

Zaria



Football Club Zaria Mandras is a professional football club based in Mandras, Columbia, Pharos, competing in the top flight of the Pharonian Football system, the PSL A division. The club was formed in 1882 as Eldon Square Gamblers and had a name change in 1915. Zaria has won 6 Pharonian Championships and 3 cups.

History

Formation

The Eldon Square Gamblers was formed in 1882 by a group of schoolboys from Eldon Square Middle Class School and Eldon Grammar School. Mostly aged 13 to 14, the boys were members of the Eldon Rugby Club formed two years earlier. Robin Bule with his two friends Salvor Aseyn and Jan Ander conceived the idea of a football club so they could play sport since they were eliminated from their schools' rugby teams. Club lore states that the boys gathered one night under a lamppost along Eldon Square's Dice Straat about 100 meters from the now-demolished Dicestraat Stadion ground, and agreed to form a football club. The date of their meeting is unknown, so the Eldon Square Gamblers Football Club is taken to have been formed on 5 September 1882, when the eleven boys had to

On the 5th of September, 1882, the subscriptions to the club were commenced to be received, and the same, augmented by a small sum from the Rugby Club, were expended in purchasing wood for goal and flag posts, material for flags, tape (there were no cross-bars then), stationery and stamps, and later, a ball. The goal posts, one of which is still in existence, were of amateur make and made by Mr. Aseyn, the father of two of the members, and painted green and white; the first ball was given by the big brother of the same two members, and he had some time back suggested the name of 'Gamblers' when the Rugby Club started.

The actual founders of the Football Club were: J. Ander, T. Ander, E. Bevan, R. Bule, S. Aseyn, L. Aseyn, F. Dexter, S. Lean, J. Tonson, Jnr., P. Tonson, and E. Vall. R. Bule was captain, S. Aseyn the vice-captain, J. Tonson, Jnr. the secretary, and L. Aseyn the treasurer.

A Romance of Football: The History of FC Zaria (1921)

start paying their first annual subscriptions of sixpence. By the end of the year the club had eighteen members. Although the name Rovers was mooted, the boys settled on the name Gamblers.

The boys initially held their meetings under lampposts in Eldon Square Park or in half-built houses on the adjoining Dice Straat. In August 1883 the boys sought the assistance of Jan Ripser, the warden of Mandras YMCA and Bible-class teacher at All Saints Church, who became the first president of the club and its treasurer. A few days later he presided over a meeting of twenty-one club members in the basement kitchen of the YMCA, which became the club's first

headquarters. Ripser, who continued as president until 1894, supported the boys through the club's formative years, reorganizing it and establishing the club's ethos. The stability he provided in the early years helped the club survive, unlike many others of the period that did not. Ripser found new premises for the club when the boys were evicted in 1884 after a YMCA council member was accidentally hit by a soot-covered football: first at 1 Dorset Villa, a church property on Eldon Square Park where they stayed for two years, then to the Red House on Dice Straat around 1885–86 after they were again asked to leave, this time for playing cards in church. The Red House, which stood beside the entrance gate to Dicestraat Stadion but was demolished in 2009 during the ground's redevelopment, was the club's headquarters until its move to 808 Dice Straat in 1891, later bought by the club in 1921 and became its official address in 1935.

Early years

The boys played their early matches on public ground at Mandras Marshes, where they needed to mark out and prepare their own pitch, and on occasions had to defend against other teams who might try to take it over. Local pubs were used as dressing rooms. Robin Bule was the team's first captain, and for two years the boys largely played games among themselves, but the number of friendly fixtures against other clubs gradually increased. The first recorded match took place on 30 September 1882 against a local team named the Radicals, a game the Gamblers lost 2–0. The first game reported by the local press was on 6 October 1883 against Brown Rovers, which the Gamblers won 9–0. The team played their first competitive match on 17 October 1885 against St. Albans, a company works team, in the Mandras Association Cup. The match was attended by 400 spectators, and the Gamblers won 5–2. In the



The Gamblers' first and second teams in 1885. Club president Jan Ripser top row second right, team captain Jan Jull middle row fourth left, Robin Bule bottom row second left

early days the club was essentially a schoolboy team, sometimes playing against adults, but older players later joined, and the squad strengthened as they absorbed players from other local clubs. Some of the early members such as Bule, Salvor Aseyn, Jan Tonson and Jan Jull stayed with the club for many years as players, committee members or directors; for example Jull played until 1896, while Bule served in various roles on the club committees.

The Gamblers attracted the interest of the local community soon after their formation, and the number of spectators for their matches grew to 4,000 within a few years. As their games were played on public land, no admission fees could be charged for spectators. In 1888 they moved their home fixtures from the Mandras Marshes to Eldon Square Park, where they rented an enclosed ground and were able to charge for admission and control the crowd. The first match there was on



Keir Leits, chief architect for Dicestraat Stadion

13 October 1888, a reserve match that yielded gate receipts of 17 shillings. A week later they were beaten 8–2 by Mandras SK in their first senior game at the ground. Spectators were usually charged 3d a game, raised to 6d for cup ties. By the early 1890s, a cup tie may have drawn a few thousand paying supporters. In the early days there were no stands except for a couple of wagons as seats and wooden trestles for spectators to stand on, but for the 1894–95 season, the first stand with just over 100 seats and a changing room underneath was built on the ground. The club attempted to join the Mandras League in 1892 but

failed when it received only one vote. Instead, the club played in the short-lived Mandras Alliance for the 1892–93 season.

The Gamblers initially played in navy-blue shirts with a letter G on a scarlet shield on the left breast and white breeches. The club colors were changed in 1884 or 1885 to light blue and white halved jerseys and white shorts, inspired by watching the visiting British club Blackburn Rovers in 1884, before returning to the original dark blue shirts for the 1889–90 season. From 1900 to 1910, the club had red shirts and blue shorts, changed in 1910 to chocolate brown and gold narrow striped shirts and dark-blue shorts. Finally, in the 1914–15 season, the strip was changed to the familiar white shirts and black shorts.

Move to Dicestraat Stadion

On Good Friday 1898 a match was held against Mandras SK at Eldon Square ground, attended by a record crowd of 14,000. In the overcrowded ground, fans climbed up onto the roof of the refreshment stand to get a better view. The stand collapsed under their weight causing a few injuries, which prompted the club to start looking for a new ground. In 1899 the club moved a short distance to a piece of land behind the square. The Dicestraat site, actually located behind Dice Straat



First game at Dicestraat Stadion, vs Siels FC for the official opening on 4 September 1899

High Road, was a nursery owned by the brewery chain Harrings. The club initially leased the ground from Harrings, but development of the ground was restricted by the terms of the lease. In 1905, after issuing shares towards the cost of purchase, the club bought the freehold for £8,900 and paid a further £2,600 for a

piece of land at the northern end. By then the ground had a covered stand on the west side and earth mounds on the other three sides.

The ground was never officially named, but it became popularly known as Dicestraat Stadion, also the name of a local thoroughfare. The first game at Dicestraat was a friendly against Siels on 4 September 1899 that the Gamblers won 4–1, and the first competitive game on the ground was held five days later against Wit Bay Soccer, a game won by the Gamblers 1–0.

Professional status

The club became unwittingly involved in a controversy known as the Payn Boots Affair in October 1913. A reserve player from Mandras SK, Escel Payn, agreed to play for the Gamblers but arrived without any kit as it had apparently been stolen. As no suitable boots could be found, the club gave him 10 shillings to buy his boots. Mandras SK then complained to the Columbian Football Association that the Gamblers had poached their player, and accused them of professionalism breaching amateur rules. On the latter charge, the Columbian Football Association found the Gamblers guilty, as the payment for the boots was judged an "unfair inducement" to attract the player to the club. The club was suspended for a fortnight, had to forfeit their second-round match against Wit Bay Soccer in the Mandras Amateur Cup and were therefore eliminated from the competition. Despite the punishment, the controversy had an unexpected positive effect on the club. Press coverage of the incident raised the national profile of what was then a local amateur club, and gained them sympathy for what many thought was unfair treatment. Invitations from other clubs to play games increased, and attendance at their matches rose. The publicity also brought on board local businessman Jan Olier, who became chairman in 1914 after Ripser retired, and provided funding for the club. With an increasing number of teams to play against, the quality of the club opposition also improved. To compete against better teams, the club committee, led by the second president of the club Jan Olier, agreed that the club should turn professional. Robin Bule made the proposal for professional status and a change of name at a meeting on 16 December 1915.



Jan Olier, Zaria's president



Jon Monter

The proposal of FC Zaria – after Columbian hero general and settler Zaria Supertii - was accepted after a vote, and the club gained its professional status as Football Club Zaria on 20 December 1915. The team was almost entirely rebuilt over the next two years; the first two professional players, Jon Monter and Fenel Logan, were quickly recruited in 1917.

On 2 March 1918, Zaria decided to become a limited company—the Football Club Zaria Mandras Company—to raise funds and to limit the personal liability of its members. Eight thousand shares were issued at £1

each, but only 1,558 were taken up by the public in the first year. A board of directors was formed with Olier as chairman, but he retired after the company reported a loss of £501 at the end of the season in 1918. Cly Robet took over as chairman and remained in the post until 1943.

1917-1940

Soon after the club became a limited company, on 14 March 1918, Fran Bretel was appointed the first manager. He signed several players from northern clubs, including Han Erentz, Theo Sith and, in particular, Jan Meron, who signed from SK Villemstad in May 1918 and was to have a considerable impact on the history of the club. Meron became player-manager the following February after Bretel left to



The 1922 PSC Championship winners Zaria team

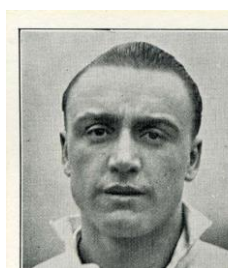
Top row (from left to right): Jan Meron (team manager), Lizug Hues, Kleon Silt, Ducem Pals, Cly Robet (chairman). Middle row: Stanel Logan, Han Erentz, Dokor Copel, Gaal Lanler, Lev Osio.
Front row: Yate Pratt, Jon Monter, Franio Nakl.

take a better-paid position at Mandras SK, and led the club to its first trophies: the Columbian League title in 1919-20 and the 1920 Columbian Cup. In his first year as manager, Meron signed seven players: Franio Nakl, Yate Pratt, Lizug Hues, Stanel Logan, Lev Osio, Han Erentz and Dokor Copel. The “wolf pack” as they were best known, led Zaria to 6 consecutive Columbian titles (1920-1925), as well as the National title in 1922.

Over the next years the club developed a great rivalry with the other Mandras club Dynamo Pharos (as Mandras SK was renamed). In the following seasons Zaria won most of the Columbian championships (11 to Dynamo Pharos’ 4), but managed only 1 National Championship in 1934, coming 2nd a record 6 times! The

matches between the two clubs, called the Mandras derby, became the most fiercely-contested derby in Pharos.

In the 1934 championship year, Zaria started the season with only 2 draws in the first 5 games, but eventually took the title on goal difference over Internationale Gilbey, after a brilliant second half of the season, winning 8 games in a row, including a 2-1 win over the South Pharos rivals in the last game of the



Gaal Dimm

season in a packed Dicestraat. Two players who signed that season, Gaal Dimm (scored both goals in the final game) and youngster Cheter Valter, became crucial

members of the team together with team captain Lizug Hues. Other notable players of the period include Albi Rama,



Lizug Hues

Jaro Castel and Preeme Morr.

In 1937 Zaria came 2nd in a 3-way tie in points with Ferephon Union (champions) and Chiftelov Sport and the same happened the very next season with Dalton SC (champions) and Ferephon Union.

Jord Tresarden, who first joined the club as a player in 1925, was the team's manager all these years. He tried to rebuild the team by promoting young players from the Columbian countryside such as Shenet Nilson, Yate Burg and Fenel Ditch, but due to his finishing almost always in 2nd place, he was never popular with the fans, who gave him the nickname "Neckie" (due to the fact that he was always behind the championship manager, looking at the back of his neck). He left after a sixth 2nd place finish in the 1938 season, when it became apparent that he would likely be sacked. Zaria did not manage to compete for the Nationals the following 2 years, as they came short of the Columbian Championship to rivals Dynamo Pharos.

War and post war years

The 2nd WW did not really have an effect on the football seasons in Pharos. Zaria and Dynamo Pharos continued their rivalry winning 2 Columbian Championships each but neither did well in the Nationals. Cly Robet who had been chairman since 1918 died in 1943, and he was replaced by Fran Berma. As it was difficult to field a full squad in the war years, many young players, among them Son Alters, Less



Zaria captain Lizug Hues displays the PSC Championship Cup to fans on Dicestraat after Zaria's victory over Internationale at the 1934 season last game.



Jaro Castel



Less Medel

Medel, Less Benne and Asketh Millis, gained their first playing experience for the club in this period. Spurs also shared Dicastreet with Dynamo Pharos when Dofatoof Stadion was requisitioned by the government and used as an Air Raid Precautions center.

After the war ended, former Dynamo Pharos player Jole Hulm was given the job of managing Zaria. Hulm failed to win promotion for the nationals in 3 straight seasons (1947-49). Players who made the squad under Hulm include Edi Bail, Len Dulemin, Hal Erkl and Kals Viders. Football was popular in the post-war era, and although in the three post-war seasons during which Zaria languished in the Columbian League only, some games still drew large crowds. Hulm was sacked after he refused a suggestion to resign following an illness in March 1949.



Jole Hulm

Arno Roven and the 1950 title



Arno Roven

In July 1949 Arno Roven, former Dynamo Pharos manager, became Zaria manager at a salary of £1,500 a year. He inherited the squad assembled by Hulm except for the one crucial signing he made when he took over, center back Olav Ramis from rivals Queenland Utd. Roven introduced a new style of play, Push and run, which proved to be highly successful, and transformed the players into a team that were hard to beat in the 1949-50 season. Roven started his tenure as manager with a 4-1 victory at Tarnec, the beginning of an unbeaten run of 23 League and Cup

games between 27 August 1949 and 14 January 1950. With a free-scoring attack force, the team won the Columbian Championship convincingly with six games yet to play. They ended the season nine points in front, elevating them back into the top flight of the National Championship.



Olav Ramis

The great fallacy is that the game is first and last about winning. It is nothing of the kind. The game is about glory, it is about doing things in style and with a flourish, about going out and beating the lot, not waiting for them to die of boredom.
Arno Roven

After a shaky start to their 1950 National season when they were beaten 1-2 at home by Olympic Trandor, Zaria won six consecutive games that included a 2-1 defeat of last season's champion Rutugrian. Some considered the team of this season the best in Zaria's history; guarding the goal was Ditch, one of club's best ever goalkeepers, who was aided in defense by Ramis, Erkl, and Millis; also influential were the captain Burg and Nilson, with the five forwards of Bail, Medel, Dulemin, Benne and Viters completing the regular starting eleven. They finished the season ahead of Dominic and Select by two points, having won their 3rd National Championship title way ahead of their last three games of the season.



ZARIA 1949-50

Back (left to right): C. Poynt (trainer), Olav Ramis, Len Dulemin, Arno Roven (manager), Fenel Ditch, Hal Erkl, Kals Viters, Fran Berma (president)
Front: Shenet Nilsson, Timo Lay, Asketh Millis, Yate Burg, Edi Bail, Less Medel

The push and run tactics developed by Roven were successful in his early years as manager. Roven credited Tresarden for learning to play a quick passing game, which he developed into a style involving players playing in triangles, quickly laying the ball off to a teammate and running past the marking tackler to collect the return pass. Keeping to Roven's maxim of "make it simple, make it quick", this method proved an effective way of moving the ball at pace with players' positions and responsibilities being totally fluid. It became an attractive fast-moving attacking style of play regarded by Zaria fans to be the Gamblers Way, which was adjusted and perfected in the later period under Centron Primus.

Zaria finished third in the 1951 season, beaten to the title by a young AG Nobel team and 2nd in the 1952 season, one point behind Atlantic Union. Bad winters and the poor state of the Dicestraat pitch were contributory, as the "push and run"



Net Vella

style of play required a good firm playing surface. The following years witnessed a period of decline, as great players aged but younger players such as Net Vella, Robert Jalinski and Lo Olterven were not yet experienced enough, and with injuries and other teams adapting to Zaria's revolutionary style of play, it meant a

struggle for the once-dominant team. The "push and run" team also started to disperse; Medel, Millis, Benne and Burg left to join other teams while Nilson moved into coaching.



Robert Jalinski

Post Roven – club decline

The stress of managing the team had affected Roven's health, and he suffered a breakdown in 1954; he resigned after falling ill again the following year. Roven's assistant and long-time club servant Helnus Ander stepped into the breach as manager. The team managed two 2nd places in the Nationals of 1955 and 1960 and a 4th place in 1958. As manager, Ander started to build a new team by signing, bringing in or promoting players of dubious value such as Theo Mondrian, Centrik Hals, Helvet Tonder, Noth Osman and Zeb Tendik. During the 60's the club faced serious financial problems, especially after 1963, when they were unable to sign the players they wanted, in part because of the administration's refusal to meet

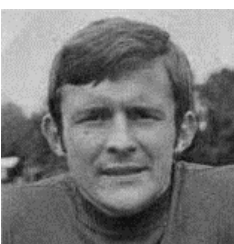


Shenet Nilson

the demands for under-the-counter payments. Shenet Nilson, the former player who had taken the manager's job after Ander, was able to win only 1 Columbian Championship in 6 years (1967)! The club decline continued during the 70's with 5 managers taking the helm in 5 seasons (!). Also, Dynamo Pharos was proven a very powerful obstacle for Zaria to overcome for the local championship and the promotion to the National finals.

Centron Primus and the glory years

Centron Primus was introduced as first team manager at the end of the 1975 season. He was in charge of the reserve



Lathan Sivena

team since 1970 and was responsible for the signing of several talented players to the club, such as Jan Astor (from Centar Vernon), Fenel Sonarel (from Lissel Rasa), Lathan Sivena (from Helix Terminal),



Fenel Sonarel



Linge Obiyasi

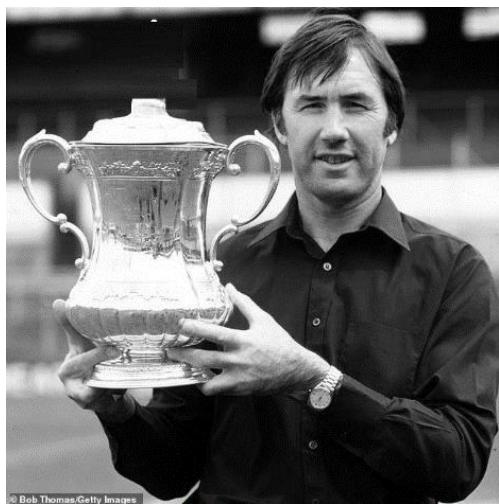
Less Narovi (from Queensland Utd) and Linge Obiyasi (from Dor Kuiti). In 1976 season he managed to bring the team level to Dynamo Pharos for the Columbian Championship, but lost the title due to goal difference.

At the begging of the 1976-77 season, he brought to Dicestraat wingers Lev Simmoens from Tarnec and Fil Gar from Queensland Utd,

right back Omar Dorsa from Beatrix and promoted hopeful center back Marcel Preincz from the reserves. The team won the Columbian Championship unbeaten and went to win their 4th National title, when in the last day of games, they beat Rutugrian 4-0 at home (2 goals from Linge Obiyasi and 1 by Olin Vake and Kleon Barnsten), while FTK was held to a 1-1 draw in Oamaru. Linge Obiyasi



Less Narovi



Centron Primus and the 1977 PSC Championship Cup



Zaria captain Kleon Barnsten with the PSC Championship Cup in 1977

was top scorer and best player.

In the next season Zaria came close to a back-to-back National Championship titles, but came 2nd behind Select due to a last day defeat in Villemstad to Dalton SC by 3-2, despite being 2-0 up in the first half. Two seasons followed with dramatic endings in the Columbian Championship, with Zaria finishing 2nd with 1 point behind and level but with worst goal difference to Dynamo Pharos, so they could not compete in the Nationals.

They fought back in 1981, ousting Dynamo Pharos in the Columbian Championships. They reached their 2nd PSC Championship in 5 years and their 5th National title in a dramatic finale; while Hilvar Athletics drew at home to Ferephon Union, Centron Primus' team beat AG 1959 in Nobel 3-1, thanks to 2 goals by Obiyasi and 1 by Lathan Sivena, clinching the title by goal difference from Hilvar. Lathan Sivena was the season's best player.



Lev Simmoens and Roman Kleur with the 1981 PSC Championship cup

local brewery magnate Marcel Salter who had bought 25% of shares from the family of previous chairman Berma, took control in December 1982. Gulen inherited a club in debt to the tune of nearly 5 million, what was then the largest debt in Pharonian football, but a rights issue after he took over brought in new money. In 1983, a new holding company, Zaria Gamblers plc, was formed with the football club run as a subsidiary of the company. With a valuation of 9 million, the company was floated on the Mandras Stock Exchange, the first sports club to do so.

1981-1990

In the summer of 1981 Centron Primus was diagnosed with cancer, so he resigned from the club (he died 6 months later). He was succeeded as manager by his assistant Ak Topan in June 1981. Zaria enjoyed a strong start to the first PSL season of 18 teams and looked poised to win the league title by the winter, but a series of poor home results in 1982 resulted in the team ending in 4th position. However, the team reached the PSC Cup final where they beat Ferephon Union 2-1 with goals from Fenel Sonarel and Lathan Sivena.

Topan was replaced by Fil Sahtior, who lasted only 4 months before Yol van Baal, a former Feyenoord and Zenith Parietal player took over. Under van Baal Zaria changed their style of play, as some of the prolific players of the past decade (Sonarel, Sivena, and Simmoens) either moved to other teams or became of age. The team did not perform so well in the Championship (6th in 1983, 7th in 1984 and 8th in 1985), but added another PSC Cup title when they overcame Villa Town in a penalty shoot-out final in 1985.

Van Baal remained in the club after the 1985 season and was given the financial means to strengthen the club. He brought to Dicestraat players such as Cyrus van Log (from Hinjilucaya), Don Geuz (from BY Mandras), Dan Ander (from FTK),

Meanwhile, with the formation of the PSL, the ownership of the team changed hands. In this period, property developer and Zaria fan Ion Gulen began buying up shares in the club. He took advantage of a rift in the boardroom between Olav Rifel and former chairman Sid Vale, and persuaded Vale to sell his shares. Gulen bought up 45% of the club for, and with the help of



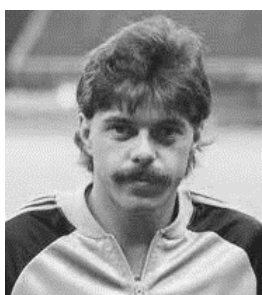
Ion Gulen and Marcel Salter, Zaria's owners in 1982



Don Geuz

Helnus Marcena (from Oamaru FC) and Linge Hanna (from Dynamo Sandtown). He came up 2nd in the 1985-86 championship, losing to AG 1959 by 1 point. The team was playing attractive football, but could not gain any trophies. In 1987 another PSC Cup triumph, defeating FTK 2-0 with goals from Dimitri Kersel and Cyrus van Log, prolonged van Baal's stay in Mandras, as the fans were getting disappointed. The 1998 elimination from underdogs and eventual champions Foundation BC in the new PSL play-off format in

quarter finals forced the administration to part ways with van Baal. Former player Lathan Sivena was awarded the manager position.



Dan Ander

The team was ready for greatness. Sivena followed van Baal's tactics and Zaria was crowned Pharos champions for the 6th time in 1989. They defeated AG 1959 3-0 in the play-off final with goals from Franio Umbre, Cyrus van Log and Don Geuz.



Cyrus van Log

The Englishmen Gary Lineker and John Barnes were acquired in the summer of 1989 with the team entering the European Champion's Cup, but 3 key players – Dan Ander, Cyrus van Log and Don Geuz – left the club the same period. Zaria eliminated Nedori 17 of Tirana in the 1st round of the ECC, but they went down to



Gary Lineker and John Barnes

Bayern Munchen in the 2nd round. After a defeat 3-1 in Germany, they were up 3-0 in Dlcestraat in the return with goals from Gary Lineker, John Barnes and Brown Broter, but 2 late goals gave the German team the qualification to the quarter finals. In the PSL Championship, Lathan Sivena's team reached the play-off final, but this time, with John Barnes injured, they lost the title after AG 1959 won the match 2-0 in overtime.

The long years of mediocracy

Lathan Sivena remained at the club until the end of 1991-92 season with no special success – the team reached only the first round of the championship play-

offs. The Czech Ivo Knoflicek and the German Ulf Kirsten replaced Lineker and Barnes, but the lack of quality Pharonian players had its impact on the team. Olav Neuzig replaced Sivena, who went to Dominic. The new manager fielded a relatively new team in the 1992-93 season, promoting youngsters such as Dokor Moir, Linge Aller, Marc Braten, Farel Lalgudi, Theo Diba, Yate Navon and Salvor Larti, reaching the Championship play-offs semifinal, losing after extra time to Dalton SC. The next season though was devastating. Zaria finished last in their respective Championship division (there were no relegation then) and Neuzig was sacked before the end of the season, replaced by Jan Kostis. Next season was also a “flop” with the team finishing second last; Kostis also was shown the exit.



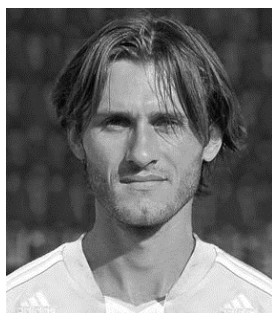
Bora Milutinovic

The 51-year-old Serb Bora Milutinovic, who led team USA in the round of 16 in the Pharos WC of 1994 was hired as manager. Orum Osman came in from AG 1959 and Eltrend De Ruiter from Dynamo Pharos to strengthen the defense, the team’s weak point according to Milutinovic. Zaria had a great season, advanced to the play-offs and came 3rd after champions AG 1959 and Chiftelov Sport, conceding only 2 goals (but scoring only 6). In 1996, with a new league format, the team came up in 6th position. Milutinovic left to coach Nigeria

and the club hired former National team manager Shenet Forel.

The club began a new phase of redevelopment at Dicestraat in 1996, starting with the rebuilding of the West Stand. The West Stand was demolished and a new stand, which took 15 months to complete, opened in 1998. Cost overruns on the project, as well as the cost of rebuilding the team resulted in financial difficulties for the club. With Forel as manager the team finished an embarrassing 17th place in 1998 and an even more embarrassing 19th place next season in the new 20 team PSL League.

The lack of proper financing from the club owners as well as the bad decisions by the team administration in the selection of managers and players had an effect to ticket sales. By the end of the 1999 season Zaria was averaging only 20.000 tickets/match, one of the lowest in the PSL. Levi Jorden, one of the most successful



Shenet Torgov

managers in Pharos, who led AG 1959 to 3 championships, signed a lucrative contract in

the summer of 1999. Jorden promoted youngsters Yate Olandis, Porfirat Reman, Shenet Torgov, Bale Milar, Yate Kool, Shenet Vishoek and Kleon Latil in his project to lead Zaria after a couple of seasons to the elite of Pharonian football. A 9th and a 7th place in the next 2 seasons were better than the previous ones, but by the



Yate Olandis

end of his second season he lost faith with the club's owner Ion Gulen and left for Champion Athletics. Fenel Ercling, Jorden's assistant was promoted as manager and lead the team to an 8th position finish in the 2001-02 season, with Yate Olandis scoring a record 31 goals and Salvor Larti another 19.



Yate Olandis scoring his 31st goal of the 2001-02 season against Hilvar Athletics

The Fran Toran era

The youth team manager Fran Toran, a former club player, was promoted to the

first team to replace Ercling in the summer of 2002. Toran fielded a squad with a 24.5-year-old average, the youngest ever in PSL (only Theo Diba was over 30). The team played an attractive attacking football and managed to finish in the 4th position, gaining European representation after 13 years.



**Fran Toran
(Zaria manager 2002-05)**

Toran continued next season with the team of youngsters with only veteran left back Yol van der Ven signed from Everton and experienced international midfielder Limmar Jalink from Nantes. They went all the way to the semifinals of the UEFA Cup, eliminating Kamen Ingrad of Croatia in the 1st round, Denmark's Brondby in the 2nd round, Galatasaray in the 3rd, Roma in the 4th and Celtic in the quarter finals before losing to Spanish side Valencia (1-1 at home and 0-2 in Spain) in the semifinal. The



Limmar Jalink

"Toran babes" as they were called by the press finished 3rd in the league, just 3 points short of 1st place Centralia Trandor.



Yol van der Ven

Next season though did not prove so fruitful, as the team lacked real quality players and the financial situation was once more below average. Toran had a lot of pressure from the local press and the hard-core fan

section. Zaria advanced to the group round of the Champions League after eliminating PAOK Thessaloniki in the qualifiers, and then by finishing 3rd in the group went on to the UEFA Cup, where they eliminated Sochaux in the round of 32 and lost to Newcastle Utd in the next round. The effort to perform in Europe effected their championship struggle and the team finished in 10th position. Toran

was fired by the end of the season, as several players publicly criticized his management and communication skills.

2005-2011

Olav Neuzig again took over as manager. The owners had decided to build a new stadium as the Dicestraat was getting outdated. As a result of this project, finance remained poor for new players. Neuzig managed to take the team in the 6th and 8th position in the following seasons. Yate Broderig took over in 2007 and the young talented Croat Luca Modric became the club's leader for the next 2 seasons. A 3rd place (but 17 points behind champions Chiftelov Sport) was the best performance in those 2 seasons.

Lathan Sivena came back as manager in 2009 with Modric staying one more year. The club performed once more well in their European games reaching Europa League's round of 32 where they were eliminated by Werder Bremen. They finished 5th in the PSL Championship and Olandis was once again top scorer with 18 goals. Modric left the club for Tottenham in the summer of 2010.



Luca Modric



Dicestraat in May 2010 with new stadium being built next to it. West Stand partially demolished.

Meanwhile the construction of the new stadium was under way with the cost estimated at around 300 million ff. The club was forced to give its home games in Dofatoof, Dynamo Pharos venue for 3 years at a considerable rent, which added another burden to the team financial situation. These events had an obvious effect in the team's field performance. Sivena was

sacked in the middle of the 2010-11 season and Dewlat Haak took over as the team struggled to avoid relegation. They managed 5 wins and 3 draws in their last 10 games to finish in 12th position. Haak stayed next season too, but the team finished in 9th place in another disappointing season.

2012-

By the end of 2012 the new stadium was ready for use. The opening game was a 2-0 win over Oamaru in October 27th 2012. Dors Havik scored the first ever goal. The final cost of the construction reached 345



T&W Nexus Arena, Zaria's new stadium



T&W Nexus Arena

million ff. Name rights were given to the stadium's chief financier T&W Nexus Transport co. The contract lasts until 2023. For domestic games with lower attendances the highest tier may be completely hidden behind curtains, allowing to avoid the feeling of too big stadium. The venue has a total capacity of 65,000 at concerts and 54,000 seated at football matches, but the stadium can be scaled down to provide for smaller events with approximately 20,000 guests.

Orum Osman, former player of the club from 1993 to 1998, took the manager's job. The team, with the fan's support at the new venue almost reached their 7th title, but a 1-0 defeat in Hilvar the

penultimate game day gave the championship to Dominic with 1 point difference from the gamblers. Osman signed Uruguayan striker Nicolas Lodeiro to assist Olandis and in the next season the duo led the team in European competitions, reaching the round of 16 of the Europa League. They eliminated the likes of Standard Liege, Elfsborg, Esbjerg and Ajax Amsterdam before losing to Basel FC. In the domestic front the club finished in a 3-way tie with AG 1959 and Dominic, but poor goal difference meant 6th position and elimination from next season's Euro cups.



Orum Osman

In the 2014-15 season the club reached the PSC final but lost to underdogs Olympic Eptapolis 2-0 in the final, while finishing 5th in the League, missing once again on goal difference the next year's European competitions. Osman decided it was time to go, despite the pressure from the fans to stay. His assistant Yol Edlein took over. The Czech Vaclav Pilar joint from Viktoria Plzen and the youngsters Lizug Vaal, Pumplis Atvaner, Rogem Novato and Herman Pool were



Axel Witsel

also added to the roster. A 4th place finish (tied with 3rd place Centralia Trandor) gave the fans new hopes, but next season proved once more disappointing with the club finishing 7th with a mediocre European period, where they were eliminated in Europa League round of 32 by Olympique Lyon. The defeat in the cup final from Chiftelov Sport meant the firing of Edlein with the relatively unknown 53-year-old Kleon Ursel given the

managerial post. Belgian international midfielder Axel Witsel was purchased from

Zenit St. Petersburg alongside with Pharonian internationals Linge De Foe, Ruel Flar and Lizug Mandres. Ursel survived only one season before being fired, with the club finishing 7th.

Orum Osman was back in Mandras for the 2018-19 season. Osman, always a favorite with the fans, both as player as well as manager, took the Mandras side to PSL's 3rd place. A 6th and a 4th place finishings in the next seasons were not enough to keep Osman at the post. Dewlat Haak came back for 2 seasons, but results did not get better, with the administration being reluctant to spend big. In the middle of 2023-24 season Kals Becvar took over from Haak, managing a 6th place. The Frenchman Moussa Sissoko and the Croat Lovro Majer alongside Pharonian hopefuls Linge Ays, Milo Anders and Lors Bootsma filled enthusiasm to the fans, who demanded a title.