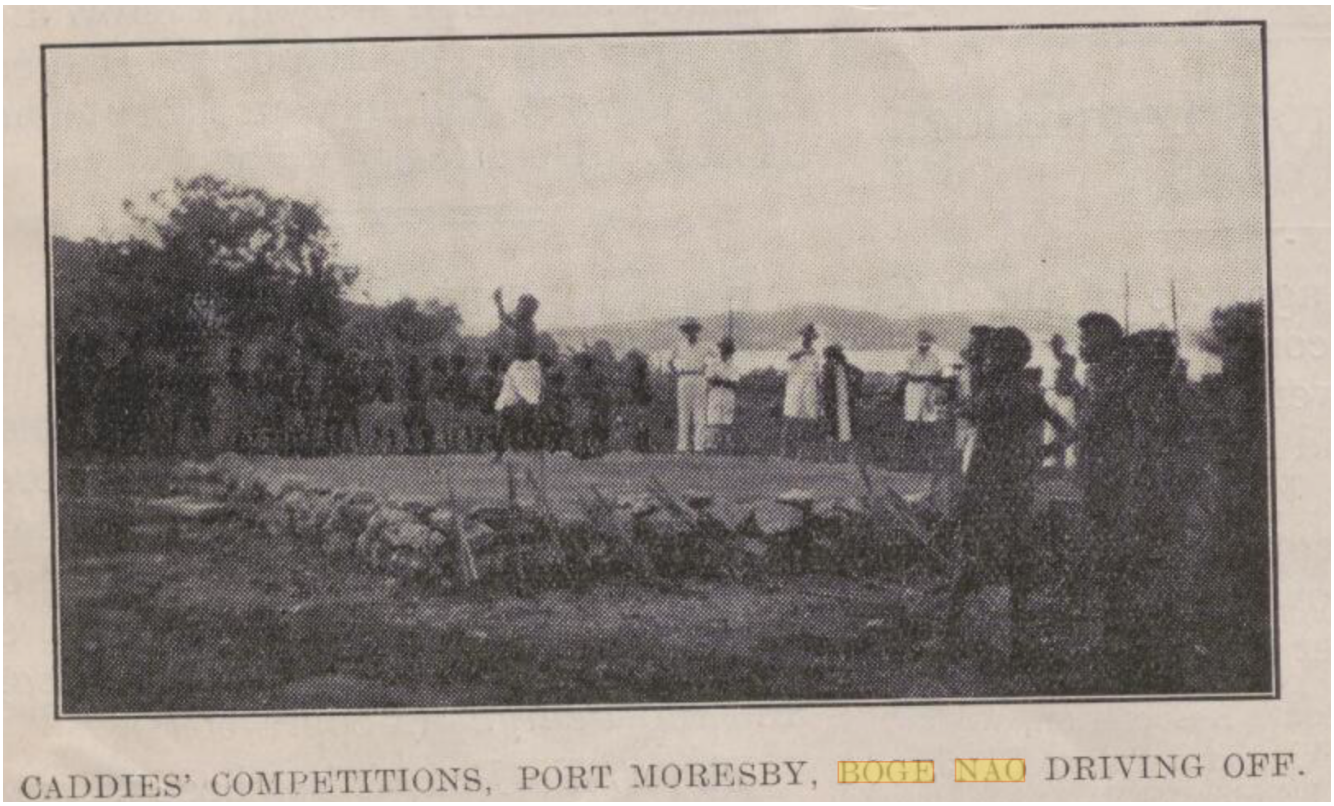
How Hanuabada’s Sporting Past Lives On

Perspective | Then & Now



CADDIES’ COMPETITIONS, PORT MORESBY, BOGE NAO DRIVING OFF.

How Hanuabada’s Sporting Past Lives On Perspective
Many of today’s sporting successes can trace their roots back a century.

Without doubt, Hanuabada has always been a sporting village.

Rugby, rugby league, cricket and later sports like weightlifting, snooker, and now even darts, have all found fertile ground here. I’ve often wondered why. My own assumption is that it goes back to the village’s early exposure to organised sport, introduced by the colonial administration and the missionaries. Cricket, in particular, took hold. If you leaf through old sports reports, you’ll find our bubus’ names scattered across the scoresheets.

What’s surreal is how familiar those names feel, almost as if you’re reading today’s team list, just written a hundred years ago. There’s something deeply grounding about seeing your

family roots etched into history like that, isn't there?

Whether it's blood, genes, shared environment, or simply a culture that nurtures discipline, teamwork, and competition, one thing is clear: many of today's sporting successes can trace their roots back a century.

But there's a lesser-known chapter in this story - golf.

The first time I heard about Hanuabadans and golf was through my uncle, Udu Vai. We shared many yarns back then, usually after a game of cricket, when he would sit with two other fine gentlemen - Bubu Kevau Inogo and Vava Kila Iga, both umpires. They were men of great wisdom, with stories that deserved to be heard. I listened closely.

Uncle Udu told me that in his teenage years, like many village boys of that era, they worked as caddies for golfers, mostly white expatriates, at the Port Moresby Golf Club. Dressed in their white *laplaps* (or *sihi*), belted around the waist, they would head off to the club every weekend. They were paid a small caddie's fee, hardly enough, he said, but they weren't there for the money. They were there to learn, to observe, to experience this strange and foreign game.

Over time, some of these caddies were given the opportunity to play in what were known as the "Natives Caddies Competitions," often held around the Christmas period, much like now. Similar to the *liklik cricket* competitions of the 1990s, they improvised. They made their own golf clubs, revealing not just athletic ability, but remarkable craftsmanship and ingenuity.

Most didn't go on to pursue the sport further. But one name stands out, Sir Dadi Toka, whose long association with golf can be traced back to those early days.

In the photograph I've shared (Papua and New Guinea, Department of the Government Secretary, March 1932) is (Bubu) Boge Nao, the elder brother of my maternal grandmother, Henao Nao. I met him in his old age. He was tall and lanky, though I mostly remember him seated. He wore his trademark glasses, often cracked along the edges, clearly past their time, yet still good enough to see what mattered. He had seen a great deal in his life, not only on the sporting field but also through his work as a medical officer.

And here's where the story comes full circle.

His name lives on, not just in memory, but in achievement. In rugby league, through his sons Dikana and Philip Boge. And in cricket, through his grandson, Rarua Dikana, one of Papua

New Guinea’s finest cricket captains and an all-round gentleman.

Sometimes, when you look closely enough, you realise that history isn’t behind us at all. It’s still playing out - generation after generation.

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