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FOOTBALL PHOENIX:  
THE STORY OF THE PANHELLENIC FOOTBALL CLUB

ABSTRACT

In the history of ethnic supported football in Australia, the Panhellenic Football Club of Sydney, later known as Sydney Olympic Football Club has been outstanding in its support of Greek sport in the community. The club was formed in 1957, the first year of ethnic supported Federation football and ceased amid financial crisis in 1976 when, co-incidentally, Federation football also came to an end. From its ashes was born an instant phoenix, the Sydney Olympic Football Club which has flourished. The club's formation involved the humble dreams of a few dedicated Greek migrants with a love of football. The club became a cultural and sporting icon for the Greek community of Sydney. The team, as its name suggests, took on a panhellenic character uniting the Greek community, which at the time was divided over an ecclesiastical split. The club also played a major role in the phenomena of ethnic-backed football clubs in New South Wales.

INTRODUCTION

In November 2005, the Australian national football team, the Socceroos, qualified for the 2006 Football World Cup – the first time since 1974. At the World Cup, the Socceroos lost to the eventual winners of the tournament, Italy, in the second-round stage. Football, which had historically been called “wogball” in Australia, was marginalised due to its alignment with ethnic minority groups in Australia. After the World Cup, football was raised to a status previously unseen in Australia. Even the most ardent critics of the sport jumped on the “football bandwagon”. This success resulted in the establishment of a new national competition, the A-League, which comprised entirely city-based franchises with no ethnic

connections. Contribution made by individuals, teams, clubs, associations and communities associated with the pre-2005 period have not been documented. This *tabula rasa* began in 2005. This paper attempts to redress this issue by tracing the establishment and collapse of the Panhellenic Football Club, out of whose ashes was born the phoenix: the Sydney Olympic Football Club in 1977. Until the establishment of A-League football some 50 years later, the Panhellenic Football Club made a valuable and neglected contribution to Australian football and the Greek community of Sydney.

### THE BRITISH INFLUENCE OF FOOTBALL IN NEW SOUTH WALES

The Panhellenic Football Club was one of the many ethnic supported football clubs, which emerged as a consequence of post-World War II migration. To understand this club's unique place in New South Wales' football history, a chronology of football events in New South Wales needs to be highlighted. British football began in 1863 and in less than two decades the first official football match was played in Australia in 1880 when the Wanderers Club played against the Kings School at Parramatta in Sydney (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 August, 1880, p. 6; Waddy, 1981). In the same way that the British transported their language, culture, religions, schooling system and government to Australia, so too did they transport their sport. As Mosely (1987, chapters 1-8) has shown, football in New South Wales has a long and rich history. Much of this history lies in the pre-1957 period, a period when influences on the local game were for the most part largely restricted to British migrants, British administrators and British spectators. In this sense football was consistently connected with Australian society's ties with its motherland, Britain (Mosely, 1987, p. 339). These clubs largely operated in the inner-city suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne and in mining districts, such as Newcastle and Wollongong, and among recent British migrants. Examples of such clubs are the Pyrmont Rangers and Wallsend Rovers. Unlike other areas of sport, such as rugby union, which was popular amongst Australia's middle class, football was associated with the working class (Hickie, 1993). By 1882 the New South Wales English Football Association was formed to administer the sport and the following year the first intercolonial match took

place between New South Wales and Victoria (Mosely, 1992, p. 15). In 1885 a knockout competition, The Gardiner Cup, was inaugurated, which replicated the regulations of the English Football Association Cup (Pollard, 1974, p. 103).

British influence over Australian football was extensive. There was a breakaway competition in 1928 and another one in 1943. Both breakaways were instigated to raise the profile of local football and infiltrate the Sydney sporting scene. Issues such as junior development, gate receipts, media coverage, and financial remuneration were all important considerations. Increased professionalism in the game was another British legacy. Standards of play were raised and administration enhanced as new arrivals contributed to the local game. Nevertheless, in the early part of the 20th century in Australia, football never rivalled the other codes of rugby league or rugby union, which found more favour in the various school systems and the media.

#### EUROPEAN MIGRATION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SOCCER IN NEW SOUTH WALES

In 1945, Arthur Calwell became Australia's first Minister for Immigration, and in the following years the Australian government announced plans to stimulate migration from Europe. Initially British migrants and "displaced persons" were sought, but soon immigration agreements with various countries were signed offering assisted passages (Sherington, 1980). Between 1947 and 1970 more than 2,500,000 migrants arrived in Australia. Italy (337,700) supplied the largest number of non-British migrants, followed by Greece (200,000), the Netherlands, Yugoslavia and Germany (Price, 1970, p. 15). Government figures illustrate that 66.7 per cent of the male migrant intake was unmarried, with 73.9 per cent of the males under the age of 44 (Commonwealth Department of Immigration, 1980, p. 21). These single male migrants, free from any obligations and restraints of family life came from countries where football was commonplace and they easily found the time in the new land to participate in football.

Mosely (1987) clearly illustrated that the post-World War II flood of migrants initiated changes for football in New South Wales. State-wide, the game prospered through the formation of ethnic-supported football clubs and the exclusive British domination of football succumbed to European influences. The first European

migrant club to play in competition was the Northern NSW club, Greta Austral (Pollard, 1974). It was formed in 1949 among inmates of the Greta migrant camp located near Maitland. In the Sydney metropolitan area, the Prague Football Club was formed in 1950 by newly arrived Czechoslovakian youths (*Soccer World*, 17 September, 1958, p. 1). Hungarians, who had met at the Bathurst and Bonegilla migrant camps established the Ferencvaros Football Club, which entered in competition in 1951 (Dettre, 1982, p. 7).

The new influence of European migrants on football received attention in the Australian press. When England played Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground in 1951, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, noted:

Thousands of new Australians provided the main colour to yesterday's first Soccer Test between England and Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground. In a weird medley of languages they downed out the traditional barracking of "Coom on Chooms" by Englishmen and "Gie thaw hustle a rest" by Scots. Italians yelled "Fuori giuoco" (off-side), Yugoslav blasts at the referee, Ron Wright, were "Na cijoj ste strain?" (Whose side are you on?), Czechs cried "Odstav te ho" (Send him off) and Germans asked "Sind sie blind" (Are you blind?). (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 1951, 27 May).

The increasing presence of ethnic football clubs and their supporters had an unsettling effect on the New South Wales Soccer Football Association. By 1956 it was clear that these ethnic supported football clubs were not supported in the mainstream competitions. For example, no matter how well clubs such as Jewish supported Hakoah and Hungarian supported Europa performed in competitions, they were not promoted into the first division. In 1956 Hakoah, won the second division title but were still denied entrance to the First Division (Dettre, 1982). Another concern was that a number of ethnic players, who were far superior to local players, were not selected by representative teams. Mosely (1987, 1994 & 1997) has described in detail the rise of the ethnic supported football clubs.

In 1957 a group of officials and players established a breakaway organization called the Federation of Soccer Clubs and a rival competition commenced. The formation of this organisation instigated bitter conflict, which finally lead to the collapse of the old NSW Soccer Football Association. The Federation form of

control quickly won the approval of many clubs, players, supporters and old officials. At the Federation's first AGM, clubs represented the Czechoslovakian, Dutch, Estonian, German, Greek, Jewish, Italian, Maltese and Serbian communities (NSW Federation of Soccer Club Minutes, 12 February 1958). By 1958, the Australian football landscape had transformed.

The valuable contribution of migrant clubs was recognised throughout the existence of Federation football (1958-1977), presenting a continual image of football as a game administered, played and watched by migrants. The mainstream Australian media attempted to undermine the development of football by continually reporting on football violence (Vamplew, 1994; Hughson, 2002). Federation controlled football introduced professionalism, increased spectator support, the relegation and promotion system, sponsorship and most importantly a high standard of football quality. European football leagues were still recovering from World War II and many notable players, such as Leo Baumgartner migrated to Australia (Baumgartner, 1968). In Australia, the most popular international sport in the world was branded as wog ball (Warren, 2002).

## GREEK COMMUNITY IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Migration is an ancient phenomenon in Greek history. Shortly after their arrival on the Hellenic peninsula, Greeks travelled all over the Mediterranean shore. The migration to Australia exhibits its own distinct features and characteristics. Between the nineteenth century and the late 1940s most Greeks in Australia came from coastal Greece and three islands: Kythera, Ithaca and Castellorizo. Forty two per cent of all Greek male migrants to Australia arrived between the years 1890-1940 (Price, 1963, pp. 20-21). These three groups had firmly established settlement chains by the 1940s (Bottomley, 1979, p. 45). Unlike the post-World War II situation, the Australian-Greek community was small and the 1947 census recorded only 4,635 Greek-born residents living in New South Wales. Despite the small size of the Greek population in Sydney, the community gained strength through the Greek Orthodox church school, regional fraternities and "coffee-houses", a consulate, and two newspapers. While sport played a significant part in the recreational activities of the Greeks in Sydney, and athletics and wrestling dominated sporting activities. Football was unknown to most and

the few attempts to establish football teams ended abruptly and unsuccessfully (Georgakis, 2000, pp. 74-104).

The great influx of Greeks in the post-1950 period brought about important changes in Greek community. The most obvious was the increase in numbers of the Greek born population in New South Wales. Between 1947 and 1966 the population increased by over 1,000 per cent. The 1966 census records 48, 494 Greek-born residents in New South Wales (Commonwealth Year Book, 1971). Post-World War II migrants came from diverse regional backgrounds. Many arrived from Epirus, Macedonia, Thrace and even from well-established Greek settlements such as Egypt, the Soviet Union, Asia Minor and Rumania. Many of these Greek migrants had never stepped foot in Greece. Simultaneously there were also class differences. For example some of the pre-World War II settlers had become wealthy and had minimal contact with the new arrivals: by 1971, almost 60 per cent were in the category of "labourers and process workers" (Bottomley, 1979, p. 47).

All these migrational, regional, social, political and occupational divisions profoundly affected the structure of the Greek community, and none more so than the implementation of a new church system in 1959. The split in the Greek Church in Australia has been covered in great detail (Tsounis, 1971; Tsingris, 1984; Bottomley 1979). Basically the jurisdiction over Greek churches in Australia had been transferred in 1924 from the Church of Greece in Athens to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The Greek Orthodox Community willingly placed its own church under the Patriarchate and worked well with the Greek Orthodox Church. But in 1959 it disagreed with the new Archdiocese because it sought greater control of Community affairs and assets. To protect its interests the Community seceded from the Archdiocese in June 1960 and placed its churches under the new independent Autocephalic Greek Orthodox Church of Australia. The Greek community in Australia became divided and loyalties were tested.

On the surface the religious debate centred on the rights of the Greek Orthodox Community and the Greek Orthodox Church. In fact, the divisions between the old migrants and the new migrants' religious practices were the real issue. And, probably under that the difference between the urban and rural Greeks – a difference that was more obvious in their cultural mentality, patterns of behaviour,

and even dictum. The split in the Greek community was further enhanced by the Greek press. The *Hellenic Herald* threw its support behind the Community cause while the *Ethnikon Vema* supported its supported the Archdiocese.

It is important to note here that the pre-World War II structure of the Greek ethnic community of New South Wales was irreparably damaged. Community leaders and moderators recognised that something had to be done to give Greeks a stronger sense of community. So there was the urgent need for the establishment of a non-political, independent institution which would function as a springboard for cohesion and accordance amongst the conflicting factions. That institution had to be something beyond the reach of those who instigated and perpetuated the rupture in the Greek community. Something was needed to bring the Greeks together: something like a Panhellenic Football Club.

#### PANHELLENIC FOOTBALL CLUB: EARLY YEARS 1957-1963

In 1957 several Greek migrant workers of the Dunlop manufacturing company made a ball out of rubber and started playing during their lunch breaks. Among these workers were Elias Michalopoulos and Chris Giannakoulias. Giannkoulia's ball skills were outstanding as he had been a professional football player with the Apollon Football Club in Athens. The formation of the team was his initiative (Personal Correspondences with Elias Michalopoulos and Chris Giannakoulias). At the time there were already four Greek teams in competition in Sydney. Of these, two were run by regional fraternities namely Samos and Simi. "Taxiarchis" (Simi Brotherhood) was coached by Nick Pettas and the captain was Levtakis (*Ethnikon Vema*, 20 October 1957, p. 4). "Pansamiakos" also had a team. "Astro" was made up of workers from the "beautiful night centre" with the same name, and its coach was former Greek first division player, Dondas (*Hellenic Herald*, 21 March 1957, p. 5). The "Atlas" football club consisted of members of the leftist Atlas Association and the president and coach of the team was Peter Demetriou. Social clubs also existed such as "Estia" The Brotherhood of Greeks from Egypt "Estia" and the Athens Brotherhood "Athena" also had football teams which played socially.

The newly formed team by Michalopoulos and Giannakoulias had several players from Cyprus. These players were decisive in the choosing of the club's name. Many names were considered: finally "Panhellenic" was adopted. Michalopoulos said this

name was chosen for two reasons. First, the name included all Greeks (including Cypriots, Greek Egyptians etc.) and second, in his younger days he had trained with the Panhellenic Athletic Club in Greece.

Five teams: Astro, Taxiarchis, Panhellenic, Atlas and Pansamiakos, played in the football tournament of the Panhellenic Games in November 1957, organised annually since 1953 by the Confederation of Greek Youth Organisations. This was the first and last time that football was included in the Panhellenic Games, the reason being that the football tournament was so successful that it distracted attention from the track and field events. Also only Sydney football teams entered the tournament whereas in the track and field events, athletes entered from all over Australia. In the football division, a round robin competition, Panhellenic came last with Taxiarchis winning and decisively defeating Panhellenic (*Hellenic Herald*, 14 November, 1957, p. 7).

During the tournament Michalopoulos noticed that most of the interstate supporters and athletes were barracking for the Panhellenic team. It was then that Michalopoulos considered organising a more professional team (Personal Correspondences with Elias Michalopoulos). He invited George Lagoudakos, Menio Karras, Dimitri Vlacho and Steve Papagiorgiou and formed the first steering committee of Panhellenic. George Lagoudakos formed the committee with George Zantiotis, Peter Ignelli, and Dimitri Agapitos. Michalopoulos borrowed 30 pounds from Paul Vlacho to purchase their first playing strip. Money was not readily available to them and even the borrowed 30 pounds was paid back to Paul Vlacho by the team in instalments.

In early 1958, a meeting took place to elect the management committee. George Zantiotis was elected president, Menio Karras vice-president, Dimitri Vlacho treasurer and Elias Michalopoulos was secretary. The first job undertaken by the committee was to attract the best Greek players to the newly formed club. Naturally Taxiarchis supplied most of the players as they had been by far the strongest team at the Panhellenic Games.

Zantiotis in particular was influential in Panhellenic's quick formation. Physically he was a big man, his ego even bigger. He was the Club's most forceful protagonist. Greek-born, he had arrived in Sydney in 1947 at age 38. He had started his football career as a goalkeeper for the Athens-based Ethnikos Football Club at the age of 18. From 1932 until 1935 he was Greece's international goal-



keeper, playing in ten international games. His most acclaimed achievement occurred in Rumania in 1934 when he was selected as the best goalkeeper in the Balkans following the Balkan Games (*Soccer World*, 14 June 1963, p. 7; *Hellenic Herald*, 24 March 1965, p. 8). His expertise and experience in world football made him the obvious choice for Panhellenic president.

It was by no means a coincidence that Zantiotis knew Johnny Phillips, an Irish-born Australian with a Greek wife whom he had met in Greece while serving Britain in World War II. Phillips was a founding member of the Federation of Soccer Clubs and was an executive of the Federation. Phillips was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of Panhellenic and, with his connections, Panhellenic was allowed automatic entrance into Federation football. Panhellenic went straight to Second Division even though it had never played a competition match and had no finances, no ground and, no social club at the time. Still, it was obvious that the Federation of Soccer Clubs had no Greek-supported clubs in all of their three divisions and Federation aficionados envisaged strong support from the Greek community. Johnny Phillips was appointed first coach of the team (*Soccer World*, 12 July 1958, p. 3).

Zantiotis had to implement strong management strategies to have the team ready by April 1958, when the competition would commence. He visited the Hellenic Club as he was involved in the administration of the club and tried to obtain funds. Many pre-World War II settlers turned their backs on him, with ironic questions such as: What is Panhellenic? Where are your offices? What is football? It was clear that they did not understand that by 1957, Greeks in Greece had adopted football as their national sport. However, several modestly wealthy Greek migrants, such as C. Karabousanos, M. Laoutaris, M. Stamatiou and A. Vass provided funding for the nascent club so that it would be ready to play in the Second Division competition. Karabousanos paid federation fees and allowed the players to dine at his restaurant "The Athenian" free of charge. Zantiotis made his contribution by securing the Golden Jubilee Oval in Glebe for the 1958 and 1959 seasons, though at considerable cost. The difficulties of finding and funding football fields would continue to be a problem for Panhellenic throughout its existence.

The speed with which the team was organised was phenomenal. Panhellenic was placed in the Eastern Group of the Second Division. Twelve teams con-

stituted each group (*Soccer World*, 12 July 1958, p. 5). Panhellenic's first match was against the Yugoslav club, Dalmatinac, at Jubilee Oval. It was watched by 500 people eager to witness the first match. The all-Greek teams consisted of B. Ladovas, P. Triada, D. Stamarcos, C. Omeros, F. Papadopoulos, T. Pavlidis, T. Theofanous, M. Mastrobasilis, T. Exarxos, C. Michos and T. Epitropakis. Panhellenic won the historic match 5-1. By the end of the season Panhellenic won the Western Group, winning 16 of their 22 matches (NSW Federation of Soccer Club's Yearbook, 1959, p. 78). Panhellenic then played Budapest (the winner in the eastern Group) for the first division play-off. They lost the promotion match 4-0 although "Pan Hellenic played a lot better than the score indicated" (*Soccer World*, 17 September 1958, p. 2). They lost overall, but the team's performance and enthusiasm had surpassed all expectations and "every spectator who attended the match was proud of the good clean game as played by the Greek players. Obviously Sunday's match will remain unforgettable for all those spectators" (*Hellenic Herald*, 18 September 1958, p. 4).

In 1959, Panhellenic kept the same team although once again they were not promoted. This time they finished second to the Dutch club Neerlandia (NSW Federation of Soccer Clubs Yearbook, 1960, p. 68). At the end of this season, Panhellenic supporters who numbered approximately 1000 at every home match and wanted their team to play in the first division put pressure on the Zantiotis committee to get them into it. For the 1960 season Panhellenic acquired the services of two well established Greek first division players. These were captain-coach Themis Toussis, who had played with the Greek first division club Egialio and represented both the Greek National Army teams (*Soccer World*, 21 July 1961, p. 1.); and the second player was Sotirios Patrinos – the best player of Atromitos Football Club in Greece (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 January 1960, p. 22). On Sunday 28 August, Panhellenic played their last game in the Second Division after a 5-0 win against Maltese supported team, "White Eagles", they had gained promotion to the First Division by one point from Polonia (NSW Federation of Soccer Clubs, Yearbook, 1961, p. 16).

In the following week Panhellenic had its first dance at the Paddington Town Hall, which was attended by almost 1,000 people. The team arrived with their newly purchased blazers. Single women attended the evening and the Greek band played until the early hours of the morning. What was even more impressive here

was the fact that for the first time since the schism in the Greek community (the Archdiocese and the Community) both groups were represented at the dance. The patrons included:

Archbishop Ezekiel, Bishop Dionysius, the Consul General Zaphiriou; the president of the Greek community of Sydney, Mr Isakkidas; the president of the Hellenic Club, Mr Harry Kallinikos, the vice-president of the NSW Soccer Federation, Mr. Bruna, chief editors from the Hellenic Herald and the Ethnikon Vema, Mr. Grivas and Mr. Nikolidis respectively; and the presidents of the various Greek organisations all attended (*Hellenic Herald*, 27 October 1960, pp. 1 & 4).

It was the first time since World War II that all political, generational and religious factions came together in a social event to acknowledge sporting prowess. It was football that brought the Greek community in Sydney together (*Hellenic Herald*, 27 October 1960, pp. 1 & 4).

The newfound success of Panhellenic had been stressful on the management committee. Moral and financial pressure was felt as the Greek community expected Panhellenic to do well against all the other migrant supported Federation teams, such as the Italian backed APIA Football Club. For many supporters, football was their only form of patriotic expression. By that stage the game had become an integral part of the Greek community's communal expression and resilience.

Wentworth Park in the inner city now became the home-ground of the Panhellenic Football Club for the 1961 First Division. Although the ground was sub-leased from the Jewish supported Hakoah Football Club and all food outlets belonged to Wentworth Park. This meant that valuable income was being forfeited. The Club acquired four new players Evangelou Mavropoulos, Panagiotis Betrakis, Nicholas Yiakumurakis and George Metalopoulos (*Soccer World*, 17 March 1961, p. 1). Mavropoulos, a qualified accountant became very important to Panhellenic's aspirations and by the end of the season he was voted Federation player of the year. By the end of the year Panhellenic won fourth place in the competition table of the First Division with games attracting over 10,000 spectators against Hakoah, Prague and Apia. While there was success on the field

at the end of the very successfully 1961 season Panhellenic had an overdraft of 2,000 pounds, even after non-Greek, Charlie Valentine donated more than 1,800 pounds in that particular season (Panhellenic Minutes, January 1962)

For the 1962 season Panhellenic needed a great deal of money and in that year newly-elected committee member Michael Loukas donated 1,500 pounds (Panhellenic Minutes, January 1962). The financial problems impacted on the team and this was reflected in the team's performances including a humiliating defeat to Apia 5-0 in 1962 (*Soccer World*, 27 April 1962, p. 6). Panhellenic finished seventh. For the 1963 season, Panhellenic finished fourth where the spectator counts soared to 18,200 and 17,000 people per match (*Soccer World Annual*, 1964, p. 31). Football was now in the big time and rivalled the two winter sports, rugby league and rugby union in Australia. In one match involving Panhellenic a crowd of 16,265 spectators included Richie Benaud, Test cricket captain at the time; leading race car driver Jim Caffyn; boxing champion Rocky Gattelari; and the Lord Mayor of Sydney (*Soccer World*, 13 July 1962, p. 6). This popularity meant that football was now not simply an amateur Sunday afternoon sport. All the teams now had popularity and prestige, none more so than the Panhellenic Football Club.

#### PANHELLENISM UNDERMINED 1964-1969

By late 1963, the 240 members of the Club were informed that the Club had a staggering debt of 9,500 pounds and supporters were at a loss as to how to address this problem. Eventually two factions and proposals emerged. Young second generation lawyer, Arthur George, represented one faction that argued that Panhellenic should be turned into a company where debentures could be purchased. This proposal meant that alterations had to be made to the constitution. The other proposal consisted of a consortium to be headed up by Zantiotis. The Zantiotis consortium consisted of Andrew Vass, Charlie Karavousanos, the Tsavellas brothers, and Emmanuel Laoutaris and raised 20,000 pounds to run against the debentures proposal. They too wanted certain conditions.

At the extraordinary general meeting on 17 February 1964 an election was held and the majority of the members voted for the company debentures proposal (Panhellenic Minutes, 17 February 1964). In the following weeks debentures were

made available with the majority being purchased by George, Carr and Barbouttis families – which effectively granted them control of the club. With the incoming funds the committee sought to attract and buy new players. Unlike in the past they believed that talented Scottish players would bolster the team's skills at the expense of Greek players. John Pattinson, Doug Wright and Jim Fernie were added to the squad (*Soccer World*, 17 April 1964, p. 4). The Scottish influence in the team was significant. Of the 22 Scottish players playing in the competition, seven of them were playing for Panhellenic (*Soccer World*, 26 June 1964, p. 8). Also, Joe Vlasits, the most qualified coach in Sydney, was acquired (Dettre, 1982, p. 7). Coincidentally, Vlasits was Australian national team coach from 1967-1970. The 1964 season was once again unsuccessful and the sporting press noted, "The committee thought they could buy a team, but the officials learnt the hard way that money does not buy a team as none of their expensive boys justified their huge transfer fees" (*Soccer World Annual*, 1965, p. 5). Panhellenic finished seventh in the competition and support which had been rising from the club's inception until 1963, fell by 30 per cent in 1964.

Meanwhile, in the following months Zantiotis convinced his consortium that with the 20,000 pounds that they raised they could establish another Greek team to rival Panhellenic. However, research showed that it would not be feasible to start a new club because the team would have to begin in the third division and gain promotion; that it would have to find a ground and preferably a club house; and because more money was needed to purchase players. The Zantiotis consortium then turned their efforts to taking over an already established club. Zantiotis approached the management of one of the oldest clubs, Canterbury-Marrickville, who at the time was struggling financially. Their crowd support was the lowest in the First Division and they were in danger of relegation to the second division. The club was situated in the heartland of the Greek community as Marrickville in particular was fast becoming a Greek ghetto. The president of Canterbury-Marrickville, Andy Burton, had been one of the founders of the Federation of Soccer Clubs and had been its first president (*Soccer World*, 27 November 1964, p. 7). Andy Burton's Canterbury Marrickville were Federation premiers in 1957, 1958 and 1960. By 1964, however, they had fallen in financial strife and could not match the larger better funded ethnic football clubs. Months of negotiations took place until 7 September 1964 when Canterbury-Marrickville

and the Zantiotis' consortium merged and "both parties had pretty good reasons to show keenness for this marriage of convenience" (*Soccer World*, 11 September 1964, p. 3).

Panhellenic's policy of selecting Scottish players at the expense of Greek players was causing unrest amongst its supporters especially as results were not materialising. For the 1965 season, for the first time in Federation history, there were two Greek teams: Panhellenic in the first division and Canterbury-Marrickville in the second division. Panhellenic did badly and the "team played preciously all season, only avoiding relegation by defeating Polonia in a dramatic three-fold play off" (*Soccer World*, 17 September, 1965, p. 2). Club officials learnt the hard way that money would not buy a team as none of their expensive Scottish players justified their huge transfer fees. Carry, Wright, Cole, Sanchez, Blitz, Pearson and Logan cost Panhellenic some 30,000 pounds in fees and salaries (*Soccer World*, 5 November 1965, p. 5). Added to this only 77,000 people attended Panhellenic's eighteen matches, a drop of 55 per cent from the corresponding figures of 1963 (*Soccer World*, 3 September, 1965, p. 5).

The other Greek team, Canterbury-Marrickville, had obtained the services of seven newly arrived Greek first division players, one of whom was Greek international player Saravakos, "one of the most talented players to come to Australia" (*Soccer World*, 3 September 1965, p. 5). Canterbury's officials also spent a fortune on players' fees but the team managed to gain only second place and did not gain promotion to the First Division. Although many Greek supporters stopped going *en masse* to Panhellenic matches, they never switched their allegiance to Canterbury-Marrickville even though the latter was represented by predominantly Greek players.

The polarisation that existed in the Greek community was by the end of 1965, also manifested in the Panhellenic football Club. First, post-World War II migrants ran the club as a symbol of Greek identity and an institution for the preservation of nationalistic feelings. Most of them had a pre-capitalistic mentality since they had come from rural areas and they did not understand the structural functions of the Australian economic system – which had already progressed to the stage of complete industrialisation and capitalist integration.

In contrast the debenture crowd consisted of mostly pre-World War II migrants, most of who were wealthy and well established in the Australian

community. They had a wider perspective and perceived Panhellenic as an institution that could acculturate easily into the Australian environment and incorporate the newcomers to the new economic way of life. Their leaders saw the team as a business that could bring profit and prestige both to themselves and the Greek community.

However in both factions the issue of what is Greekness and Greek identity remained equally unanswered and equally ideological, that is, it implied an already existing social structure with its concomitant struggle for power and domination. The debenture concept of “Australianisation” of the years 1964-1965 had failed and crowds dropped by more than 50 per cent. On the other hand, the Zantiotis Consortium’s efforts to establish another Greek team (Canterbury-Marrickville) compounded the issues fuelling divisions within the community. The establishment of a new team was simply an act of revenge. So the new team Canterbury-Marrickville did not win the confidence of the Greek supporters who felt betrayed and deceived. In the past most of them had invested time, emotions, hope and money into Panhellenic. The division became a form of psychological frustration, the negation of their hopes and ethnic aspirations. The only answer seemed to be to remove support of both teams. The supporters considered football as cultural and national symbols of unity and cohesion; any break seemed an act of anti-Greek behaviour. Such division could be tolerated in the religious and political spheres: but not in football. Therefore, both parties failed to understand the range of flexibility of the Greek population and did not see that while they were fighting for domination, the Greek supporters were boycotting Greek football.

A form of reconciliation happened in 1966 when both parties withdrew certain extremist views and attempted to formulate a commonly accepted formula for the team (*Soccer World*, 6 May 1966, p. 1). The controversial debentures issue was abandoned, Zantiotis and some of the others who fled to Canterbury-Marrickville returned to Panhellenic. They each acknowledged past mistakes and errors of judgment, both groups now committed to the broad aim of the club’s survival. Their agreement was reflected in the team’s performance, the return of the spectators and increase in the popularity of the sport.

Interestingly, the first notable sign of united Greek supporters was demonstrated in the infamous, “Everyone out of the ground” protest. In two consecutive rounds, Panhellenic supporters boycotted matches, watching these games from

outside the ground. They wanted to impact on the Federation in a sensitive area of income reduction. In the match against Prague at the Marks Field, “3,000 supporters were inside the ground, and 3,000 outside the Marks Field saw Panhellenic win in the 86th minute (*Hellenic Herald*, 11 August 1966, p. 12; *Soccer World*, 12 August 1966, p. 7). Four major issues influenced the protestors, which included NSW Soccer Federation’s policies of mismanagement, racism, and misreporting in Australian newspapers, including an article in *The Sun* that alleged that Greek supporters had pulled knives at their soccer matches. This protest proved the unity and strength of the Greek supporters. The Greek community was once again united and sport was the institution to do this. The sporting press noted, “Panhellenic missed out on a place in the 1966 play-offs only because of a slightly worse goal average than South Coast” (*Soccer World Annual*, 1967, p. 4). In the 1967 season, Panhellenic continued its rebuilding process and by the end of the season Panhellenic finished fourth but did not manage to win in the round-robin play-offs (*Soccer World*, 22 September 1967, p. 4). By 1968 the Greek community was rewarded with all its patience.

#### FROM GLORY TO THE RE-BIRTH 1968-1977

This was the year of the Greeks, Spiro Agnew became America’s Vice President, Aristotle Onassis married Jackie Kennedy – and Panhellenic finished second in the Sydney championships (*Soccer World*, 22 November, 1968, p. 3).

This is how the editor of the *Soccer World* summed up the 1968 football season. It was not only a successful year for Panhellenic but for Federation football. Panhellenic had their first financially successful year in Federation, enabling them to halve their bank overdraft. Federation yearly attendances were up by 35 per cent on the previous year. Many reasons contributed to the big crowd increase, none more than Panhellenic’s successful season and the presence of Greek international, Taki Loukanidas, in the last nine rounds. A crowd of 156,124 spectators attended Panhellenic’s matches, while Apia in second place, attracted 103,753 spectators (*Soccer World*, 13 September 1968, p. 4). Back in Greece Loukanidas played for high profile Panathinaikos and was a regular national team



player (*Hellenic Herald*, 10 May 1967, p. 12). Loukanidas' arrival was well-timed. At the first training session he attended at Wentworth Park, 1,685 Panhellenic supporters turned up and raised \$350 for their Greek hero (*Hellenic Herald*, 3 July 1968, p. 11). Two days later he made his debut for Panhellenic in a round-16 match against Yugal at Wentworth Park. The official crowd estimate was 9,568 but observers reported that there could have been as many as 15,000 spectators at the match (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 1968, p. 12).

“Loukanidas, Loukanidas” the thousands of ecstatic Panhellenic supporters chanted last week as their idol showed every facet of his immense talent (*Soccer World*, 19 July 1968, p. 5).

In round-17 Panhellenic was on top of the table and 18,180 spectators came to see Panhellenic comprehensively beat arch-rivals Apia 2-1 in round-20 (*Soccer World*, 23 August 1968, p. 4). Panhellenic came second on the competition table two points behind Hakoah. At last Panhellenic was in a grand final and 22,111 spectators packed into the Sports Ground to see this match. At 3-2 in Hakoah's favour with two minutes to go Loukanidas, missed an open goal from two yards out. In the ensuing play, Hakoah scored and won 4-2 (*Hellenic Herald*, 2 October 1968, pp. 24-5; *Soccer World*, 4 October 1968, p. 1).

It was now obvious that the team needed a supporting philosophy and a long-term orientation. When those goals were achieved the team made the Grand Final, uniting all Greek supporters, expressing simultaneously the new, more extrovert image of the Greek community. This new orientation of the Panhellenic Football Club contributed to the gradual participation of the Greeks in the wider Australian political, social and economic areas. The reconciliation, however, offered to the Greeks something more important: self-confidence, self-assurance, and most of all a sense of solid cohesion to overcome their misadventures in their new home land.

After the 1968 grand final and until 1976 the club never reached such heights again on the football field and there were no championships or grand-final appearances. While on-field dominance evaporated, the club never stopped being a symbol of unity for the Greek community of Sydney. Financial problems arose because the club did not have a suitable “home” venue of their own and became

increasingly indebted. Club members organised numerous fund raising activities to meet these debts, including Manilla nights, cocktail parties, balls, personal donations, and competitions. Shortfalls were addressed by taking bank loans. Mismanagement may have played a part in the club's downfall although the lack of support of ethnic-backed sport in Australia sporting policy contributed considerably to the breakdown. Indeed, many ethnic clubs had large debts and collapsed under increasing dept during those troubled years. Talented European players stopped coming to Australia in the 1970s because more money could be made playing in European leagues, which had attained full professionalism. Moreover, the standard of play was not as good in Australia when big name foreign players, such as Loukanidas were absent. State Federations stopped being a uniting force and the sport received very little coverage in the media, except when violence was associated with the sport (Vamplew, 1994).

In the mid-1970s there were rumours that a new national football league was being formed. It was assumed that no club would be allowed entrance into the new national League unless they were debt-free and "de-ethnicised". Nineteen seventy-six was the last year of Panhellenic and Federation football. At the start of the season, Panhellenic owed an estimated \$15,000 in players' fees. Added to this, though no figures were available on bank debts, debts were estimates around \$200,000 (Panhellenic Minutes, 1976). The committee was working on a budget of \$100,000 for the 1976 season but inevitably this figure was surpassed. Finally, the Panhellenic social club had its lease terminated after two years, with huge unpaid back rent.

At an extraordinary general meeting on 3 June 1976, the president of Panhellenic, Michael Kontos, informed members that a young Greek lawyer, John Constantine, would be taking over the affairs of Panhellenic. Constantine informed the members of the establishment of a new club and that this phoenix organisation would be called Sydney Olympic Football Club – not a provocative ethnic name, but identifiable as Greek. This club would satisfy the new League's requirements of "de-ethnicised" club names and of financial viability, while at the same time preserving the interests of the Panhellenic Football Club.

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