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Story of the Sam China Cup

THE brains behind one of the important soccer events in the Indian community in days gone by was the Sam China Interprovincial Tournament.

And, continuing our series of soccer teams and stars of yesteryear from the Gems Archives of photographer Gopal Naransamy, we bring you a brief background on the man who initiated the legendary tournament, Sam China.

Sam China, who made the South African Indian Whos Who, was born in Pondicherry in the then French India in 1857.

He landed in Durban in 1863 and nine years later left on foot for Kimberley, during the world-famous Diamond Rush. He completed the journey in 21 days.

He later started his own business in Kimberley and was wellknown to all the pioneers of the Diamond City, including Cecil John Rhodes.

Sam China was interested in all activities of the Indian community, including the sporting side. As a keen sportsman, he presented a trophy to the South African Indian Football Association, bearing

his name. This trophy was competed by all the provinces affiliated to SAIFA.

Although he died in Kimberley in 1930, leaving three daughters — Mrs R S Pillay, Mrs N Veerasam and Mrs S N Moodley — his memory lived on. SAIFA staged the Sam China Cup inter provincial biennially at a central venue and these events would draw huge crowds.

His death occurred when players from various provinces of the Union of South Africa gathered in his town to play for his trophy. It was, therefore, fitting that the captains of the participating provincial teams were pallbearers at his funeral.

His grandson, Tilly Naidoo of Vereeniging Old Boys, emulated the great man by being selected and representing Transvaal, not only for the Sam China Cup but also for the province when winning the Dr Godfrey inter-race inter provincial trophy.

The photograph reproduced here is courtesy of Tilly's wife, Sylvie and the families. More details and photos of the heroes and teams of yesteryear will be published in our next and subsequent issues.



The famous Transvaal team of 1956 featuring Tilly Naidoo, seated right. The others in the photograph are (back row): A Moodley, F Pillay, G Pillay, Terence Thomas, S Moonien. (Seated): Ivan "Sarge" Naidoo, S

Paddy (vice captain), V Sundra (manager), T Padayachee (captain), A F Williams and (front) N Moodley and T Naidoo.

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