



# 6

## João Havelange: A Businessman for World Soccer

Philippe Vonnard and Nicola Sbetti

### Introduction

Despite the on-going Rio Olympics and the historic gold medal won by pole-vaulter Thiago Braz da Silva, Brazil's media headlines on 16 August 2016 were not all about the Games. João Havelange, one of the most important men in twentieth-century Brazilian sport, had died. During a long and illustrious career he had presided FIFA (Fédération International de Football Association) for 24 years and been a member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) since 1963. Nevertheless, reactions to Havelange's death varied greatly. While the Brazilian Football Confederation declared seven days of mourning and

---

P. Vonnard (✉)  
ISCC, Paris, France  
e-mail: philippe.vonnard@unil.ch

N. Sbetti  
University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy

several Brazilian newspapers remembered him as “Brazil’s greatest football administrator”, the press in most Western countries, especially the UK and France, described him as the “granddaddy of the corruption inside FIFA”.<sup>1</sup> Havelange was obviously a highly controversial figure who seriously divided opinion. His supporters would brook no criticism of someone they felt had devoted his life to developing sport, particularly football.<sup>2</sup> His detractors, on the other hand, were just as forthright in their condemnation of a man they considered morally bankrupt and “FIFA’s king of corruption”.<sup>3</sup>

Hopefully, his passing will allow a more balanced assessment of his life and achievements than the overly categorical pictures currently painted by his supporters and detractors. What is undisputable is that during his time at the head of FIFA, from 1974 to 1998, Havelange transformed the federation into a modern and efficient—but far from accountable—non-governmental organisation capable of meeting the challenges of the new global market which emerged with the end of the Bretton Woods system (1971) and the neoliberal deregulation of the 1980s. As well as substantially increasing its income and expanding its head office staff from 15 to almost 100 employees, FIFA extended its membership to over 200 countries and doubled the size of its flagship competition, the World Cup finals, from 16 to 32 teams. This growth can be attributed largely to the policies introduced by Havelange and his team, who worked hard throughout his presidency to develop the game around the globe while building close ties between FIFA, multinational companies and media groups.

---

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, articles in *Le Monde* (France) and *The Guardian* (UK) published on 16 August 2014.

<sup>2</sup>See, for example: Pereira, J.M. and Vieira, S.M. (2010) *João Havelange: o dirigente esportivo do século XX = João Havelange: The Great Sport’s Administrator of the twentieth century*, Rio de Janeiro: Casa da Palavra: 209.

<sup>3</sup>See, for example: Jennings, A. (2006) *Foul! The Secret World of FIFA: Bribes, Vote Rigging and Ticket Scandals*, London, New York: Routledge, 2006; Tomlinson, A. (2014) *FIFA. The Men, the Myths and the Money*, Oxford: Routledge.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a fuller understanding of Havelange's impact on FIFA, addressing the issues of *what* he did during his tenure as president and *why* he was able to implement what were, at the time, ground-breaking policies. In order to answer these questions, we begin by looking at Havelange's upbringing, training and career before he made it to the top of world soccer. In fact, Havelange came from a very different background to his predecessors. As a true businessman, he brought a new vision to FIFA that put much greater emphasis on developing soccer, particularly through increased commercialisation and mediatisation of the game. In this respect, he was the first of a new generation of sports leaders that would also include Juan Antonio Samaranch at the IOC.

This review of João Havelange's life, career and achievements at FIFA draws upon several sources, including his personal files at the IOC (stored in the IOC's archives in Lausanne) and at the FIFA (stored in the FIFA's archives in Zurich) and academic studies of changes within world soccer's governing body during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Moreover, the research benefited by two interviews realised with two former UEFA secretaries (Hans Bangerter, 1960–1989, and Gerhard Aigner, 1989–1998) and by one interview conducted with Jacques Ferran, a journalist with the French newspaper *L'Equipe* from 1948 to 1998 who had met Havelange on numerous occasions.

We begin by presenting Havelange's background and career in order to show how he secured FIFA's top job and why, in contrast to his predecessors, he placed so much importance on introducing policies to expand FIFA. We then look at the changes he oversaw, focusing on the steps taken to maximize FIFA's income and the programs introduced to develop soccer around the world. We also examine the system of corruption that grew within FIFA during Havelange's reign, proof of which led to the former president's final disgrace and forced him to resign his membership of the IOC (2011) and his honorary presidency of FIFA (2013).

## João Havelange's Early Career and Election as FIFA President

João Havelange, who came from Brazil's more affluent classes, spent a large part of his life working within national and international sport federations. He rose to become one of the most important figures in world sport during the second half of the twentieth century.

### An Entrepreneurial Background

Faustin and Juliette Godefroid de Havelange welcomed their second son, João Marie Faustin Godefroid de Havelange, into the world on 8 May 1917. Originally from Belgium, the couple had emigrated to Peru, where Faustin Havelange had worked as a mining engineer, before moving to Rio de Janeiro, where he set up his own business as a dealer for two arms companies, Belgium's FN Herstal and France's SFM. At first, João's father prospered and the young Havelange spent his early years in a relatively wealthy and business-minded environment.

João attended Rio de Janeiro's Lyceum French high school—a sign of the family's social standing—before joining his father's company to learn the trade. However, by the 1930s Faustin Havelange was finding it increasingly difficult to secure government contracts and his business began to struggle. Probably because of the stress of trying to keep his company afloat, he suffered a fatal heart attack at the age of just 54. João, then aged 18, was profoundly affected by his father's death, which he blamed throughout his life on the public authorities deserting his father's business. This event undeniably strengthened his belief in the primacy of private enterprise and convinced him that one should never rely on the state as a sole business partner.<sup>4</sup>

After studying law at Rio's prestigious Fluminense Federal University, Havelange contacted Jules Verelst, a family friend and president of the Belgian Mining Company (BMC), to ask for a job. The young

---

<sup>4</sup>Tomlinson, A. (2000) 'FIFA and the men who made it', *Soccer & Society*, 1(1): 55–71.

Havelange was obviously already adept at using his network of friends and acquaintances to help him further his career. In fact, this was a skill he would exploit throughout his life to help him achieve his goals, especially in the field of sport. He went on to occupy several positions within the company, gradually rising through the ranks to become head of the import–export department.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the future FIFA boss did not stay with BMC for long, resigning from the company in order to follow in his father’s footsteps and start his own business. With his brother Juan, he moved to Sao Paulo, where the two ambitious young men hoped to build a successful law practice.

The firm was doing well when circumstances presented Havelange with an opportunity that would prove decisive to his career. In 1942, Brazil declared war on Germany and its allies, making it difficult for people from the Axis countries to run businesses in Brazil. At the time, Sao Paulo’s largest public transport company, *Auto Viacao Jabaquara*, was run by two Italians, Tito Mascioli and Arthur Brandi. In order to avoid problems for their company, they asked João Havelange to take over as manager for the duration of the hostilities. Havelange did such a good job that Mascioli and Brandi asked him to stay on once the war had ended.<sup>6</sup>

After the war, the Brazilian government nationalised a number of industries in an effort to modernise the country. One of its priorities was to improve Brazil’s public transport system, so, in 1947–1948, the government took over *Auto Viacao Jabaquara* and brought it within the state-owned company, *Onibus Braz*. Havelange was at the centre of the operation and, together with several other entrepreneurs, including Tito Mascioli, he founded *Viacao Cometa*. Although he was now an important and powerful figure in Sao Paulo’s business community—the head of a giant public transport company, a position he would hold for sixty-two years—Havelange had greater ambitions. As a result, he spent the 1950s diversifying into other areas of business, including banking, as a member of the Advisory Council of Brazil’s Central Bank, industry, as

---

<sup>5</sup>Pereira and Vieira *João Havelange: o dirigente esportivo do século XX*: 209.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 210.

the managing director of the *Orwec Quimica e Metalurgia Ltda.* chemical company, and insurance, as the president of the Sao Paulo insurance company *Farroupilha*.<sup>7</sup> He was a talented businessman who described himself on his 1971 curriculum vitae as a “business administrator”.<sup>8</sup> He also had great conversational skills and spoke English, Spanish, French and Portuguese perfectly. He would later apply the skills he had learned in the world of business to his positions within sports federations, but his interest in sport had begun on the field of play.

## A Career in Brazilian Sport

Havelange gained his first experience of competitive sport playing soccer for Fluminense, the club of the Rio de Janeiro elite, most of whose players during the interwar years came from the upper echelons of society.<sup>9</sup> However, Havelange was a man who needed to excel, so he abandoned soccer as soon as he realised he was not talented enough to play for a first division team. Instead, he took up swimming, which was mostly an upper-class sport at the time. Both he and his brother failed to qualify for the 1932 Olympic Games,<sup>10</sup> but João made it to the Berlin Olympics in 1936, where he competed in the 400 metres and 1500 metres freestyle events. The brothers went on to gain a degree of public recognition by becoming Brazilian champions several times over. In the late 1930s, they began playing water polo for *Botafogo*, staying with the team even after they moved to Sao Paulo, where they joined the exclusive *Esperia* sports club. As a result, for several years they played for both teams, competing in two parallel championships, where they rubbed shoulders with other athletes and, most importantly, numerous sports executives.

---

<sup>7</sup>IOC (International Olympic Committee) archives, João Havelange’s CV, João Havelange’s ‘Biography’ file.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Davies, D.J. (2000) ‘British Football with a Brazilian Beat: The Early History of a National Pastime (1894–1933)’ *English-Speaking Communities in Latin America* (Ed. O. Marshall) London: Institute of Latin American Studies.

<sup>10</sup>Pereira and Vieira *João Havelange: o dirigente esportivo do século XX*: 205.

As Pereira points out in his book, the *Esperia* club gave Havelange the opportunity to meet “influential people and, with his discreet, self-assured and courteous demeanour, he quickly won the respect of all and made (friends) which he kept for life”.<sup>11</sup> The contacts he cultivated were very useful in terms of his business dealings and also helped him rise through the ranks of Brazilian sports administration. Even though he competed in a second Olympic Games in 1952, as a member of Brazil’s water polo team, by the 1940s he had already started moving into sports administration. The curriculum vitae he sent to the IOC summarises this period in his career, with 9 pages of the 13-page document detailing the positions he held within Brazilian sports organisations.

He gained his first experience of sports administration as treasurer of the Botafogo Club and then as director of the *Esperia* Club, from where he moved on to become president of the Swimming Association for the State of Sao Paulo. This post allowed him to help one of his friends and the head of Rio’s chamber of commerce, Silvio Pacheco, become a member of the Brazilian sports confederation (CBD), which controls all sport in Brazil. Pacheco returned the favour by helping Havelange climb the sports administration ladder, securing him the post of national director of water sports in 1954. The future FIFA president’s rise continued when he became a member of the Brazilian Olympic Committee, in which capacity he accompanied Brazil’s athletes to the Melbourne Olympic Games (1956) as head of the national delegation.

Shortly after being appointed vice-president of the CBD, he began campaigning to become the Confederation’s president. His triumphant election in 1958, where he won 158 of the 177 votes cast, shows both his popularity within Brazilian sport and the extent of the network he had built up. His rise through the echelons of sports administration was so spectacular that just five years later, in 1963, he was co-opted as a member of the IOC.

Immediately after his election as president of the CBD, Havelange began implementing an ambitious policy that he would later apply to FIFA. He launched several financial reforms and took steps to improve

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.: 210.

the confederation's image, partly by acquiring new headquarters through a lease-purchase contract that allowed the premises to be paid for over several years. The people Havelange gathered around him at the CBD show his astute political sense. For example, he quickly began working with Paulo Machado de Carvalho, the owner of the *Record* television network and a director of *Sao Paulo Football Club* since the 1940s.<sup>12</sup> Through Machado, Havelange could rely on support from someone who had detailed knowledge of the footballing world and substantial influence over the media. Moreover, the Sao-Paulo-born Machado helped defuse potential regional conflicts the president from Rio Janeiro might otherwise have faced, especially in the soccer world, where there were still quarrels over whether the national football association should be run from Sao Paulo or Rio de Janeiro.

Havelange dedicated a lot of time and energy to soccer, the country's most popular sport,<sup>13</sup> restructuring the Brazilian championship to create a single national league and launching an ambitious program to build new stadiums in several of the country's cities. However, Brazilian football's most memorable achievements during this period, and the events he stressed most strongly during his campaign to become FIFA president, were the national team's triumphs in the 1958, 1962 and 1970 World Cups. Havelange had contributed to the team's success by hiring doctors, a psychologist, masseurs and a dedicated national-team manager. Brazil's 1970 World Cup team included such outstanding players as Pelé, Jairzinho and Rivellino, whose brilliance and artistry delighted soccer fans throughout the world. As their victory in Mexico was the third time the *Seleção* had won the World Cup, Brazil became the permanent holders of the Jules Rimet Trophy. However, Havelange was looking to expand his career far beyond Brazil and was already planning his next battle: challenging Stanley Rous for the FIFA presidency.

---

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.: 209.

<sup>13</sup>A lot of books have been written about Brazilian football. See, in particular the special issue 'Soccer in Brazil' edited in 2014 by Martin Curi in *Soccer & Society* 15(1). For a general overview, see also Goldblatt, D. (2014) *A Futebol Nation. A Footballing History of Brazil*, London: Penguin.

## FIFA's 1974 Election

Why did João Havelange want to become FIFA president? Was he, as he claimed,<sup>14</sup> chosen by South America's football associations to defend their interests against the Europeans and therefore fulfilling what he saw as a duty? Given his career up until this time, it is difficult to believe this was his only motivation. As early as 19 November 1963 the French sports newspaper *L'Equipe* had noted that he "had a reform plan for the international federation, an organisation he could one day preside".<sup>15</sup> Havelange undoubtedly saw the FIFA presidency as one of the most prestigious positions in world sport and an objective worthy of his ambitions. Moreover, he came from a very different background to the current president, England's Stanley Rous, a former schoolteacher and secretary of the Football Association (from 1934 to 1961), and probably thought he could bring new ideas for developing football.

## FIFA at the Time of João Havelange's Election as President

Until the early 1960s FIFA was still a very small organisation that had changed little since its creation in 1904.<sup>16</sup> However, the growing popularity of football in Africa, Central America and Asia, combined with the granting of independence to numerous former colonies, had led to a steady increase in FIFA's membership, which had grown from 65 countries in 1947 to 124 countries in 1963.<sup>17</sup> These developments made managing FIFA an increasingly complex and demanding task that required ever-larger numbers of staff. It was also becoming necessary to create closer relationships between the head office in Zurich

---

<sup>14</sup>*L'Equipe*, 28 May 1986.

<sup>15</sup>*L'Equipe*, 19 November 1963.

<sup>16</sup>Wahl, A. (2014) 'La Fédération Internationale de Football-Association (1903–1930)' *Sport et relations internationales* (Eds. A. Wahl and P. Arnaud) Metz: Université de Metz.

<sup>17</sup>Information included in the reports by FIFA's General Secretary for 1946–1947, 1956–1957 and 1962–1963.

and the national football associations, spread across the four corners of the globe. In 1953, after several months of intense discussion, an Extraordinary Congress accepted a first step towards decentralisation,<sup>18</sup> but FIFA's failure to distribute power more equitably across the continents, despite intense debate throughout the 1960s, was a major factor in the election of a non-European president.

These “centre-periphery” tensions<sup>19</sup> became even greater in the 1960s, during Stanley Rous's presidency (1961–1974). Rous was a former international referee who had been secretary of England's Football Association for more than twenty years. After launching an international youth tournament in 1948, he helped create the Inter-cities Fairs Cup,<sup>20</sup> which was held for the first time in 1954. Rous travelled widely during his presidency, visiting most of the world's continents and recording his trips in numerous reports. This penchant for travel led authors such as Alan Tomlinson and John Sugden to dub him the football “missionary”.<sup>21</sup> Although the work he did to develop the game was widely acknowledged, many non-European associations could not forgive his support for the South African Football Association following the declaration of apartheid, considering his position to be “neo-colonialist”.<sup>22</sup> FIFA's African members felt that FIFA should have responded to the introduction of apartheid by excluding South Africa's federation, thereby sending a strong message condemning racial discrimination.<sup>23</sup> The Executive Committee was reluctant to do this, preferring to try and

---

<sup>18</sup>FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) Archives, Minutes of the II Extraordinary Congress, held on 14 and 15 November 1953, file: 29th–30th Congress, 1953–1959 Activity Report/Financial Report Minutes.

<sup>19</sup>A term suggested by I. Wallerstein.

<sup>20</sup>For information about the Fair's Cup, see Vonnard, P. (2016) “How did UEFA Govern the European Turning Point of football? UEFA, The European Champion Clubs' Cup and the Inter-cities Fairs cup (1954–1959)” *Building Europe with the Ball. Turning Points in the Europeanisation of Football, 1905–1995* (Eds. P. Vonnard, G. Quin and N. Bancel) Oxford: Peter Lang.

<sup>21</sup>Tomlinson, A. and Sugden, J. (1998) *FIFA and the Contest for World Football: Who Rules the People's Game?* Cambridge: Polity Press: 33.

<sup>22</sup>Darby, P. (2005) ‘Africa and the World Cup: FIFA Politics, Eurocentrism and Resistance’ *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 22(5): 883–905.

<sup>23</sup>For more information about South Africa's position in football, see Bolsmann, C. and Alegi, P. (2010) *South Africa and the Global Game: Football, Apartheid and Beyond*, London: Routledge.

reach a compromise,<sup>24</sup> so it was not until 1964 that FIFA's Congress finally suspended South Africa.<sup>25</sup> Even then, this decision did not satisfy the African members, who wanted the annulment of the South African association, as the African Confederation's energetic president, Yidnekatchew Tessema, frequently reminded both FIFA and the media.<sup>26</sup>

Dissatisfaction with Rous among FIFA's non-European members was compounded by his stance on the Chile-USSR World Cup qualifying match in 1973. After a 0-0 draw in the first match of the two-leg play-off, the second game was scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile, on 21 November 1973. However, in September 1973 a military coup led by General Pinochet had deposed Chile's democratically elected left-wing government and president, Salvador Allende, throwing the country into turmoil. As violence raged, the army took possession of the National Stadium, which had been built for the 1962 World Cup, intending to use it as a concentration camp for political opponents. Given the political situation in Chile and the new government's disregard for human rights, some FIFA members asked the board to cancel the match. In response, FIFA sent its secretary, Helmut Kaser, to Chile to investigate. He reported back that "life (is) normal, there are many cars and pedestrians look happy".<sup>27</sup> Having also received guarantees from the new government that the stadium would not be used as a jail, FIFA's board decided the match should go ahead. But the Soviet Union protested the situation in Chile by withdrawing from the competition on the day of the game, leaving the Chilean team to play a match against a phantom opponent. In a surreal atmosphere, Chile's captain scored in the empty goal and was loudly cheered by the crowd in the

---

<sup>24</sup>Darby, P. (2008) 'Stanley Rous's "Own Goal": Football Politics, South Africa and the Contest for the FIFA presidency in 1974' *Soccer & Society* 9(2): 259–272.

<sup>25</sup>FIFA, Minutes of the XXXIV Congress held on Thursday, 8 October 1964; file: 33rd–37th Congress, 1962–1970 Activity Report/Financial Report Minutes.

<sup>26</sup>*Jeune Afrique*, 3 March 1973.

<sup>27</sup>Dietschy, P. (2010) *Histoire du football*, Paris: Perrin: 288.

half-full stadium.<sup>28</sup> FIFA validated Chile's 1-0 victory, allowing the country to take part in the World Cup finals in Germany the following year, a decision that was contested by many non-European countries.

In addition to the growing effect of geopolitical tension on football politics, the arrival of a major new medium—television—revolutionised the way football was brought to the public. In just a few years, the “goggle-box” transformed media coverage of the game and unseated newspapers and radio stations from the dominant positions they had held between the two world wars. Television's inexorable rise completely reshaped the way the economic and political exploitation of matches was viewed and approached,<sup>29</sup> and the popularity of televised football was a decisive factor in the emergence of a “sport-media complex”,<sup>30</sup> which quickly started to attract the interest of sponsors.

One of the first entrepreneurs to understand the huge potential of televised football was Horst Dassler, the son of Adidas's founder, Adolf Dassler. After splitting with his brother, he took over Adidas-France, where astute use of the opportunities offered by the new medium combined with a shrewd strategy allowed him to transform the “three-stripe company” into a global brand. He was also one of the first people to realise that support from the leaders of international sport institutions would be a key ingredient in capturing a large slice of an as-yet unexplored market.<sup>31</sup> Although Rous was not against television, he was clearly more reluctant than Havelange to create an alliance with it. Hence, electing Havelange appeared to offer new opportunities, a prospect some of football's European administrators found very tempting. For example, Chaim<sup>32</sup> recently noted that Havelange's bid was supported by the president of France's professional league, Jean Sadoul,

---

<sup>28</sup>Footage of this can be seen in the third part of the BBC's 1990 documentary *The History of Football*.

<sup>29</sup>Dietschy *Histoire du football*: 446.

<sup>30</sup>See Rowe, D. (2004) *Sport, Culture and the Media*, Maidenhead: Open University Press; Martelli, S. (2010), *Lo sport 'mediato'*, Milano: Franco Angeli.

<sup>31</sup>On Dassler, see Smit, B. (2009) *Sneaker Wars. The Enemy Brothers Who Founded Adidas and Puma and the Family Feud that Forever Changed the Business of Sport*, New York: Harper.

<sup>32</sup>Chaim, A.R.M. (2016) 'Playing for power: João Havelange's Path to FIFA 1958–1974', 70th Bulletin of the International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE).

who, according to Eric Maitrot,<sup>33</sup> was a key proponent of increased commercialisation in French football in the 1970s.

## Campaigning for the FIFA Presidency

Havelange was designated South America's official candidate for the post of FIFA president in 1971.<sup>34</sup> He immediately began a "journey that took over two years",<sup>35</sup> travelling the world to solicit support for his bid. In addition to accompanying the national football team, he spent enormous sums of money on trips to meet the leaders of world football, visiting more than 80 countries. He campaigned hardest in countries that had been most critical of Stanley Rous, focusing on South America, Africa and Asia. He was very meticulous, even going as far as taking pictures of all the executives he met and filing them in an album so he would not forget anyone's face. He was very candid about his reasons for doing this, saying: "I cannot run the risk of meeting an acquaintance tomorrow in London, Paris or any other place and not remembering his or her name. If I do not say hello, I will have an enemy".<sup>36</sup>

Havelange's election platform included promises to help finance the development of football in countries outside Europe and to provide extra funds during the World Cup. In the run up to the election, he published an 8-point program covering three main objectives:

- Develop FIFA competitions;
- Develop FIFA's structure;
- Help national associations develop football.

One of Havelange's proposals was to increase the number of countries taking part in the 1982 and subsequent World Cup finals from 16 to

---

<sup>33</sup>Maitrot, E. (1998) *Sport et télé. Les liaisons secrètes*, Paris: Flammarion.

<sup>34</sup>*L'Equipe*, 24 June 1971.

<sup>35</sup>Pereira and Vieira *João Havelange: o dirigente esportivo do século XX*: 225.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 225.

24, mostly by making more places available to African and Asian countries. He also wanted to create a world cup competition for young players and a world championship for clubs to replace the Intercontinental Cup.<sup>37</sup> In addition, he promised to build a modern headquarters for FIFA, provide material and financial support to the poorest football associations and set up courses to professionalize aspects of football such as administration, refereeing and training.<sup>38</sup>

Havelange used his extensive network of acquaintances in order to tilt the balance even further in his favour. For example, he persuaded a senior Lufthansa executive called Thyssen, with whom he had had regular dealings since the Berlin Olympics, to provide free plane tickets for administrators from small associations in Oceania so they could vote in the election. Similarly, he asked Silvio Pacheco to help him print a glossy, 4-page brochure containing photographs from his sporting career, his curriculum vitae and a summary of why he would be the best president for FIFA. The text, written in English, French and Portuguese, refers to Brazil's World Cup victories, the development of Brazilian football when he was president of the CBD and his desire to obtain better representation for South American, African and Asian associations within FIFA. He concluded as follows:

This is why the sportsman João Havelange, who has dedicated his life to the sport, a true IDEALIST comparable to Jules Rimet, a STRONG man in his will to lead a cause, a LEADER filled with good will to serve, a PACIFYING SPIRIT and RENOVATOR that has all the necessary qualities to be a candidate to FIFA's presidency, an association that is in the capacity of broadening the ties of solidarity and human fraternity through sport.<sup>39</sup>

The comparison with Jules Rimet was not made lightly, as FIFA's former president, who had held the post for more than 30 years, had left an

---

<sup>37</sup>Since 1960, the Intercontinental Cup has been awarded to the winners of a two-leg match between the European club champions and the winner of South America's Copa Libertadores.

<sup>38</sup>*Le Figaro*, 15 November 1973.

<sup>39</sup>IOC Archives, João Havelange's CV, João Havelange's 'Biography' file.

indelible mark on the organisation.<sup>40</sup> Referring to Rimet was also a way of overshadowing the achievements of the Frenchman's successors, especially Stanley Rous, Havelange's opponent. The battle was on!

## Winning the FIFA Presidency

FIFA's 1974 presidential election was held in June, in Frankfurt. The first round of voting failed to designate a winner, as neither candidate obtained the necessary two-thirds majority: out of the 122 associations eligible to vote, 56 voted for Rous and 62 voted for Havelange. In the second round, Havelange increased his share of the vote to 68, against Rous's 52, giving him a majority of 16 and allowing him to become FIFA's first non-European president. FIFA could now be considered a truly global federation. The election was also a pivotal moment for another reason, as it had given the most powerful job in football to a man who was intent on making major changes.<sup>41</sup>

Havelange's election changed the geographical balance of power within FIFA by reducing Europe's dominance and producing a concomitant increase in the influence of non-European members. In fact, the African and Asian associations were an essential part of Havelange's power base, backing him despite his right-wing, bourgeois upbringing because they saw him as a "strong opponent of all forms of racism and a fighter for multicultural coexistence between developed and developing countries".<sup>42</sup>

The other key factor in Havelange's election was the support he received from Horst Dassler, who by 1974 had become such a prominent figure in the world of sport that he could influence presidential elections at both FIFA and the IOC. In the run up to the 1974 FIFA presidential election, Dassler, who had previously campaigned for Rous,

---

<sup>40</sup>On this point, see Grégory Quin and Philippe Vonnard's chapter on Jules Rimet in this book.

<sup>41</sup>Bangerter particularly stressed business-related changes. Interview with H. Bangerter, 1 October 2012.

<sup>42</sup>Eisenberg, C (2006) 'FIFA et politique. 1945–2000' *Le football dans nos sociétés. Une culture populaire. 1914–1998* (Eds. S. Mourlane and Y. Gastaud) Paris: Autrement: 125.

decided to back Havelange as well, believing that Havelange would be more accommodating than Rous to opening up the commercial side of football. Dassler's backing proved decisive.

## FIFA's Growth Under João Havelange

On acceding to the presidency, Havelange immediately began implementing his program, giving FIFA a completely new dynamic with his stamp on it. As Goldblatt noted, "Argentina 1978 belonged to the Junta but Spain 82 was João Havelange's".<sup>43</sup> However, the World Cup was not the only thing he transformed. According to Jacques Ferran, "Havelange gave an impetus, a force, a huge boost to FIFA and, at the same time, to international football; everything he created, such as youth competitions and female competitions, is unimaginable".<sup>44</sup>

## The New President Makes His Mark

Under Rous and his predecessors, FIFA's main purposes had been to administer football and run the World Cup. Football's governing body had a large budget, but financial growth was not its top priority. This was to change when Havelange took the reins, as his aim was to refocus the federation's objectives towards increasing its financial resources, introducing programs to promote the game around the globe and expanding the World Cup.

The measures taken to expand the World Cup were particularly successful, as Heidrun Homburg pointed out in 2017<sup>45</sup> Doubling the

---

<sup>43</sup>Goldblatt, D. (2014) 'Another Kind of History. Globalisation, Global History and the World Cup' *The FIFA World Cup 1930–2010: Politics, Commerce, Spectacle and Identities* (Eds. S. Rinke and K. Schiller) Göttingen: Wallestein: 23.

<sup>44</sup>"[João] Havelange a donné un soufflé, une force, une impulsion énorme à la FIFA et au football du même coup international, tout ce qu'il a pu créer de competitions secondaires, de jeunes, de femmes, c'est inimaginable" Interview with J. Ferran, 12 September 2012.

<sup>45</sup>Homburg, H. (2007) 'Financial Aspects of FIFA's World Cup or the Structural Challenges of Growth' *Aspects de l'histoire de la Coupe du monde de football* (Ed. A. Wahl) Metz: Université de Metz.

number of teams involved in the World Cup finals (from 16 to 32) helped increase spectator numbers by almost a million over a period of just 20 years, with total match attendance rising from 1,700,000 in 1974 to 2,600,000 in 1994. Revenues from the event also soared, from CHF8.60 million for Germany 1974 to CHF257.26 million for France 1998. In real terms, taking into account the fact that the Swiss franc doubled in value during this period,<sup>46</sup> income from the World Cup increased 15-fold in less than 25 years. Havelange's lead was quickly followed by the IOC under Juan Antonio Samaranch, who initiated a similar process for the Olympic Games.<sup>47</sup>

Havelange also transformed the president's role, most notably by travelling all over the world to visit FIFA members and preach his doctrine for the federation. In a 1986 interview with *L'Equipe*, he told Gerard Ernault that he had visited 1000 countries in 12 years.<sup>48</sup> These trips allowed him to use his powers of persuasion to good effect: as a former FIFA communications manager once put it, Havelange could "convince you the sky is red, even though it's blue".<sup>49</sup> During his successive terms as president, he helped forge a brand image for FIFA by building a new headquarters for the federation in the late 1970s/early 1980s and setting up translation, legal and public relations departments. In addition, he fulfilled many associations' expectations by expelling South Africa from FIFA because of the country's continuing policy of apartheid.

The widespread protests that greeted the decision to award the 1978 World Cup finals to Argentina, then ruled by a repressive military junta,<sup>50</sup> led Havelange to follow the example of the IOC, which had worked with UNESCO to introduce a more proactive policy under which political criteria were taken into account when choosing hosts

---

<sup>46</sup>See the Swiss Statistics Office website: [http://www.portal-stat.admin.ch/lik\\_rechner/f/lik\\_rechner.htm](http://www.portal-stat.admin.ch/lik_rechner/f/lik_rechner.htm).

<sup>47</sup>See the chapter by Jean-Loup Chappelet in this book.

<sup>48</sup>*L'Equipe*, 29 May 1986.

<sup>49</sup>Tomlinson 'FIFA and the men who made it': 64.

<sup>50</sup>Dietschy, P., Gastaud, Y. and Murlane, S. (2006) *Histoire politique des Coupes du monde de football*, Paris: Vuibert.

for major competitions. One of the first consequences of this policy was FIFA's decision to withdraw its 1993 and 1995 youth tournaments from Croatia and Nigeria<sup>51</sup> due to the political situations in these countries.

Although Havelange's reforms were wide-ranging, his actions had the greatest impact in two main areas:

- Increasing FIFA's financial resources
- Introducing policies for developing football

## Increasing FIFA's Financial Resources

Unlike his predecessors, who had not realised the game's potential, or were not particularly interested in exploiting this potential to the full,<sup>52</sup> Havelange wanted FIFA to earn as much money as possible from football, so he would have the funds needed to carry out his ambitious electoral program and thereby cement his position as FIFA president. He felt it was essential "to improve the structure of the Federation and to pursue a development policy without increasing membership fees".<sup>53</sup> In his efforts to do this, he was supported by Horst Dassler and, later, by Sepp Blatter, who joined FIFA in 1976 and who became Havelange's successor in 1998.

Dassler was not only instrumental in Havelange's election, he was a crucial figure during the first years of Havelange's presidency, acting as a mediator between FIFA and those economic forces, already present in football, which wanted to secure a larger and more influential role. Hence, Dassler's importance went far beyond his control over International Sport and Leisure (ISL), a sports marketing company he created in 1981 and to which Havelange gave total control for managing FIFA's television rights and marketing operations. Even before

---

<sup>51</sup>Lanfranchi, P., Eisenberg, C., Mason, T. and Wahl, A. (2004) *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson

<sup>52</sup>Lanfranchi, P. (2000) 'La consommation du spectacle sportif. Une comparaison entre l'Allemagne, l'Italie et la France dans l'entre-deux-guerres' *Le Mouvement Social* 206(1): 115–125.

<sup>53</sup>Lanfranchi et al. *100 Years of Football: The FIFA Centennial Book*: 290.

this, Dassler's negotiating skills had been vital in convincing Coca-Cola to provide \$5 million in sponsorship for the FIFA World Youth Championship,<sup>54</sup> the first edition of which took place in Tunisia in 1977. The agreement between Coca-Cola and FIFA was Havelange's first commercial coup as president. A measure of the change occurring within the federation is provided by the fact that just five years earlier, under Rous, FIFA's executive committee had refused financial support from Pepsi Cola to organize an international youth tournament.<sup>55</sup>

In the years that followed, FIFA, through the intermediary of ISL, built up a network of partners among marketing firms, multinational companies, media conglomerates and sports organisations. This enabled the federation to increase its revenues from subsequent editions of the World Cup by, for example, convincing large brands to pay considerable sums to place advertisements around the field of play. What is more, in the early 1980s FIFA followed in the IOC's footsteps and obtained the copyright to its logo. Another innovation was the development of tie-in merchandising, sales of which rocketed during the 1980s. A key figure in this operation was FIFA's secretary general, Sepp Blatter, a former journalist who had worked for the Swiss Ice Hockey Federation and, more importantly, for the Swiss watchmaker Longines, where he learnt a lot about the sport business.<sup>56</sup> He quickly became Havelange's right-hand man at FIFA, occupying the post of secretary general from 1981 until he was elected president, 17 years later.

The success of the World Youth Championship, held every two years from 1977 onwards, led FIFA to take an even larger step in 1991, when they expanded the competition to cover three age groups: under-17s, under-20s and under-23s.<sup>57</sup> The electronics company JVC quickly joined Coca-Cola as a main sponsor of this bi-annual event.

---

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.: 245.

<sup>55</sup>FIFA, Minutes of the session of the Executive Committee of 10 January 1971, file: Executive Committee Meeting, Agenda Minutes, 1971.

<sup>56</sup>Longines has been the official timekeeper for several editions of the Olympic Games. Many thanks to Quentin Tonnerre for this information.

<sup>57</sup>Herren, A. (1994) *90 Years of FIFA. 20 Years of FIFA President João Havelange: souvenir edition*, Zürich: Fédération Internationale de Football Association: 48.

Competitions such as these fulfil two important objectives for FIFA. First, they allow countries with little chance of hosting a “mega event” like the World Cup to stage a world football tournament. Second, they provide large companies with opportunities to develop new markets, as the events are awarded to countries in which FIFA’s partners have little or no presence. This method marked a change from “classic” sponsorship deals in which companies pay to display their name and/or logo on a stadium or team shirt, for example, to true partnerships.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the final page of the book produced to commemorate FIFA’s 90th anniversary was dedicated to thanking the federation’s biggest sponsors, including Coca-Cola, JVC, Fujifilm, Philips and McDonalds.<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, increasing the number of teams present at the World Cup finals allowed FIFA to provide more places for non-European countries and to meet media demands by providing more matches to broadcast. Havelange fully understood the importance of the media, especially television, which had been an important player since the 1966 World Cup.<sup>60</sup> In this respect, he fully exploited technological advances and the arrival of private networks, which consider sport a key area for building audiences (as is shown by the policies adopted by Canal+ in France and Mediaset in Italy). With help from ISL, in 1982 FIFA began taking a more aggressive stance when negotiating television rights.<sup>61</sup> In this light, it is significant that one of FIFA’s vice-presidents, Guillermo Cañedo from Mexico, was the head of a media group and used his position to ensure Mexico was awarded the 1986 World Cup when Columbia, which had originally been attributed the event, was unable to meet its obligations.<sup>62</sup> This growing media interest in FIFA events

---

<sup>58</sup>For more on this new type of partnership, see Hamil, S. (2008) ‘Manchester United: the commercial development of a global football brand’ *International Cases in the Business of Sport* (Eds. S. Chadwick and D. Arthur) Amsterdam: Elsevier; Milward, P. (2011) *The Global Football League. Transnational Networks, Social Movements and Sport in the New Media Age*, Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke.

<sup>59</sup>Herren *90 Years of FIFA*: 87.

<sup>60</sup>Chisari, F. (2006) ‘Quand le football s’est mondialisé: la retransmission télévisée de la Coupe du Monde 1966’ *Histoire et sociétés* 18–19: 222–237.

<sup>61</sup>Goldblatt *Another Kind of History*: 23.

<sup>62</sup>Dietschy *Histoire du football*: 457.

was accompanied by ever-larger revenues for the federation, with earnings from World Cup broadcasting rights increasing from €30.5 million in 1986 to €94.3 million in 1998.<sup>63</sup>

By the second half of the 1980s, sponsorship and merchandising had largely overtaken ticket sales as the most important sources of revenue both for FIFA and for sports organisations in general. This situation led to new ways of managing sports organisations<sup>64</sup> and clubs,<sup>65</sup> and directly affected the organisation of major competitions, including the World Cup, which have tended to involve ever-larger numbers of teams.<sup>66</sup>

Can it be said that FIFA became a commercial company during Havelange's presidency? Christiane Eisenberg argues that this is not the case because, even though one of FIFA's goals is to make a profit, it redistributes a large proportion of its earnings to national football associations<sup>67</sup> in order to, among other things, help poorer countries set up programs to develop football. Havelange made this point himself after his election in 1974.

## FIFA and the Development of World Soccer

FIFA's increased resources greatly benefited national football associations, either through support programs or through direct grants. Although courses for coaches and referees existed during Stanley Rous's presidency, Havelange oversaw a major expansion of such schemes. The man he chose to develop them was Sepp Blatter, who was put in

---

<sup>63</sup>However, it was under Sepp Blatter's presidency that this number really exploded, as in 2002 television networks paid a total of 907.8 million (€), ten times more than four years before. For a brief overview see Hoeppe, F. (2010) 'Droits TV: l'inflation', *Jurisport* 98: 29–30.

<sup>64</sup>For more on this subject, see papers in Bayle, E., Chantelat, P. (Eds.) (2013) *La gouvernance des organisations sportives*, Paris: Ed. L'Harmattan.

<sup>65</sup>For a good example of this new strategy: Pierpoint, B. (2000) 'Heads Above Water: Business Strategies for a New Football Economy' *Soccer & Society* 1(1): 29–38.

<sup>66</sup>Holt, M. (2007) 'Global Success in Sport: the effective marketing and branding of the UEFA Champions League' *International Journal of Sport Marketing & Sponsorship*, 9(1): 51–61.

<sup>67</sup>Eisenberg, 'FIFA et politique. 1945–2000': 125–128.

charge of “finding funding for organising and coordinating initiatives for the promotion of soccer throughout the world”.<sup>68</sup> He set up a number of programs during Havelange’s presidency, focusing on Central America, Africa, Asia and Oceania, and continued this work when he himself became president. For example, the GOAL program, which he launched in 2000, is an ambitious initiative to develop football in several regions around the world. The programs Blatter set up under Havelange were important enough to be listed individually in FIFA’s 90th anniversary commemorative album. They were:

1976–1979: World Development Program FIFA/Coca-Cola (project 1);  
1980–1982: International Academy FIFA/Coca-Cola (project 7);  
1984–1986: International Academy FIFA/Coca-Cola (project X);  
1987–1990: World Youth Soccer Academy FIFA/Coca-Cola 1987–1990;  
1991–1997: Futuro. World Soccer Development Program FIFA/Coca-Cola.<sup>69</sup>

Development courses, most of which last approximately 10 days, are very diverse and deal as much with how to administer football organisations (associations or clubs) as with technical aspects of the game, such as coaching, refereeing and sports medicine. These programs could not be run without sponsorship from large companies such as Coca-Cola, which provided financial support for most of the early programs, and Adidas, which provided equipment.

Although this policy may appear to be largely philanthropic, certain aspects have been criticized. For example, it has been said to be too Eurocentric and to prevent true change due to coaches not adapting their approaches to each country’s specific circumstances. Furthermore, the programs also have commercial objectives, as the goal of the multinational companies sponsoring them is to develop new markets. However, the main criticism was that all these development programs

---

<sup>68</sup>Lanfranchi et al. *100 Years of Football*: 224.

<sup>69</sup>Herren *90 Years of FIFA*: 43–44.

were purposely oriented towards “friendly federations”, in order to curry favour with national association presidents, who would be expected to return the favour by re-electing Havelange.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, these criticisms cannot overshadow the fact that FIFA under João Havelange invested considerable resources in developing soccer around the world, thereby giving large numbers of young people the chance to play the game. Today, the fruits of the groundwork accomplished under his presidency can be seen in FIFA’s 12 development offices across the globe, which are responsible for creating and running a wide range of projects to refurbish/build stadiums, supply equipment and develop school sport, etc.<sup>71</sup>

These development programs may have become a source of corruption and clientelism, helping to maintain FIFA’s established leaders in power, but they also played a fundamental role in transforming soccer from a European-South American game to a truly global game that is now played and watched by more people than any other sport on Earth.

## The Presidency Ends Under a Cloud

After 24 years at the head of FIFA, Havelange finally retired in 1998. His last action as president was to use his influence to ensure his protégé, Sepp Blatter, succeeded him as FIFA president. The reason Havelange gave for supporting Blatter was to ensure the policies he had instigated during his presidency were continued.<sup>72</sup> Following his victory over Sweden’s Lennart Johansson, who had had quite tense relations with Havelange,<sup>73</sup> Blatter continued working along the same lines as his predecessor, continuing to build development programs, expand

---

<sup>70</sup>Sudgen and Tomilson *Fifa and the Contest for World Football*: 36–39.

<sup>71</sup>Information obtained from the 2008 FIFA Activity Report.

<sup>72</sup>Pereira and Vieira *João Havelange: o dirigente esportivo do século XX*: 235.

<sup>73</sup>More generally, the relationship between FIFA and UEFA, which had had its ups and downs since the early 1960s, became increasingly tense. See Sudgen, J., Tomlinson, A. (1997) ‘Global Power Struggles in World Football: FIFA and UEFA, 1954–1974, and their Legacy’ *International Journal of the History of Sport* 14 (2): 1–25.

the horizons of the World Cup to include Africa (2010) and the Middle East (2022), and increase FIFA's financial resources.

Although Havelange's policies had produced rapid growth for FIFA, they also provoked criticism, especially during the last years of his presidency. According to Gerhard Aigner, then UEFA's general secretary, "During the 1990s, Havelange became very dictatorial and began upsetting a lot of people. He basically dictated things, who became a member and where, etc. [...] He promised the World Cup to Japan, for example".<sup>74</sup> In addition, voices started to be raised against Havelange, who had become increasingly secretive over the years. His detractors questioned his financial management, accusing him of misappropriating funds. In 2006, an investigative journalist called Andrew Jennings launched a direct attack on Havelange and his successor in a book alleging numerous cases of bribery and vote rigging. FIFA attempted, but failed, to have the book banned.

Continuing suspicions of corruption led Havelange to resign from the IOC in 2011, after having been a member for 48 years. Two years later, in July 2013, evidence that he had accepted bribes from ISL, uncovered during an investigation by the Swiss authorities, forced him to resign his honorary presidency of FIFA. However, despite the controversy surrounding the later years of Havelange's life and work, history's final judgment will surely take into account much more than his questionable morality, the bribery with which he was associated and the vote rigging that enabled him to maintain such a long hold over the presidency. For example, even if Havelange refined and developed a "culture of backscratching" at FIFA, he almost certainly did not invent it, as FIFA's other long-serving presidents, such as Jules Rimet (1921–1954) and Stanley Rous (1961–1974), are unlikely to have remained in power for so long without courting the support of their peers.

Havelange was unarguably the first member of a new generation of sports officials, which included Samaranch at the IOC and Nebiolo at the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), that opened the door of international sport to economic forces by embracing

---

<sup>74</sup>Interview with G. Aigner, 20 August 2012.

commercialisation. Having begun their professional lives in the world of business, this new generation of leaders wanted to apply the strategies they had seen in that field to the organisation of sport. Developing a deeper understanding of these people's backgrounds and careers is certain to throw new light onto the transformations international sport has undergone over the last three decades.

## Biography

1916: Born in Rio.

1936: Olympic Games in Berlin (as swimmer).

1938: University licence in Law.

1940: Entry in the Esperia Rowing Club.

1942: Moved to Sao Paulo where he became lawyer.

1948: Founder of Viação Cometa.

1952: Olympic Games in Helsinki (as water-polo player).

1954: Entry to the Brazilian Confederation of Sport.

1956: Chief of the Brazilian delegation in Olympic games of Melbourne.

1958: President the CDB.

1963: Entry in OIC.

1974: President of FIFA.

1998: End of this mandate FIFA.

2011: Resignation from IOC.

2012: Resignation from FIFA.

2014: Died in Rio (26 August).