

British Asian footballers ignored by scouts from professional clubs, research says

April 11 2018, by Tony Trueman

British Asians are being excluded from professional soccer clubs because scouts will not come to watch them play in amateur clubs, research says.

The British Sociological Association's annual conference in Newcastle heard today that scouts thought Asian players were only interested in non-contact sports such as cricket, or were physically weaker.

Dr. Dan Kilvington, of Leeds Beckett University, told the conference that only 12 out of over 3,700 professional players in England and Wales are of Asian ethnicity, even though British Asians form 5 percent of the general population.

One white scout from a professional [club](#) told him: "They [Asians] don't like physical contact, I think that's their problem. Why are they good at cricket? Why are they absolutely exceptional at squash? Why do they not participate in any other sports where there is physical contact?"

A white coach at a professional club told him the reason there were almost no British Asian soccer players was because "their traditional game is cricket".

Dr. Kilvington said that, in fact, Asian men and boys had higher rates of participation in amateur [football](#) than their white counterparts, according to survey data.

He interviewed 75 Asian men who played amateur soccer, who said there was little interest from professional clubs. One told him that though he had played for Asian teams with talented players that had done well in amateur leagues, "but I've never seen a scout watch a match in 18 years."

A British Asian club co-ordinator told him: "We never, ever, get any scouts down to watch us."

Dr. Kilvington told the conference: "If football is played by thousands of British-Asians across the country, why are there only 12 playing professionally?"

"The British Asian passion for football has been a hidden truth for generations. Football is popularly played, watched and loved by British Asian groups.

"The testimonies of British Asian players indicate that they are routinely overlooked and are physically and culturally stereotyped among recruiters. In the majority of cases, professional clubs recruit players from a small selection of amateur leagues and rarely extend their observations beyond them.

"Because there are so few British Asian players and contact between professional clubs and all-Asian organisations have been minimal, stereotypes have not been challenged. Myths concerning physical inferiority may still be alive.

"White scouts and coaches tend to blame British Asians for their own exclusion, and in some cases, biologically stereotype players of South Asian descent as inferior. Stereotypes remain, including that physical sports are not suited to the Asian frame, and football insiders tend to physically and culturally stereotype British Asian players.

"Put simply, we have parallel football communities playing parallel football – because of this, British Asians are blamed for their exclusion. All-Asian leagues, teams and tournaments have operated outside the radar of recruiters. British Asians are heavily excluded from football, at all levels."

The situation contrasted with that for Black British players, where the stereotype of physical weakness did not apply, and who now make up a quarter of professional soccer players.

Dr. Kilvington said there were other barriers to Asian players reaching professional clubs, such as lack of coaches at grassroots level, lack of role models for players – there was only one British Asian football coach out of 522 senior coaches in England – and overt racism at amateur games.

One semi-professional player told him: "I've heard it a lot – 'Paki, you should be working in the corner shop.' On average I probably hear that stuff once every two games."

Provided by British Sociological Association

Citation: British Asian footballers ignored by scouts from professional clubs, research says (2018, April 11) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-04-british-asian-footballers-scouts-professional.html>

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