

American Football introduced at UON

By TSUMA CHRIS

Kenya became the second country in Africa, after South Africa, to have an American Football team when the spot was launched at the University of Nairobi on January 24, this year by the Vice

Chancellor, Professor Francis Gichaga.

The game, also called Gridiron, is being introduced and popularized in Africa by Mr Tom Kelly of the 'Gridiron Diplomats'. This is a group of thirteen coaches from the United States who aim at making it an Olympic sport during

the 2004 Olympics. The climax of this programme will be a playoff between sixteen African teams culminating in the African Superbowl tentatively slated for January 17, 1998.

The University of Nairobi already has a team, Mean Machine, which draws most of its players from the Mean Machine Rugby Club. But speaking to *The Anvil*, the University's Games Tutor, Mr John Ngugi, said his department plans to get their players elsewhere to avoid a clash in cases where the games or training sessions are scheduled for the same place at the same time.

Asked how they planned to finance the game, Mr. Ngugi said the university has benefited from a donation of playing kits from Mr Kelly. He added that while on a

tour of the United States to familiarize himself with the game recently, he successfully solicited for playing kits from several universities and high schools. He said that although most of the kit donated was second hand, it is still in good shape.

A player must be attired in a helmet, shoulder pads, boots, a jersey and tight-fitting pants. It is the helmets and the pads that make the game expensive and certainly beyond the financial means of many African countries.

Messrs John Kamau Thenya, Aaron Muriungi and Simon Kimani, all of the university of Nairobi are being trained as local coaches and are scheduled to proceed to the United States for further training. Mr Victor Flores from the Mexican Embassy in

Nairobi will assist in coaching the team. Mr. Ngugi revealed that they are organizing a sports seminar in Kenya next year, to discuss American football among other sports.

On how they intend to develop the game without any team to play against, Mr Ngugi said he was confident the game will pick up and become popular, contrary to what some people think.

He disclosed that the game has also been introduced at Makerere University which the Nairobi team played against on February 9 this year, losing 16-19. There are also plans to introduce the game at Moi University soon, making Kenya the only African country to have two teams.

A big task for sports dept

By TSUMA CHRIS

Inadequate funds, an inconsistent academic calendar and class timetables are to blame for the decline of sports activities at the University of Nairobi.

Speaking to *The Anvil* recently, the Games Tutor of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mr Joe N. Mutua, said each college is allocated about Ksh. 80,000 per year for sports. This particularly affects university teams participating in national competitions. Badly hit are Mean Machine, the rugby team, Terrorists, the men's basketball side, among others.

On academic calendars and lecture timetables, Mr Mutua said it is difficult to raise a team or conduct a training session because players are either attending lectures, which sometimes go up to 7 p.m or at home on long holidays.

He said the cost-sharing measures introduced at the universities have also contributed to the decline in sports because the students barely get enough food to survive, leave alone cope with the rigours of games.

Mr. Mutua also revealed that the university sports department lacks equipment and that many of the sports facilities need repair.

He said the main campus

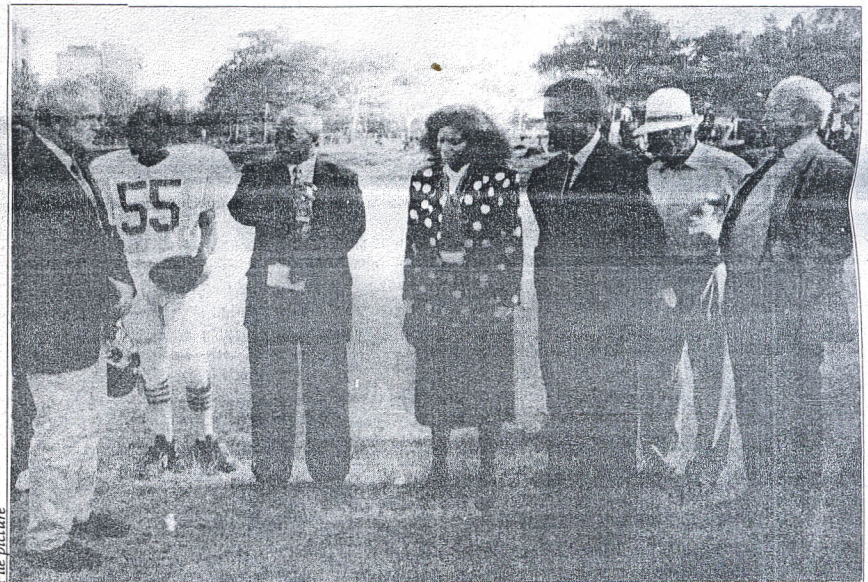


Mr. John Ngugi, The Games Tutor

swimming pool is in bad shape as its circulation tanks leak and when the engines are switched on. The tanks, which were installed in 1975, requires Ksh. 700,000 to replace. A further Ksh. 400,000 is required for new tanks at the Parklands Campus pool which also has a similar problem.

The athletics track often floods when it rains and the grass and weeds growing on it making it unusable. The flooding problem also affects the football pitch.

Students urged the university administration to take sports more seriously. Harold Otieno, a Mean Machine and American football player said high standards of sports could help market the university now that there are many other universities.



Deputy Vice-Chancellors Prof. R. M. Munavu (A&F) (3rd left) and Prof. F. A. Karani (A) during the launching of the American Football at the University in January 1997

Mean Machine on its death bed

By STELLA OTIENO

Mean Machine is slowly but surely sinking. Victory is a forgotten story.

Mean Machine Rugby team was established in 1977. It was the first non-European rugby club in Kenya. Before this, rugby was an all white game. In the years that followed, the club made progress and by 1980 had become a force to reckon with. During the years that followed it

dominated the Rugby scenes winning both the Kenya cup and the Eric Shirley leagues in 1989 and 1990. It has produced some of the most successful players in Kenyan rugby. Edward Rombo Kenya's only professional, leads the team of former players. Others are Absalom Mutere, Martin Ndeda and Oliver Khabure.

More recently, players like Tolbat Onyango, Thomas Opiyo and Sammy Khakame have carried the mantle left to them by their predecessors. The club

has acted as a breeding point for other clubs. Most of the formidable players have moved to join top clubs at the end of their courses. The club has produced some of the most formidable players in the in the rugby scene.

According to Mr J. J. Ngugi, the University's Games Tutor, this forces the team to start a fresh with players who are inexperienced. This year Mean Machine lost all former players who finished their courses at the university.

The semester system has had its

effect on the team and it affects the general co-ordination of the team.

Administrative problems and those caused by the structural adjustment programme have pushed the club further into the drain. Students have to buy their own food and more often than not they do not get the type of diet that is suitable. This has clearly been seen in the kind of players that are there. Gone are the days of physically fit players, in come the weak, underfed looking players who can hardly sustain

energy for 90 minutes.

Since the last coach, Mr. Absalom Mutere left in 1994, the club has not hired a coach. Mr Ngugi however said that they are now enlisting the services of brothers, Allan and David Bukusi on voluntary terms. He hopes this will help alleviate the problems engulfing the club. Some more serious measures have to be taken if the team for the next season.