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Syonan Sports Association (SSA)



The Syonan Sports Association - players from different soccer league teams to form the Singapore team. 1942-1945. Source: National Archives of Singapore (Media – Image No: 19980005027 – 0080)

Power and Play

The formation of the Syonan Sports Association (SSA) brought about a series of interactions between Japanese and Singaporeans that would combine power and play.

The key Japanese official was Mamoru Shinozaki, a bespectacled former journalist who had been convicted of spying on Singapore in 1940 before the invasion. He was Chief of the Welfare Department (*Koseika-cho*) and responsible for delivering the political messages of the senior administrators.

The key Singaporean official was Goh Hood Kiat, known as G H Kiat, a well-respected businessman and sports devotee, who became the Chairman of SSA.

Syonan Shimbun and Sports News

The daily Syonan Shimbun published its first edition five days after the British surrender. Focusing on sporting activity at the end of April 1942, sport was to signal that some form of normalcy was returning to the island.

Members of the pre-war sporting fraternity were instructed by the Sports Editor of the Syonan Shimbun to attend a meeting on the formation of the SSA. Former Committee members of the Football Association, Tennis Association, Hockey Association, and representatives from other sports such as Baseball and Boxing, were the first delegates.

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Formation of SSA – Clubs and Associations

The SSA was registered in early September 1942, with Mayor Sigeo Odate as patron and Honorary President. The following clubs were invited to attend the committee meetings:

- Singapore Japanese Club
- Chinese Swimming Club
- Straits Chinese Recreation Club
- Ceylon Sports Club (at Balestier Plain)
- Indian Association (at Balestier Plain)
- Singapore Recreation Club
- Clerical Union (at Balestier Plain)
- Municipal Services Club (at Farrer Park)
- Island Club
- Singapore Badminton Association
- Singapore Boxing Association
- Malay Sienen Club

Sport may be regarded as the true barometer of the mindset of the community. However, there was resistance to the new philosophy amongst Chinese sporting clubs who wanted that sense of independence that had developed with the British.

Singapore Recreation Club, Singapore



The Singapore Recreation Club was founded in 1883 with 30 Eurasian members. In 1884, a Pavilion was erected on the site of the Padang allocated to the Club. Eurasian athletes became dominant in many sports and team games such as athletics, cricket and hockey. 1920-1928. Source: Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore. (Media - Image No: 19980005093 – 0026)

Syonan Sports Association 'Nucleus Of Power For Good' Of All Races

THE nucleus of a great sports club, open to all communities, was formed on Friday when the Syonan Sports Association had its first annual meeting. Held in the hall of the Bras Basah Road Boys' School the meeting which was well attended, was presided over by Mr. G. H. Kiat. The meeting was honoured by the presence of Mr. M. Shinozaki who gave an inspiring address after he had been formally introduced at the outset of the meeting. He stressed the importance of the Association and gave the meeting a pleasant surprise when he disclosed that the Authorities were giving full support and had promised a monthly donation of \$300 to the Association. He also hinted that if the Association needed more financial help it would be forthcoming.

The daily reported that the first AGM of the SSA, open to all communities, was held at Bras Basah Road Boys' School (St Joseph's Institution). Source: Syonan Shimbun, 18 October 1942, Page 4. Retrieved from NewspaperSG.

Universal Brotherhood – 'Hakko Itiuo'

No sporting club could be formed without the sanction of the SSA. The stated objective was to do away with racial and sectional differences - *"emphasising that the people of Syonan are now members of one community as an all-Malayan community and doing away with all the former prejudices and jealousies..."*.

"Any friendly rivalry that may exist will be only that to be found between two teams – both belonging to the same parent body – the Syonan Sports Association. This will do more than anything else to build up that close harmony and kindly feeling for each other which is essential to the creation of the spirit of Universal Brotherhood."

- Syonan Shimbun, 10 October 1942, p.2

The term *Hakko Itiuo* or Universal Brotherhood was significant for the Japanese. It implied a spirit of good-fellowship and harmony, such as was displayed during inter-state games in the pre-war period. Communal sport, a British legacy, was viewed as the curse of sports.

SSA Headquarters at Jalan Besar Stadium

The first objectives of the SSA were to repair the Jalan Besar Stadium and to convert Farrer Park into a venue for athletic events. The Esplanade was to be retained as an open space and playground.

The SSA consolidated its own position by constructing a pavilion adjacent to the stadium. It was completed in April 1943, with extensions to follow. The increase in membership by the end of 1943 and the subscriptions collected provided financial support for the venture.



During the Japanese Occupation, Jalan Besar Stadium became the Headquarters of the Syonan Sports Association. Both photographs depict the stadium just after WWII. A young footballer and future Olympian, Chia Boon Leong, is captured in action. Top Photo: Chia going full length to head past Derbyshire, the goalkeeper of Johore. Bottom Photo: Chia in action at a charity football match where the Rovers beat R.E.M.E. 6 goals to 1 at Jalan Besar Stadium. 1947. Source: Chia Boon Leong Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media - Image No: 20140000148 – 0066 and 20140000148 – 0035)



The Indian Association was registered in 1923. Cricket, Hockey and Football figured highly in the activities that emerged as competitive sports for the association. Photograph above depicts the prize-winners of various tournaments held in 1927 at the Indian Association. 1927. Source: Singapore Sports Council. (Media - Image No: 19980005604 – 0008)

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Visit the [Singapore Sports Museum](#) to discover Singapore's sporting heritage and the Hall of Fame (HOF), which honours more than 50 sporting legends. The Hall of Fame was created in 1985 by the Singapore Sports Council (now Sport Singapore) to recognise and celebrate the achievements of Singapore's top athletes.



Straits Chinese Recreation Club (renamed Singapore Chinese Recreation Club in 1946). This iconic octagonal pavilion stood in the middle of Hong Lim Green for many years. The pioneer club was established in 1885 and was the first club adopting English sports for Straits-born Chinese. The club offered facilities for cricket, hockey, lawn tennis, football and indoor games such as chess and billiards. The lovely green lawn was damaged during the Japanese Occupation years and could not regain its former glory. 1910. Source: Lim Kheng Chye Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore (Media – Image No: 19980005901 – 0101)