guardian*, 28 September, 1923.

<sup>37</sup> NSW Rugby League. *Minutes of the General Committee Meeting 6 August 1923*, Item 16: From the NSW Soccer Association re: Sydney Cricket Ground.

<sup>38</sup> "Chinese soccer team make good," *Sunday Times*, 12 August, 1923.

<sup>39</sup> "Footballers from China," *Adelaide Advertiser*, 13 August, 1923.

<sup>40</sup> *Bulletin*, 16 August, 1923.

another, the *Sun*, asked why if soccer had, a few years earlier, given the league tour of England use of their grounds, that rugby league in NSW did not reciprocate.<sup>41</sup>

When the first international was held at the Showgrounds instead of the Sydney Cricket Ground (SCG), this time rugby league was falsely accused by the press of hoarding grounds for their own use. In a goodwill gesture towards soccer, rugby league was willing to negotiate the use of the SCG but the soccer authorities chose ‘that they were not going on with the matter’.<sup>42</sup> The reasons for soccer’s choice not to continue discussions on the matter is unknown, yet in doing so, the inability to use the SCG drew the ire of some press. In Melbourne the *Sporting Globe* said that ‘rugby league is being roundly condemned for its action. Truly the league has alienated a good deal of support by its recent actions’.<sup>43</sup> While rugby league was not the ‘greedy and churlish professional body’<sup>44</sup> the *Bulletin* had tagged them as, the press had opened the door for not only condemnation of rugby league but a wider discussion of ground allocations.

The ever-recurring fight for the control of grounds would be common-place during the tour when it visited the State capitals. In Brisbane the greed of the rugby league authorities halted the ability of the Queensland Football Association (QFA) to have use of the larger Exhibition Ground. The dealings were exposed in the unionist paper, *Daily Standard*, which provided a detailed description of the negotiations between the QFA and the Queensland Rugby League.<sup>45</sup> The Brisbane Cricket Ground, also known as the Woolloongabba, eventually was to be just sufficient in size to hold the modest crowds of ten to fifteen thousand spectators. In Adelaide the matter took a different turn where the local Australian rules authorities chose not to concede Adelaide Oval owing to the

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<sup>41</sup> “Soccer Triumph,” *Sun*, 14 August, 1923.

<sup>42</sup> N. S. W. Rugby League *Minutes of the General Committee Meeting 13 August 1923*, Item 18a. Re. Soccer Association.

<sup>43</sup> “Soccer Test,” *Sporting Globe*, 22 August, 1923.

<sup>44</sup> *Bulletin*, 16 August, 1923.

<sup>45</sup> “Chinese Football,” *Daily Standard*, 4 September, 1923.

need for it as the venue for the premiership final of their local competition.<sup>46</sup> The fifth international was therefore forced to the smaller ground of Jubilee Oval, which was located across the river from Adelaide Oval. In Melbourne, the Saturday games were contested on grounds other than the large Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG), including the Essendon Cricket Ground and Fitzroy Oval, owing to cricket matches on the MCG. In the middle of the week, all of the big grounds were available, but at that time, the crowds were not as big and thus the need for a larger venue was not as important.

### **The Games**

The Chinese contested 24 matches, winning eight, drawing seven and being defeated in nine. Most of the defeats occurred early in the tour when matches were played in NSW and Queensland. While the Chinese team was considered good prior to their arrival, they were no match for the experienced sides in NSW and Queensland. The style of game was also quite different. The Chinese preferred to pass the ball around while the Australians relied heavily on their strength.

Taken from a viewpoint of their opening matches, it would appear that the Chinese are not accustomed to quite such robust football as is played by the white man. Those who have seen the visitors in action, however, state that in cleverness of foot and head work the Chinese are as good as, if not better than, our men.<sup>47</sup>

Their first win did not occur until near the midway point when they stopped in Tamworth, on their return from Queensland towards Sydney. From 11 August until 17 October, there were two games each week, one on a Saturday and one midweek, normally Wednesday. One extra game was held in Wollongong on the way to Sydney, from Melbourne, prior to their departure. Of the 63 goals scored by the Chinese, Li Wai Tong was to net 29 times. Considering Li was a late replacement, his aptitude for scoring was quite remarkable and the tour was to launch a career that went for many

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<sup>46</sup> *Bulletin*, 13 September, 1923.

<sup>47</sup> *Mercury*, 31 August, 1923.

decades thereafter including captaining the 1948 Chinese Olympic team to London.<sup>48</sup> Li commenced his large haul in the opening match of the tour, netting all the goals for China in a three-all draw with NSW.

The opening match set the scene for the rest of the tour. The overwhelming crowd of approximately 47,000 opened the eyes of all sporting enthusiasts throughout Australia. Although the Chinese were originally only to travel to venues in NSW and Queensland, the other States were soon approaching Australian Tours Limited to secure the Chinese for matches in their States. The approval to extend the tour was given not long after the opening matches. Considering that the income from the first few matches had exceeded the expenses, it was stated that ‘the promoters can well afford to widen the scope of their expense, to further the game in the weaker States’.<sup>49</sup> Other venues also became interested in the Chinese, including Orange which guaranteed the expenses for an exhibition match between the Chinese and a Sydney team.<sup>50</sup> They were not to be successful in the request, yet the towns of Tamworth and Harden were. While the Chinese travelled to venues close to the major State capitals, any matches in country towns took place if the team was travelling through. Orange would involve a trip west from Sydney and one back, and the logistics of this precluded the option.

The touring party arrived in Sydney on Monday 6 August. ‘Pretty girls and other members of the Chinese community’ were there to greet them.<sup>51</sup> A ‘well-known Chinese lady pinned a lucky ‘kewpie’ to the buttonhole of each’.<sup>52</sup> One of the members of the Chinese welcoming community was Otto Kong Sing. Otto’s father, of the same name, was a well-recognised educated, middle-class ‘Anglo-Chinese’ athlete from the late-1890s, who was involved in numerous sports including as captain of the Newington

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<sup>48</sup> *Smith’s Weekly*, 27 March, 1948.

<sup>49</sup> “Soccer,” *Daily Guardian*, 22 August, 1923.

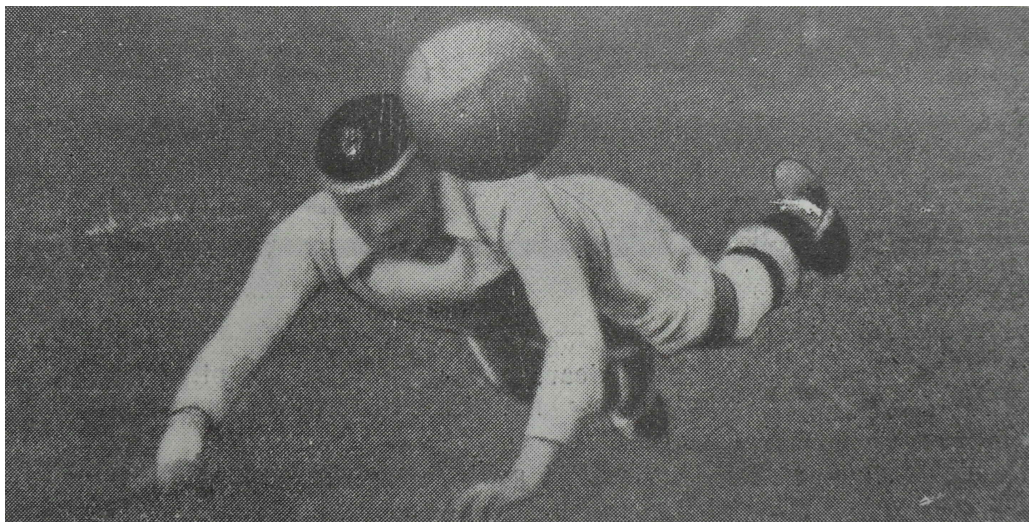
<sup>50</sup> “British Association,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 August, 1923.

<sup>51</sup> “Soccer,” *Adelaide Advertiser*, 7 August, 1923.

<sup>52</sup> “Soccer,” *Daily Guardian*, 7 August, 1923.



College rugby team. Otto, the senior, studied to become a solicitor and travelled to Hong Kong in 1904 where he died in 1917.<sup>53</sup> The team was welcomed by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce in Sydney on their first night and were received at a full reception the following day, by members of the soccer community, politicians and local Chinese. The Chinese players attended the reception in Chinese costume.<sup>54</sup>



A wonderful save (Opening match)<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Gary Osmond and Marie-Louise McDermott, "Mixing Race: The Kong Sing Brothers and Australian Sport," *Australian Historical Studies* 39, no. 3 (2008): 338-55; "Death of Mr. Otto Kong Sing," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 May, 1917.

<sup>54</sup> "The Soccer Season," *Referee*, 8 August, 1923.

<sup>55</sup> "A Wonderful Save," *Sunday Mail*, 15 August, 1923.



A good header (opening match)<sup>56</sup>

The first leg of the Chinese tour was in Sydney with matches on Saturdays, 11 and 18 August, and Wednesdays, 15 and 23 August. The result on the field of the opening match, and the enthusiasm in the media following the game guaranteed a healthy patronage for the remaining matches in Sydney. A good number of the 40,000-plus who attended the match came from the ranks of rugby league support. Rugby league suffered badly on that Saturday with only 13,500 attending the four games. The representative Australian rules match was not affected as 10,000 made their way to that match. The Chinese game saw rugby league lose out severely in gate takings for that weekend. Rugby league relied on the takings to pay its players. The opening match was an example where the tour became a threat to the dominant codes throughout Australia, endangering their source of income.

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<sup>56</sup> "A good header," *Sydney Mail*, 15 August, 1923.



A piece of smart work (Australia v China 18 August, 1923)<sup>57</sup>



An incident (Australia v China 18 August, 1923)<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> "A piece of smart work," *Sydney Mail*, 22 August, 1923.

The midweek match for the Chinese, held at the SCG in front of 7,000 spectators, was contested against a team called Metropolis.<sup>59</sup> Representing the Sydney area, the hosts won by four goals to two, but not until after the enigmatic goalkeeper for China, Lau, was injured and taken to hospital.<sup>60</sup> Lau's injury would affect his play the following Saturday in the first international where the Chinese were defeated five goals to one. Lau was the only recognised goalkeeper in the Chinese squad of players. The crowd of 25,000 counters many arguments that most were at the opening match for its novelty as soccer in Sydney did not have such sizeable patronage.<sup>61</sup> Rugby league returned to its normal spectator numbers with 29,000 in total attending the four matches and the NSW versus Victoria Australian rules match drew 8,000. On the Wednesday, the Chinese played against a local Sydney team, Granville, at Clyde Oval in front of about 3,000 spectators. Prior to the match, a two-all draw, the Chinese had been received at the local Town Hall and visited the Clyde Engineering Works.

The trip to the engineering works was part of an extensive social program developed for the Chinese visitors. The events were so frequent that the games proved to be rare rest for the players. One Sydney journalist was impressed with the Chinese players' stamina stating that 'banquets, picnics and other outings follow in rapid succession; yet the tourists turn out on match days'.<sup>62</sup> Not all events in the early days received appreciation by the media. On the day following the opening match, the Chinese were taken by the Vice-Consul for China to the National Park, south of Sydney.<sup>63</sup> On their return that Sunday night, the bus with the Chinese was allowed to jump the queue waiting for the punt at Tom Ugly's, and significantly ahead of some nurses late back from a picnic south. The writer summed up the situation in light racist terms. 'Australians are rarely

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<sup>58</sup> "An incident," *Sydney Mail*, 22 August, 1923.

<sup>59</sup> "British Association," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 August, 1923.

<sup>60</sup> *Tung Wah Times*, 25 August, 1923.

<sup>61</sup> "International Soccer Test," *Sun*, 18 August, 1923.

<sup>62</sup> "Australia Wins Soccer Test," *Referee*, 2 August, 1923.

<sup>63</sup> "Chinese Footballers," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 August, 1923.

wanting in courtesy to overseas visitors, whether white, black, or yellow. The only difference is that it speeds the parting guest much more enthusiastically when he is coloured.’<sup>64</sup> In this instant, the fact of being sportsmen gave the Chinese an advantage over others.

Following four matches in Sydney, the Chinese travelled to Newcastle for the second international where they were defeated by a last-minute penalty, four goals to three.<sup>65</sup> The match was exciting for the 16,000 who gathered at the Newcastle Showground as each time Australia took the lead, the Chinese would draw level. The Chinese were considered unlucky and many believed that following the trip to Queensland, ‘when Sydney sees the Chinese team again they will be a really high-class combination’.<sup>66</sup> On their return towards Sydney, the Chinese stopped in Hamilton to contest a match against the a team representing the Newcastle district. The Chinese lost seven goals to one on a field that fulfilled the mining tradition of early football history in the region, the game was played on a surface of black coaldust. When a reporter from the *Chinese Republic News* enquired about the result, the players stated ‘(W)e are not used to playing on sandy and gravelly fields and so that is why there was such a big difference in the score this time’.<sup>67</sup>

The match in Hamilton would be the first of three regional ventures prior to the trip north. The seventh match was a contest with a team representing the Illawarra district, located south of Sydney. Played at Bode’s Oval in Wollongong with a large attendance of 12,000, the game finished in a draw, each team scoring once. The surprise of the match, related by local journalists, was not the Chinese on the field, but the merchants from Sydney who chose to fly to Wollongong for the game thus adding a ‘touch of

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<sup>64</sup> “Chinese Before Nurses,” *Daily Guardian*, 14 August, 1923.

<sup>65</sup> “Saturday’s Football,” *Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner’s Advocate*, 27 August, 1923.

<sup>66</sup> “Soccer,” *Sydney Sportsman*, 28 August, 1923.

<sup>67</sup> “The South China Soccer Team’s 67th Match,” *Chinese Republic News*, 8 September, 1923.

novelty to a scene that was already replete with novelty'.<sup>68</sup> The following Wednesday, the Chinese were in South Maitland at the Abermain Recreation Ground for a match against Maitland. Again the result ended in a draw, two all. The crowd was one of the lowest for the tour, only 1,600, and significantly this was unfortunate, as the proceeds of the gate were to go to the Miner's Relief Fund following the nearby Bellbird Disaster.<sup>69</sup>

The result of yet another draw or loss began to concern a few. A worry existed that the players were being 'run to death' playing twice a week for three months. To these people, 'the whole thing savours of money making'.<sup>70</sup> Other journalists were not as worried. One believed the tour a success following the opening games. 'Even supposing the arrangement of the tour was suggested in the first place as a novelty to advance the cause of Soccer, the fact remains that the Chinese students have delivered.'<sup>71</sup> Another was more succinct. 'As a factor in international football China has certainly arrived.'<sup>72</sup> While there was a belief by some in the Chinese press that the players were being overworked,<sup>73</sup> the players themselves were enjoying the tour and prior to each match they sang their war-cry. The following is a literal translation:

Ho! Ho! The loud laughter,  
Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!  
We've come to Australia  
To play the "Soccer"  
Our China team,  
To represent Great China.

We want good friendship,  
Don't mind win or defeat,  
But hope both closer,  
Australian Chinese.  
Peace and prosperity.

Long way we have come from,

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<sup>68</sup> "Soccer," *Illawarra Mercury*, 7 September, 1923.

<sup>69</sup> "Soccer Code," *Maitland Daily Mercury*, 5 September, 1923.

<sup>70</sup> "Soccer," *Sydney Sportsman*, 4 September, 1923.

<sup>71</sup> "Soccer," *Daily Guardian*, 30 August, 1923.

<sup>72</sup> *Bulletin*, 16 August, 1923.

<sup>73</sup> *Tung Wah Times*, 25 August, 1923.

Facing difficulties,  
To exchange our ideas,  
And enlarge our trade.  
Ho! Brethren. Patriotic and reverent.

We're glad to meet.  
All must wake up.  
And show our ability,  
And (thereby) gain for China.<sup>74</sup>

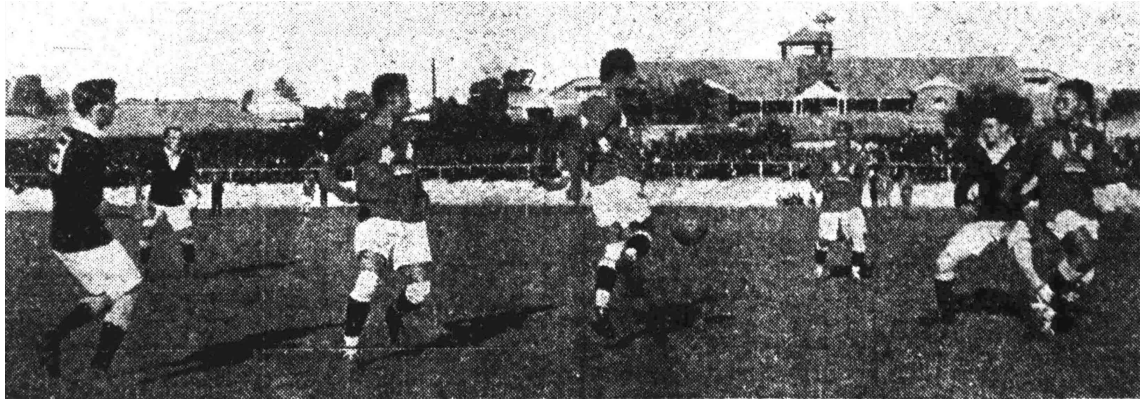
The war-cry provided for both their countrymen in Australia, and the Europeans who read the translation, a further view of the desires of the soccer visitors to combine their Chinese patriotism with an acceptance of the demands for global engagement. China and Australia were ripe for improved trade relations and the players considered themselves as ambassadors, not only of China and its people, but also that country's commercial and trade interests. Further discussion on trade will be provided in Chapters 5 and 6.

The Chinese travelled by train from Maitland to Queensland for a three-match tour of that State, two on a Saturday and one on Wednesday. On Saturday 8 September, the Chinese played against a team representing Queensland. The result, as with the more recent games, was a draw, each team scoring a goal. The Chinese played in a gentlemanly manner, not conceding a single foul against their opposition and that impressed the 15,000 spectators, more than the ground could hold, such that they 'were encroaching on the cycle track.'<sup>75</sup> The game had the celebrity comedienne, Miss Ruby Norton, provide the kick-off for the Queensland side.

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<sup>74</sup> "Chinese Footballers," *Daily Standard*, 6 September, 1923.

<sup>75</sup> "Soccer," *Daily Standard*, 10 September, 1923; "A Great Crowd," *Sports Referee*, 8 September, 1923.



Chinese Footballers (Brisbane v China)<sup>76</sup>

The mid-week match was held inland at the Ipswich Cricket Reserve, in oppressive heat where the temperature reached 93 Fahrenheit,<sup>77</sup> against a West Moreton team representing the Ipswich region. Ipswich was a mining town similar to Wollongong and Newcastle, and like the NSW towns, had a rich tradition in soccer. The first ever captain for Australia of an international match, Australia versus New Zealand in Dunedin on Saturday 17 June 1922, was Alec Gibb from Ipswich. Gibb did not participate in the match, being injured, but his team-mates were successful by a score of four goals to two. There was some controversy in the match. 'The game was somewhat marred by indifferent refereeing, one of the Ipswich goals being glaringly offside.' Another paper stated that '(T)he referee's decisions were very faulty, and soon earned the disapproval of the crowd'.<sup>78</sup> Further, in an unsavoury incident 'Leung and Edwards got into hots and commenced kicking one another and a halt was called for a second or two to compose their differences.' The two players shook hands and play continued.<sup>79</sup> The incident was one of a rare few where players of each team, while on the field, became involved in matters other than playing the game. Generally, the Chinese were gentlemanly on the field and the robustness and aggression was left to the Australians.

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<sup>76</sup> "Chinese Footballers," *Daily Standard*, 11 September, 1923.

<sup>77</sup> "China Turns the Tables," *Sunday Times*, 23 September, 1923.

<sup>78</sup> "Soccer," *Sports Referee*, 15 September, 1923; "Soccer," *Daily Standard*, 13 September, 1923.

<sup>79</sup> "Soccer," *Daily Standard*, 13 September, 1923.



The Chinese were beginning to tire from all of the travelling and the exhaustion came to a head in the third international, played at the Brisbane Cricket Ground in front of only 10,000 spectators on Saturday 15 September. The Chinese ‘played bravely and they had defended many times within an hour. After that, they were worn out’,<sup>80</sup> and the Australians overran them. The final score was five goals to nil with four netted in the second half. The Chinese had now played 11 matches without a win and only five draws.

The Queensland leg provided for the players on the field a disappointing time. Off the field it was mixed. The Queenslanders treated the Chinese players generally very well. Their generosity astonished the organisers of the tour noting that the ‘business people contributed many trophies for competition among the members of the team’.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately for the Chinese, an unsavoury element of Australia reared its head when ‘pickpockets touched their clothes during absence from a Brisbane hotel.’<sup>82</sup>

The results in Queensland and the hotel robbery behind them, the Chinese were extremely keen to perform well when they stopped in Tamworth on the way from Brisbane to Sydney. The northern NSW town were also intent on putting on a show for the visitors. They moved the races for the second day of the Tamworth Jockey Club’s Spring meeting to a time earlier in the day<sup>83</sup> so that the players and spectators could attend both events. Further, a large number of shops chose to ‘close their premises at 1 o’clock’.<sup>84</sup> The Chinese visited the horse races on both the Tuesday and Wednesday and played in a tennis match against the locals on the Wednesday morning.<sup>85</sup> All of these distractions did nothing to alter the focus of the Chinese when it came to the game at the

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<sup>80</sup> “10th and 11th Competition,” *Chinese Republic News*, 22 September, 1923.

<sup>81</sup> “Back From Tour,” *Sun*, 20 September, 1923.

<sup>82</sup> “China turns the Tables,” *Sunday Times*, 23 September, 1923.

<sup>83</sup> “Tamworth Soccer,” *Northern Daily Leader*, 7 September, 1923.

<sup>84</sup> “Soccer and Races,” *Northern Daily Leader*, 17 September, 1923.

<sup>85</sup> “Football,” *Northern Daily Leader*, 19 September, 1923.

No. 1 Oval against a representative team from Tamworth and neighbouring towns. The Chinese easily accounted for their lesser opponents, winning their first game on tour by nine goals to nil. A healthy crowd of 3,500 attended with some Chinese driving up from Sydney for the game.<sup>86</sup>

The result in Tamworth was to be the turning point for the Chinese tour, in playing terms. When the Chinese arrived in Sydney aboard the Glen Innes train the players 'looked the picture of health, and they all stated they had a good trip'.<sup>87</sup> The players were re-invigorated and keen for a result in the next match, the fourth international between Australia and China. It was at this time, in late September, that the original schedule for the tour was to be completed. With the success of the early games, especially the crowd sizes, the tour was extended to include games in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.<sup>88</sup> On Saturday 22 September 1923, approximately 7,000 turned up to watch China defeat Australia by three goals to one. The Australian captain Judy Masters complimented his opponents after the match that 'China beat us on their merits. They have kept plugging away, and I'm glad to see them victorious. It was a fair-dinkum win.'<sup>89</sup>

The trip from Sydney to Melbourne was a long one, and thus a stop was organised in the combined towns of Harden and Murrumburrah. The towns had been involved in football using the railway as a method of transporting its players. Only a few weeks prior to the Chinese visit, Harden contested a set of matches with the Goulburn Junior Soccer Club, a regular event.<sup>90</sup> As was witnessed at Tamworth, the locals provided a strong programme of entertainment for the Chinese. On the morning of the game, the Chinese travelled to Garangula Station where they 'took part in shearing a few sheep

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<sup>86</sup> "Soccer," *Northern Daily Leader*, 20 September, 1923.

<sup>87</sup> "Back From Tour," *Sun*, 20 September, 1923.

<sup>88</sup> "Soccer," *Daily Guardian*, 22 August, 1923.

<sup>89</sup> "China Turns the Tables," *Sunday Times*, 23 September, 1923.

<sup>90</sup> "Soccer Football," *Murrumburrah Signal*, 28 August, 1923.

with the machines.’ Some of the Chinese also ventured to have a ride on horseback. This was a new experience to the Chinese players. The match, though, would not be against locals, but a team brought in on the same train from Sydney representing its Metropolitan area. Yet, spectators came in from nearby towns by bus, car and train for the match and a crowd of 1,600 built up prior to kick off. The Metropolitan team won three goals to two, yet only after scoring the winner late in the match.<sup>91</sup>



International Association Football<sup>92</sup>

The Sydney Express continued south with the Chinese and arrived in Melbourne at 2pm on the day after the Harden-Murrumburrah match. They were now entering Australian rules country. For the next two months, the Chinese would entertain crowds in the three States where Australian rules was the predominant sport and soccer a long-distant second in participation and spectators. Many hoped that the Chinese tour would alter this imbalance where national pride of the home-grown game held sway. ‘The match will provide supporters of the Australian game with the opportunity to see the English

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<sup>91</sup> “Soccer Football,” *Murrumburrah Signal*, 27 September, 1923.

<sup>92</sup> “International Association Football,” *Argus*, 1 October, 1923.

game played by high class exponents.<sup>93</sup> Melbourne hosted three matches. They were played only as the Chinese passed through the city. The first, the fifteenth game of the tour, was an unofficial international against a selection from different parts of Australia. Played on Saturday 29 September at the Fitzroy Oval the Australian team defeated China two goals to nil.<sup>94</sup> The crowd of 12,000 was considered remarkable in its composure. ‘Chinese residents attended in large numbers, hoping for the victory of their countrymen. There were Little Bourke Street denizens present whose only sport in the past has been Fan-tan.’<sup>95</sup>

The Chinese travelled by train from Melbourne to Adelaide. Unfortunately, not too far outside of Melbourne, during a stop at Bacchus Marsh, one of the players was pick-pocketed of £16, 10/. Together with the £28 the players had stolen in Brisbane while they were having breakfast, the two events left a sour taste for the Chinese.<sup>96</sup> When they arrived in Adelaide, the Chinese found that the whole of their stay had been planned to the last detail including a visit to Penfold’s wineries of the Barossa Valley, cinema viewings and tea-parties.<sup>97</sup> The day after they arrived, the Chinese participated in a clash on Jubilee Oval, in front of 4,000 spectators, with a representative team from South Australia.<sup>98</sup> The Chinese won convincingly six goals to two. There was some argument in the Adelaide press about the selection for that game. In a letter to the Editor of the *News*, one correspondent stated that the selection process was a ‘joke’ and a ‘farce’ and that some teams, including the Premiers of the recent season, were not represented.<sup>99</sup> The soccer authorities in Adelaide countered a few days later stating the specific players were not selected for the South Australian or Australian game for

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<sup>93</sup> “Soccer,” *Herald*, 28 September, 1923.

<sup>94</sup> “International Match,” *Sporting Globe*, 29 September, 1923.

<sup>95</sup> “Australia v China,” *Herald*, 29 September, 1923.

<sup>96</sup> “Chinaman’s Luck,” *News*, 3 October, 1923.

<sup>97</sup> “Chinese Soccer Players,” *Advertiser*, 3 October, 1923.

<sup>98</sup> “Soccer Football,” *Observer*, 6 October, 1923.

<sup>99</sup> “Soccer,” *News*, 3 October, 1923.

reasons 'well known to those behind the scenes'.<sup>100</sup> An assumption can be made that the respective players, out of favour with the officials owing to certain indiscretions, could have made a difference, and thus the best team was not placed against the Chinese. The South Australian authorities placed their dealings with the players above the commercial interests of the tour.

The fifth international, and seventeenth match of the tour, was held at Jubilee Oval with 12,000 in attendance. The Australian team consisted of five players from New South Wales, one from Victoria and five from South Australia. The match ended in a draw with each team scoring twice, although China led by two goals into the second half. At a dinner held following the match, members of the local Chinese community stated that they were overwhelmed with the behaviour of the local supporters at the match and believed that '(N)ow that the barrier of prejudice, which had existed for centuries, was broken,' they hoped for more encounters between East and West. The locals had exhibited the 'kindest feelings' towards the Chinese on the field, and showed true sportsmanship towards the players of both sides.<sup>101</sup> The stay of the Chinese soccer players in Adelaide was brief, lasting only five nights, but they had left with their reputation held high.

The day following the fifth international, the Chinese travelled back to Melbourne as a stopover before proceeding to Tasmania. In Melbourne they played a match on the Tuesday afternoon at the Melbourne Cricket Ground in front of a small crowd of 2,000 spectators. The Chinese won the game three goals to one. The match raised an interesting description from an Australian rules writer, called "J.W.", who was unfortunately assigned the task of covering the match, even though he had no knowledge of the game, nor any care towards it. His commentary deserves mention as it

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<sup>100</sup> "International Soccer," *News*, 5 October, 1923.

<sup>101</sup> "International Soccer," *Advertiser*, 8 October, 1923.

is a rare item discussing the muscularity of the Chinese. Initially he recognises that not one player in the local side is Victorian, six of English origin and five from Scotland. Yet, in an attempt to attack soccer and defend Australian rules he wrote '(S)eeing the little Chinese bodies running around and twisting, studying position and passing, one recognised it was a game for them, and much better suited to their physique and antecedents that the more robust and vigorous Australian method.'<sup>102</sup>

The second match in Melbourne completed, the Chinese travelled by boat to Burnie in Tasmania before taking the train to Hobart. Yet, not all of the players made the trip. Wong, from Tientsin, and Shen, from Shanghai, had returned to China from Melbourne, as they were unhappy with the way they were treated. A discussion of this matter will be presented in the next chapter. Again, as in Adelaide, the complete itinerary was laid out for the, now 14, Chinese players and manager upon their arrival. Entertainments included a trip to the Cadburys chocolate factory near Hobart. In Tasmania, four matches were played, with two in Hobart and two in Launceston.

Unlike in other major cities, the Tasmanian Football League provided the venue, North Hobart Oval, for the matches against the Chinese.<sup>103</sup> On the first Saturday of the visit, a selection of players from Tasmania defeated the Chinese by two goals to one. The weather was unsettled, yet still 4,000 turned up to the venue to watch the Chinese, with even a band playing the Chinese National Anthem.<sup>104</sup> The inclement weather was to continue through the tour of the island. On a waterlogged ground, the Chinese easily accounted for a Southern Tasmania selection by eight goals to one, with Li Wai Tong scoring six times.

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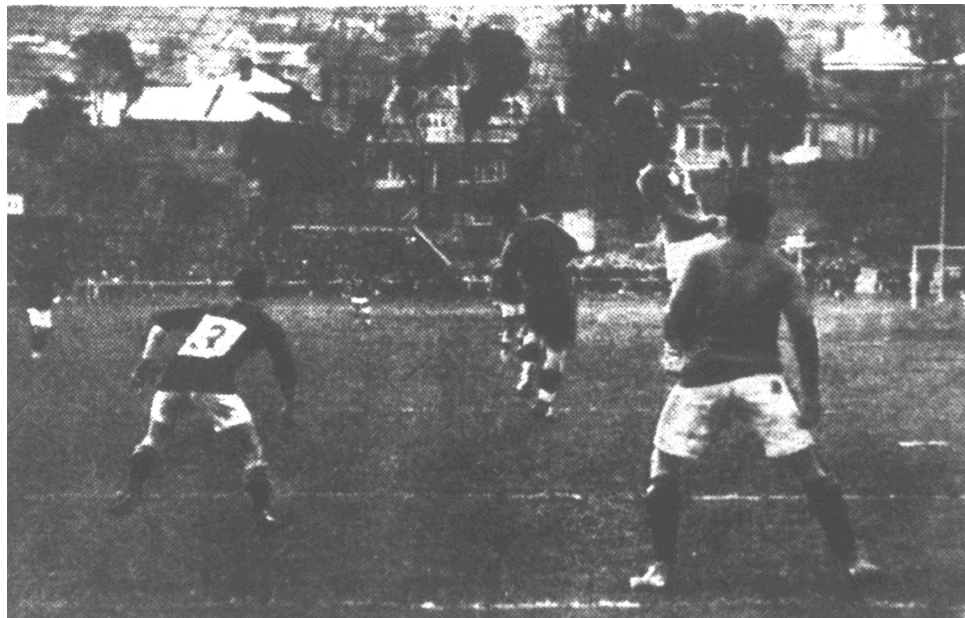
<sup>102</sup> "Victoria v China at Soccer," *Australasian*, 13 October, 1923.

<sup>103</sup> "Soccer," *Mercury*, 5 October, 1923.

<sup>104</sup> "Soccer," *Mercury*, 15 October, 1923.



Lucas, Tasmania's goalie clears his goal<sup>105</sup>



Wong Pak Chung heads the ball in front of goal<sup>106</sup>

Following the two matches in Hobart the Chinese made their way to Launceston. On the Saturday, playing their 21<sup>st</sup> game, the Chinese gained revenge for their loss in Hobart winning four goals to one against Tasmania at the Cricket Ground. Unlike the correspondent in Melbourne a week prior, the writer in the local newspaper praised the game. 'It was the first occasion on which many Launceston people had seen an

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<sup>105</sup> "Soccer," *Mercury*, 15 October, 1923.

<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

exhibition of this game, and they were surprised at the skill required and the speed at which it was played.’<sup>107</sup> The Tasmanian team consisted of only one true-born Tasmanian, the rest having migrated from Great Britain, which explains the need to get more locals interested in soccer.

The next Thursday the Chinese contested a match against Launceston at the Launceston Cricket Ground. To improve the size of the crowd the organisers chose to make the event ladies’ day and children’s day for the match with a grandstand set aside for the children. Unfortunately, not all members of the Chinese touring party were to be at the match as the team manager, Mok Hing, was hospitalised with malaria.<sup>108</sup> The game, won by the Chinese five goals to one, attracted a number of school pupils who ‘were very interested in the skill shown by the players, though the game was a little bewildering after their accustomed Australian rules’.<sup>109</sup> Although Australian rules was played or supported by most who attended the games in Launceston, the game of soccer had left an impression, and that was one of the main aims of the CFA.

The Chinese travelled to Melbourne, arriving the day after the Launceston match. On Saturday 27 October, they played against Victoria at the brand new Essendon football ground, called Windy Hill, in the penultimate match of the tour. As the Chinese were dressed in dark blue shirts, the Victorians chose to wear the local Essendon colours of black and red. While China won the match two goals to nil in front of 7,000 spectators, the highlight of the afternoon was the half-time entertainment where Shanghai player, Chan So performed in a kicking competition with Essendon rover Charlie Hardy. The two players first kicked a soccer ball as far as possible and then an Australian rules ball. Hardy proved the better in each case, although only by a small margin and was awarded

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<sup>107</sup> “International Soccer,” *Examiner*, 22 October, 1923.

<sup>108</sup> “Chinese Soccer Team,” *Examiner*, 23 October, 1923.

<sup>109</sup> “Chinese Soccer Team,” *Examiner*, 25 October, 1923.



a gold medal for his victory.<sup>110</sup> That was the end of the southern leg of the tour, but what happened next showed that not everything was organised well for the Chinese.

The manager, Mok Hing, chose to travel to Sydney with Millard, leaving the players to stay with the Chinese Consul General. Discussions were held in relation to a charity match in Sydney and another match in Goulburn on the return trip to Sydney, but neither eventuated.<sup>111</sup> In Melbourne, the players believed that they had fulfilled their responsibilities to the contract, but, after negotiations, an extra match in Melbourne was scheduled for 3 November.<sup>112</sup> Mr Oui, the Consul General believed that there were other reasons for the changes in the tour schedule.

The leader has some private matters in Sydney and asked me to take care of his team members. I think that's my responsibility, so I am taking care of them with the Consul, Mr Liang. I know it is a holiday and there is no available hotel, so I invited the members to live in my house. Even though there were many inconveniences, I could overcome these because of my responsibility. Now I have done my job, but I am disappointed with the leader who was saying the ground is not good enough to make a contest. Actually the reason is the leaving date is coming very soon and he wants to return to China. Without asking team members, he decided cancel the last contest. But I suggested if we told the team members the income of this trip will go to the local charities, I think they will stay. Otherwise, this income will be put into private use<sup>113</sup>.

The team was initially due to travel to Sydney on the 4<sup>th</sup> and relax for two weeks of sightseeing,<sup>114</sup> but this was changed with the idea of a charity match on the 10<sup>th</sup> in Melbourne after which they were to journey to Sydney on the 13<sup>th</sup> or 14<sup>th</sup> and then depart on the 17<sup>th</sup> back to Hong Kong.<sup>115</sup> Neither option occurred with the team travelling via Goulburn and thence to Wollongong to play one last match against a

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<sup>110</sup> "Football," *Argus*, 29 October, 1923.

<sup>111</sup> "Soccer Team," *Referee*, 7 November, 1923.

<sup>112</sup> "Chinese Embassy in Australia Sent Mail to Chinese Business Community," *Tung Wah Times*, 17 November, 1923.

<sup>113</sup> *Chinese Republic News*, 10 November, 1923.

<sup>114</sup> "South China Soccer Team's 20th and 21st Matches," *Chinese Republic News*, 27 October, 1923.

<sup>115</sup> "South China Soccer Team's 22nd and 23rd Matches," *Chinese Republic News*, 3 November, 1923.

selection of players from the South Coast region on 10 November. Before a 'large attendance' the two teams could not find the net, the game finishing without score.

The fourteen remaining Chinese soccer players and the manager sailed for Hong Kong on 17 November aboard the *SS Arafura*. Their record on the field was, from 24 games, eight wins, nine losses and seven draws. The Chinese scored 63 goals and conceded 55 goals. Two of the players, Li, the top goal scorer, and Lau, the acrobatic goalkeeper, 'had a circle of young ladies to bid them au revoir.' Each player took a mascot back with him and the team manager, Mok Hing, had a huge Australian flag as the team's souvenir.<sup>116</sup> The Chinese were moved by the occasion of the farewell, the captain Leung Yuk Tong said, upon leaving:

What can I say to thank you all? The fifteen weeks we have spent in Australia will ever be a very happy recollection to us all. We are going back to talk about Australia, and help foster that understanding which is necessary for the encouragement of trade between China and Australia. We hope to welcome an Australian team to China, and to return to your hospitable shores.<sup>117</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The tour of the Chinese provided many positive outcomes for the sport of soccer in Australia. In the early 1920s, soccer had emerged as a new force amongst the football codes. The re-formation of the Commonwealth Football Association helped solidify soccer as an organised sport while the international tours in the 1920s exposed soccer to parts of the country where other football codes held prominence. It would be this threat to their domination that created concerns for Australian rules and rugby league. Many a newspaper stated that '(T)he visit of the Chinese team should do much to improve the

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<sup>116</sup> "Back to China," *Sunday Times*, 18 November, 1923.

<sup>117</sup> A. J. Boyd, "Chinese Soccer Captain's Farewell Message to Australia through the Referee," *Referee*, 21 November, 1923.

standard and also in making the game more popular'.<sup>118</sup> Their response was to relegate the matches against the Chinese to venues incapable of holding the expected excessive crowds. In doing so they attempted to protect the sports space they had so laboriously created. The *Bulletin* spelt out the concerns of the other codes. "We stand for the Australian game of football," declared Daly, manager of the (South Australian) team lately in Melbourne; "never mind about soccer or any other game".<sup>119</sup> Even with this attitude of the officials of other sports, the tour brought about the importance for the CFA to take advantage of all the publicity to further the game throughout Australia.

The Chinese tour provided for the CFA a chance to put forward their best players in international competition. It was the longest tour by an international soccer team to Australia. While the CFA were harnessing their attention towards a possible English tour, they understood the importance of improving the quality of players in Australia and allowing themselves to view players from other States while they were competing against the Chinese. The make up of the Australian team for the tour to New Zealand in 1922 and the return tour by New Zealand prior to the visit of the Chinese consisted of only players from New South Wales and Queensland. The first international against China included a player from South Australia and one from Tasmania. The fifth and final international, played in Adelaide, used many players from South Australia and one from Victoria. Yet, the rest of the matches, significantly those in the southern States allowed for many others to put their names forward for possible selection in future Australian national teams. In 1925 a team from England finally did travel to Australia and during 1924, a team from Canada toured and for the international matches, players were selected from a wider group than just New South Wales and Queensland.

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<sup>118</sup> "International Soccer," *Examiner*, 22 October, 1923.

<sup>119</sup> *Bulletin*, 13 September, 1923.

In management, the creation of the company Australian Tours Limited was a success. The fact that the company made a significant profit justified its existence. The CFA noted that the profits from ventures of this nature could be returned to the game and the Association took note of the work of the committee intending to use its methods during future tours. The main aim of the company was to assist with the finances for the Chinese soccer tour. The company eventually provided assistance with the organisation of the extension of the tour to the States of South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania as well as to some smaller towns in NSW. Australian Tours Limited provided the platform for a successful tour.

In soccer terms the tour was an overwhelming success. It laid the foundation stone for future tours involving countries from around the world. While the two New Zealand ventures were important, they were minor when compared to the effect of the Chinese tour in Australia. The other codes stood up and took notice, realising that their own monopoly of football was being threatened. Finally, the tour would be an event for the Chinese and provide them with many talking points.