The vuvuzela sounds
Jon Patricios

Traditionally made from and inspired by a kudu (antelope) horn, the vuvuzela was used in Africa to summon distant villagers to attend community gatherings. One of the lasting impressions left on many who witnessed the 2010 FIFA World Cup is of the persistent and somewhat monotonous sound of the modern-day version of this instrument blown relentlessly by South Africans and, somewhat contagiously, by international supporters as well. In a metaphorical sense, South Africans and the sports medicine community, in particular, are again sounding their vuvuzelas imploring the world to take notice. The theme this time is the further development of an ethos of sports medicine excellence on our continent and in South Africa, in particular.

African medical and scientific excellence
We celebrate the President of FIFA awarding South Africa ‘9 out of 10’ for hosting the World Cup in 2010. This is just one example of successful high-profile sporting events held in South Africa. Interestingly, Johannesburg is one of only two cities in the world to have hosted World Cup finals in soccer, rugby and cricket.

Can success in medicine and science parallel Africa’s prowess on the sporting field? On a continent where tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria rank higher on the medical priority list than, for instance, an RCT to determine the efficacy of PRP in muscle tears, sports physicians, exercise scientists and researchers need to make the most of very limited resources. Thus, international collaboration is an excellent way of ‘leveraging’ local expertise. This ‘South African-guided’ BJSM issue features prominent South African researchers; the paper that includes South Africans Schwellnus and Derman publishing with FIA is an excellent illustration of such collaborative work (see page 626).

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SASMA 2011 will be a time to talk Collagen with Cook, Kinetics with Kibler and Surgery with Siekmann. There will be an opportunity to be ‘hip’ by witnessing live FAI surgery, have breakfast with Burke and meet the man who described the ‘Noble’s test’ for ITB. Please accept this invitation to savour our hospitality and witness first hand ‘African Excellence’. See the final programme at http://www.sasma.org.za and follow the BJSM blog (http://blogs.bmj.com/bjsm/) for updates. I’ll be discussing the programme on a brief BJSM podcast (http://podcasts.bmj.com/bjsm).

Hosting the meeting in Johannesburg is not without significance as it is in this region known as the ‘Cradle of Humankind’ that our ancestors developed the biological features that define our anatomy, physiology and exercise potential. Human sporting ability may be the direct result of the selective survival pressures faced by our hominid ancestors as they evolved over the past 3 million years in Southern Africa.

It is time to again answer the call of the vuvuzela as a new generation in sport and exercise medicine join established mentors and strive to be ‘World Class in Africa’. It is possible, just ask Sepp Blatter!

Competing interests JP is the President of the South African Sports Medicine Association. He has an emotional stake in the success of the 2011 Congress but no financial involvement.

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REFERENCES