

## Diaspora Players: Legal Issues, Nationalism, and National Identity in the Indonesian Elite Football System

Abrar<sup>1A-E\*</sup>, Fitriani<sup>2B-D</sup>, Suryani<sup>3C-D</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Program Studi pendidikan Jasmani, Kesehatan dan Rekreasi, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Kependidikan, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sulawesi Tenggara, Kendari, Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

Citizenship conversion is no longer a new thing in the international world. However, in the field of sports, the case of the naturalized Indonesian national football team diaspora is still often debated. The introduction of foreign talents is supported by national policies to strengthen the Indonesian national team towards the World Cup. This paper examines several legal concepts and various phenomena from a sociological perspective, such as nationalism and national identity in the lives of diaspora football players. The aim is to make the exchange of football players' citizenship a case that needs to be discussed in the current status quo of sports in Indonesia. This research is methodologically based on the analysis of the mainstream press of naturalized Indonesian diaspora football players between 2020 - 2025, official documents of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), as well as a review of various literature in the form of books and journals to examine the case of naturalized football players in Indonesia in the context of globalization, migration, citizenship, nationalism and national identity. As an implication, the Indonesian national team is one step closer to the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which has never been achieved before; the enthusiasm of the Indonesian people to watch the match, both directly and indirectly, is very high, as well as many children who are interested in joining SSB because they see the progress of the Indonesian national team diaspora players. Recommendations from the research results are that naturalized diaspora players should be level A, still young, and play in the major league clubs of each country.

**Keywords:** Diaspora Players; Nationalism; National Identity

### Corresponding author:

\*Abrar, Program Studi pendidikan Jasmani, Kesehatan dan Rekreasi, Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Kependidikan, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Sulawesi Tenggara. Jl. Mayor Jenderal Katamso, Kec. Baruga-Kota Kendari, Indonesia. Email: [antarkotaz018@gmail.com](mailto:antarkotaz018@gmail.com)

### Article History:

Submitted: March, 2025  
Revised: April, 2025  
Accepted: May, 2025  
Published: May, 2025

### Authors' contribution:

- A) Conception and design of the study;
- B) Acquisition of data;
- C) Analysis and interpretation of data;
- D) Manuscript preparation;
- E) Obtaining funding.

### Cite this article:

Abrar, Fitriani, & Suryani. (2025). Diaspora Players: Legal Issues, Nationalism, and National Identity in the Indonesian Elite Football System. *Indonesian Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 5(2), 323-333. <https://doi.org/10.31949/ijsm.v5i2.14288>

## INTRODUCTION

Naturalized diaspora players refer to legal actions that can be taken by individuals who are not citizens to obtain citizenship of a country according to applicable laws and regulations; this can be understood as the process of making someone a citizen of a particular country. The person previously had citizenship X and changed to citizenship Y after going through the naturalization process with various predetermined requirements. These requirements are the rights of a country to maintain its stability, as the law has a function of maintaining state order. This process must be approved by the international football federation FIFA. The regulations regarding naturalized diaspora players in Indonesia are contained in Law Number 12 of 2006 concerning Citizenship. According to the law, the naturalization process is also known as citizenship, a procedure for a foreign citizen to obtain Indonesian citizenship through an application. The requirements for citizenship are: being 18 years old



The Author(s). 2025 **Open Access** This article is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0)**, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third-party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

or married, having resided in Indonesia for 5 (five) consecutive years or 10 (ten) non-consecutive years, being physically and mentally healthy, being able to speak Indonesian and acknowledging Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, never having been sentenced to one year or more in prison, by obtaining Indonesian citizenship, it does not cause him/her to have dual citizenship, having a permanent job and/or income, and paying citizenship fees to the state treasury.

Player naturalization is usually done to increase the dynamics of the development of a particular sport in the country. Athletes tend to change citizenship for several reasons, such as economic benefits and individual welfare (Marques & Marchi, 2021) and the natural human aspiration to get better opportunities in various international events, such as the Olympic arena and the FIFA World Cup. As happened during the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, 16.5% of all players were born in a country other than the country they represent (Amarante, 2024). In most cases, naturalized football players from a particular country's national team are adopted as a positive strategy to increase the team's strength. However, this phenomenon has received many challenges and criticisms because it can cause controversy that allows someone from a foreign country to compete with another country that does not have cultural, historical, or linguistic relations and ethical confusion: Who has the right to represent the country in international competitions (Jansen et al., 2018), and the emergence of legal status at the starting point of the existence of the same citizenship is a complex process regarding the sense of belonging in understanding the process of "nation building" (Oonk, 2020). However, in the context of Indonesian football, naturalized diaspora players are players who have blood (descendants) or incestuous relationships with Indonesia but were born and raised in other countries. They still have emotional and cultural ties to their ancestral homeland, so the naturalization of players from other countries differs from that of Indonesia.

The National Sports Grand Design (DBON), stated in Presidential Decree Number 86 of 2021 concerning the National Sports Grand Design, is a Long-Term Sports Development program for 2021-2045, including educational sports, community sports and achievement sports. One of the targets of DBON is for Indonesia to achieve its best at the 2044 Olympics. Therefore, sports stakeholders, including football, are trying to achieve that dream through naturalized diaspora players. Their experience playing in elite European competitions and above-average abilities make their presence very much needed in building the greatness of the Indonesian national team on the international stage, as long as it is done correctly (Thohir, 2023). Naturalization is needed to help improve the quality of the Indonesian national team in various international competitions. Their presence must raise the quality of the Indonesian national team as a whole, both in terms of mentality and skill quality. Naturalized diaspora players are not just a simple issue of competition; they serve as a lens to display the relationship between sports and politics, diplomacy, national identity, and the formation of nationalism. However, it is not as easy as turning the palm of your hand; reality is sometimes not as sweet as expectations, so resistance arises against the naturalization process. A harsh sarcasm from one of the Indonesian House of Representatives members from the Gerindra faction, Andre Rosiade (2025), with the words, "Thank God Indonesia won. Congratulations to the Garuda national team. and Chief @erickthohir, who firmly made improvements within the National Team. Today, Ridho proved himself a hero in the heart of Indonesia's defence." This proves that Indonesia does not need players who pretend to be injured, even though the results of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) state that there are no injuries. Please check with the Mitra

Keluarga Cibubur Hospital for those who do not believe it. “Naturalization is an instant method that is contrary to the philosophy of Indonesian football, inhibits the growth and development of local players, thus damaging their mentality, and destroys the youth development system built for a long time.

Seeing this problem, the problem is formulated as follows: 1) What is the legal concept of the naturalization process of players in Indonesia? 2) Can naturalized players boost the achievements of Indonesian football? 3) If they can, how far can the progress be achieved? Moreover, 4) What is the nationalism and identity of diaspora players?

## METHOD

This research is methodologically based on the analysis of mainstream press of naturalized Indonesian diaspora football players between 2020 – 2025, official documents of the Indonesian Football Association (PSSI) and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), as well as a review of various literature in the form of books and journals to examine the case of naturalized football players in Indonesia in the context of globalization, migration, citizenship, nationalism and national identity. Exploring the phenomenon of diaspora football players is very interesting because the Indonesian Government gives complete trust to PSSI to develop football. This paper is divided into three main parts: (a) a review of legal concepts related to naturalized diaspora football players to Indonesian immigration policies and FIFA regulations; (b) a brief overview of the transformation of Indonesian nationalism and the importance of football in the construction of nationalism; (c) a brief analysis of how the Indonesian media constructs naturalized football players and their national identity.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Legal Concept of Diaspora Players

#### *Nationality and Citizenship*

Nationality and citizenship are not lexically the same. Nationality means “the status of belonging to a particular nation”, while citizenship is defined as “the position or status of being a citizen of a particular country” (Hornby, Lea, and Bradbery, 2020). Nationality is generally defined as a legal bond that connects a person to a particular country, where the country can provide jurisdiction and protection over people. According to the Hague Convention of April 12, 1930, only a country can grant citizenship. Nationality means (1) characteristics that mark a nation, (2) matters of the nation concerning (related to) the nation, and (3) self-awareness as a citizen of a country.

In Indonesia, the law on obtaining citizenship is regulated in Law Number 12 of 2006 concerning Citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia, Chapter I, Article 1 Paragraph (3), which reads: Citizenship is a procedure for foreigners to obtain citizenship through application; Furthermore, Article 2, Indonesian citizens are native Indonesians and people from other nations who are legalized by law as citizens; Furthermore, Article 3, Citizenship of the Republic of Indonesia can only be obtained based on the requirements stipulated in the law. For example, if someone obtains Indonesian citizenship, he is an “Indonesian citizen.” Therefore, in this study, we can equate ownership of Indonesian citizenship with nationality. Indonesia adheres to the principle of *jus sanguinis*, which is the principle of a person’s citizenship, which is determined based on the descent of parents, and Indonesia does not adhere to the principle of dual citizenship. Naturalization for diaspora players is a

fascinating subject to analyze because Indonesia is one of the few countries that explicitly does not recognize dual citizenship. The Citizenship Law regulates the requirements and procedures for obtaining Indonesian Citizen (WNI) status. There are various processes and a relatively long period for a foreign citizen for the President to accept his application as an Indonesian citizen. Since the naturalization program for football players in the Indonesian national team has been widely discussed, the government seems to find granting WNI status to foreign players easier.

### **Naturalization Procedures**

Citizenship or naturalisation has two forms: regular and special (Luntungan, 2013). Normal naturalisation is a process that foreigners must pass to obtain Indonesian citizen status by the Citizenship Law. The standard procedure is regulated through Article 9. Namely, applicants for Indonesian citizen status must be 18 years old or have been married, are fluent in Indonesian, are physically and mentally healthy, and have never been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for 1 year or more. Citizenship applicants must also reside in Indonesia for at least five or 10 consecutive years when applying. This is the procedure that footballer Cristian' el Loco' Gonzales went through to obtain Indonesian citizenship and then join the national team. This Uruguayan striker started playing in Indonesia when he was bought by the PSM Makassar club in 2003.

Since then, Gonzales has continued to live in Indonesia by moving from club to club. Despite his advancing age, his goal-scoring prowess attracted PSSI management's interest in naturalising Gonzales, especially ahead of the 2010 AFF Cup held in Jakarta. Gonzales then gave up his Uruguayan citizenship and was entitled to use an Indonesian passport since November 1, 2010. There is a shortcut for a foreigner to obtain Indonesian citizen status outside of standard procedures. Article 20 of the Citizenship Law states that the requirement is that the foreigner must have rendered services to the Indonesian state, one of which is in the field of sports. The standard procedural requirements do not need to be followed if this requirement is met. In addition to rendering services, Article 20 provides an opportunity for naturalisation based on national interests. Meanwhile, from a sporting aspect, the granting of naturalisation also meets the requirements according to the provisions of Law Number 11 of 2022 concerning Sports and Presidential Regulation Number 44 of 2014 concerning the Awarding of Sports Awards. That is why PSSI general chairman Erick Thohir invited many players of descent (diaspora) to play in the Indonesian national team with the status of naturalised Indonesian citizens through special procedures.

### **Citizenship and FIFA Regulations**

Acquired citizenship does not automatically mean representing a country, but "sports nationality" often determines whether an athlete can or cannot compete. In international competitions, sports citizenship means the qualification of a country's citizenship held to represent the country in international sporting events. Nationality is a concept in public law that determines citizenship, so sports citizenship is a civil law issue that determines its qualification in sporting events (Zhang, 2019). This means that citizenship is important but insufficient for sports citizenship. The FIFA Statutes, the closest explanation to "sports citizenship," is the eligibility to play for a representative team, which is explained in the "identity applicable to the management rules." Eligibility to play for a representative team is considered a priority in the FIFA system (Oonk, 2020).

Since 1930, foreign-born players participating in FIFA competitions have been a long-standing phenomenon (Campenhout et al., 2018). This triggered the formulation of the first provisions of the FIFA regulations on the exchange of citizenship. At the 33rd Congress in 1962 in Santiago–Chile, FIFA regulated it in Article 18, stating: 1) Every player who is a naturalized citizen of a country under the law of the country is entitled to play for the national or representative team of that country; 2) if a player has ever been part of the national or representative team of the country for which he is entitled to play by paragraph (1), he will not be allowed to take part in international matches for the other country. Therefore, a player who is eligible to play in more than one national association (having dual citizenship) will be considered committed to only one citizenship when he plays his first international match as a representative of the competition (at any level) for that association; and 3) the only players excluded from this provision are those whose nationality has been changed not voluntarily but as a result of an international decision, either granting independence to a territory or ceding part of a country to it (Lyu, and Leite, 2023).

This confirms that FIFA respects the Nationality Laws applicable to each member association. The issue of naturalization is left to the laws of each country and eligibility to be part of the national team. Another change made by FIFA clarifies its residency rules. The previous rule stated that players who were not born in the territory and did not have a parent or grandparent born in the territory of the country of which they hold citizenship had to have lived there continuously for at least five years after the age of 18 to be eligible for the national team. This left a loophole that meant players under 23 could not play for the national team. The rule came under scrutiny when Qatar won the Asian Cup in 2019. The United Arab Emirates questioned the eligibility of Qatar's star striker Almoez Ali, born in Sudan. He was 23 at the time of the tournament (Freeley, 2020), meaning he had not lived in Qatar continuously for five years after his 18th birthday. FIFA's new eligibility rules appear to be more about solving a problem than making drastic changes.

Specifically, FIFA has added new exceptions where a player can change the national team they play for. Firstly, a player can now switch national teams even if they have already played competitively at senior level, provided that: 1) The player holds the citizenship of their new association at the time of their first official appearance for their first national team; 2) the player has played no more than three competitive senior matches before the age of 21; 3) the player has not played in the final round of an official tournament such as the World Cup, European Championship, Copa America, Asian Cup, etc.; 4) at least three years have passed since the player's last senior appearance for their previous national team. Secondly, a player can now switch to a new national team even if they did not hold that citizenship at the time of their first appearance for their old national team, as long as they last played for their old national team before age 21. Overall, in the case of Indonesia, diaspora footballers must first obtain citizenship. Then, after receiving FIFA approval, they can compete to represent the Indonesian national team. As of May 2025, the Indonesian National Team is now filled with a total of 19 diaspora players who are part of the Garuda squad prepared by coach Patrick Kluivert (Khoiriyah, 2025), and some of them have played for the senior national team, U-23 national team, and U-20 national team.

### **Nationalism in a Transnational Context**

PSSI first introduced naturalization in Indonesia to five players of Dutch descent, namely Van der Vin, Van der Berg, Pietersen, Pesch, and Boelard van Tuyl (Wijaya, 2020).

These naturalized players debuted with the Indonesian national team against the Hong Kong team, Nan Hua, on July 27, 1952. When facing the Hungarian national team, Van der Vin returned to strengthen the Indonesian national team and thwarted Ferenc Puskas' penalty kick at the Ikada Field, Jakarta, in 1960. While wearing the Red and White uniform, the player nicknamed Zero Van der Vin appeared 15 times under the crossbar of the Indonesian national team. Van der Vin and his parents migrated to Indonesia during the Dutch occupation. In 1954, President Soekarno's political stance forced the Dutch population to leave Indonesia, so Van der Vin was affected and forced to return to his country in the Netherlands. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Law and Human Rights, since 2010, there have been 30 naturalized footballers (Djamil, 2024). Whether we admit it or not, the naturalization process carried out by the government with the reason of wanting achievements at the international level, until now, is still like a back longing for the moon. So, is it right, and is there something wrong with naturalization? Should wanting to achieve achievements make naturalization like mushrooms growing in the rainy season? Until the final round of the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifiers, Indonesia has only qualified for the fourth round; there are 19 naturalized players in the Indonesian national team, with a fairly diverse market value ranging from IDR 1.3 billion to IDR 52.14 billion (Revo, 2024). This means that the skills of naturalized players are above the average of Indonesian national players because the price is sometimes directly proportional to the quality. The difference between naturalizing players during the previous PSSI management and the era of Erick Thohir, who has been the chairman of PSSI since early 2023. Previously, naturalized players were foreign players with long careers in Indonesian football whose quality was still far from expectations, such as the naturalization of the Cristian Gonzales era, Greg Nwokolo, Victor Igbonefo, Beto Gonzalves and others.

Meanwhile, Erick Thohir, a naturalized player, has blood ties with Indonesia (diaspora) and is still relatively young, so his energy can be used far into the future. Not only that, naturalized players are also not just any football players. Those in the highest caste of European football leagues, such as Thom Haye, are registered as midfielder for the SC Heerenveen club-Netherlands with a transfer value of IDR 52.14 billion.

Thom Haye, who has a Javanese father and a Sulawesi mother, is happy to be able to strengthen the Indonesian national team (Rosid, 2023). At least, there are three benefits that the Indonesian National Team can get after naturalizing Thom Haye. 1) Thom Haye's experience with the Dutch National Team is no joke; Thom Haye has two prestigious titles with the Dutch U-17 National Team. Winning the 2011 and 2012 U-17 European Cups and playing in the highest caste of the Dutch League SC Heerenveen, which is considered luxurious; 2) Haye is noted to be able to play in three different positions, namely defensive midfielder, centre, and also attacking midfielder; and, 3) Tom Haye has deadly skills through dead balls. The role of this naturalized player can improve the quality of the Indonesian National Team in terms of playing vision, physical, and mental. Because they already can play with modern European football schemes and strategies. Physically, they are also strong enough to play 120 minutes because they are used to tight training and competition. Mentally, the Indonesian National Team players are no longer nervous when controlling the ball, as is usually shown in every international match.

The naturalization program by Erick Thohir, with the selection of the right players, is the primary basis for the national team's performance to increase. So, the presence of Jay Idzes in the Indonesian National Team's defence line is powerful. Then, Tom Haye was an attack organizer, Calvin Verdonk was on the left wing, Kevin Diks was on the right wing,

and Ole Romeny was a goal-getter, making the Indonesian National Team very solid now. So, Indonesia won over Saudi Arabia 2-0, Bahrain 1-0 and China 1-0 in the last match of Group C, which made the Indonesian national team qualify for the fourth round of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers.

Knowledge of building a football team is not Erick Thohir's only advantage. Erick Thohir's international network allows PSSI to convince the organization that regulates almost all aspects of football throughout the world, FIFA, as well as the Royal Dutch Football Federation or Koninklijke Nederlandse Voetbalbond (KNVB), as well as the diaspora players to defend the Indonesian National Team. Erick Thohir knows the needs of the Indonesian National Team; he also understands the need for players to strengthen the Indonesian National Team. As a former President of Inter Milan, he knows how to manage a big club from upstream to downstream, the player transfer market to complete the Indonesian National Team squad. The most recent example is when the match between the Indonesian U-23 National Team versus the Jordanian U-23 National Team in Qatar was over, Nathan Tjoe-A-On hurriedly left Qatar with the excuse of returning to the club. However, what happened then was that in just 24 hours, Nathan Tjoe-A-On returned to Qatar to strengthen the Indonesian U-23. This would not have happened if it were not for high-level lobbying. This is Eric Thohir's reputation as a former President of Inter Milan, close to former world players. Then, the collaboration built by Erick Thohir as chairman of PSSI to the Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Law and Human Rights, and the Indonesian House of Representatives through the leadership elements, Commission III and Commission X went quite well.

This naturalization is not only a monopoly of Indonesia. Morocco, Qatar, Malaysia and China, which have the largest populations on the planet, have also carried out naturalization. Luo Guofu and Elkesen, both Brazilian citizens and Nico Yennaris, a British citizen, were naturalized and became part of the Chinese national football team. Likewise with France, when 13 naturalized players strengthened the 2018 FIFA World Cup champions, the French National Team Coach, Aime Jacquet, was criticized for including many immigrant players in Les Blues who did not know "La Marseillaise", the French national anthem. The coach did not budge, and finally, France embraced and lifted the World Cup for the second time.

Then what about Indonesia? The author believes naturalization is necessary as long as it is not positioned as a "projection" or "agenization" by a handful of individuals to get a wad of rupiah. Because talking about naturalization is like kicking a hot ball. Amid "sports constituents", this discussion is often coloured by pros and cons. Of the many naturalized footballers, you can count those still surviving and achieving on one hand. The rest are struggling to adapt to the football culture in Indonesia. Some even wilt before competing. The blueprint for national sports development must be carried out to present the "four healthy five perfect" in national sports. Suppose you only rely on naturalization to achieve achievements in national sports. In that case, it is precisely like someone doing a "treadmill," moving and sweating but only walking in place.

### **The Meaning of National Identity of Diaspora Players**

The current meaning of "identity" is a complex and unclear concept but plays a central role in the ongoing process. "Identity" as we know it today largely stems from the work of psychologist Erik Erikson in the 1950s, who failed to capture the word's current meaning in everyday and social science contexts (Fearon, 1999). The meaning of identity

originally came from studying “the process through which the duality of mind and body forms a unified subject” (Chai & Guan, 2018). Identity is a modern formulation of dignity, pride, or honour that implicitly links these to social categories, such as who we are as individuals and as members of social groups (Eran & Durias, 2021). It refers to the sense of how others perceive and label us. Lexically, identity is defined as “the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that make one person different from others” (Hornby, Lea and Bradbery, 2020).

So, what is the relationship between sport and national identity? What can sport tell us about changing perceptions of national identity? The relationship between sport and national identity is complex and multifaceted. It has become even more complex since the end of the Second World War, when the empires established by Britain and other European powers in the nineteenth century collapsed, and independent states legitimized by the principle of national self-determination emerged (Smith, 2013). These changes have provided the context in which sport has developed throughout the second half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The relationship between sport and national identity has taken various forms. The idea that sport, in general, can create or foster a sense of nationhood is important, mainly since international competition provides so many occasions when nations are embodied in something tangible and visible. Having made the necessary imaginative leap and accepted that the eleven men in the red and white jerseys at Gelora Bung Karno are Indonesia, who beat Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and China, the possibility of redefining what it means to be ‘Indonesian’ is inextricably linked to what happens on the field of play. The success achieved by the Indonesian football team in early 2025 ‘made Indonesia exist’. The clever exploitation of FIFA’s qualification rules, which allowed the sons and grandsons of exiled Indonesians to wear the red and white jersey, gave a kind of cultural legitimacy to the Indonesian diaspora. It certainly made Indonesia more visible and better known.

Although still debatable, the presence of the diaspora in the Indonesian National Team squad has at least given a new colour to Indonesian football. They have truly given meaning and national identity about how citizens should fight to defend the country in sports, especially football. Tom Haye’s tears of emotion, virally known as The Professor, when hugging his father after winning the match, is a real and visible sight that cannot be denied. The extended family of diaspora players who never miss every home match of the Indonesian national team is a separate note of how they truly give colour as a community of a great nation, Indonesia. Sporting achievements are often considered ideal symbols of collective identity that connect the nation and nationalism, which allows countries to unite for a common goal.

The sport of football has a unique ability to unite spirit and strength for a common goal. Because of its universal value, it has enormous potential to create a more positive and sustainable future for everyone. Football cannot be separated from society and also cannot be separated from national feelings and national identity. Such a view is justified because football is an activity with almost universal value; this is reflected in the competition, namely the existence of specific rules that guarantee equality in the competition itself. For example, it is impossible to start a football match unless both teams have the same number of players on the field. So, the basic premise is that both teams have an equal chance of winning. Of course, the skill of performing some playing skills determines the winner. This premise of equality is what makes the sport of football attractive all over the world.

The passion for football in the villages of Africa, Latin America, Asia and even worldwide is the same. However, other tendencies from both of these points of view are not the same. A young man in Africa does not have the same opportunities as a young man in Europe or America. In addition, the differences between certain parts of the world, be it economy, education, living conditions, civilization and society, health, etc., are visible in all aspects of life. On the other hand, football provides a framework in which everyone can have the same rules and the same chance of winning. This is an important view because we can see other results that sport produces from there.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study briefly discusses the naturalization strategy of Indonesian footballers from historical, sociological, and management perspectives. To explore critically, a legal study related to citizenship exchange, white nationalism, and national identity through a special case is needed. Because naturalized diaspora players in Indonesia are the product of a special state policy for players of Indonesian descent who excel, these players complete two tasks before participating in international matches on behalf of a new country: citizenship conversion and sports citizenship.

Diaspora players can impact a country's social life. One of the most apparent influences is a sense of belonging and telling inspiring stories through the national team's success. The story also serves as a general inspiration both within a country and globally so that it can unite various levels of society around the national team and become a symbol of the strength of a nation. It should be emphasized that this phenomenon is mainly reflected in competitions where the best national teams compete with each other. The victory of the team is the victory of the nation. The power of victory is very tempting, precisely from the impact of identifying the nation with the players. The success of diaspora players in national uniforms is equivalent to personal success.

The country looks forward to high-level diaspora talents to drive the football market and eventually form a virtuous ecological circle of national football. However, any change in any part is like dropping a stone into a calm lake. Therefore, the formulation of diaspora player policy should not be done in isolation but should explore the significance and long-term impact from a broader perspective. In the context of diaspora players, building an "imagined community" requires good news, good performances and firmness. This requires a long-term process. The diaspora of naturalized Indonesian players reflects the country's determination to develop. However, this is designed primarily for the country's political interests or economic goals and not due to "cultural enthusiasm."

The strength of diaspora players in the Indonesian national team must be respected and treated cautiously. Although unity and positive feelings towards the national aspect benefit society, many dangers must be combated. Developing nationalism and all its products, such as hooliganism, violence, racial supremacy and political manipulation, is something that should not be allowed. It is impossible to expect the total eradication of these problems. However, as long as this is not accepted as part of fan culture, diaspora players will positively impact the development of national identity in society.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest from any party and funder in conducting this research that could affect the results and objectivity of the study.

## REFERENCES

- Amarante, P. (2024). *Sports Migration and Investment Migration: Two Forms of Facilitated Naturalization*. <https://medium.com>. Accessed. Wednesday, June 26 2024. Time. 08.00 Central Indonesian Time.
- Campanhout, V. G., and VAN Houtum, V. H. (2021). "I am German When We Win, But I am an Immigrant When We Lose". Theorising on the Deservedness of Migrants in International Football, Using the Case of Mesut Özil. *Sport in Society*, v. 24, n. 11, p. 1924–1940.
- Campanhout, V. G., et. al. (2018). Who Counts as a Migrant Footballer? A Critical Reflection and Alternative Approach to Migrant Football Players on National Teams at the World Cup, 1930–2018. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, v. 35, n. 11, p. 1071–1090.
- Chai, M., and Guan, J., (2018). *From Individual Identity to National Identity: A Social Psychological Path*. Nanjing Social Sciences, v.11, p. 76-81,87.
- Djamil, M. N. (2024). *Naturalisasi WNA Atas Nama Prestasi, Apa Untungnya?* <https://www.news.republika.co.id>. Diakses. Selasa, 12 Maret 2024. Pukul. 08:00 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Eran, D and Durias, D. (2021). *Exploring the Concept of Identity*. <https://www.facinghistory.org>. Accessed. Tuesday, 12 March 2024. At. 06:50 Central Indonesian Time.
- Fearon, D. J. (1999). *What Is Identity (As We Now Use the Word)*. Department of Political Science. Stanford: Stanford University.
- Freeley, M. 2020. The Inside Story of Qatar Winning the 2019 Asian Cup. <https://www.beinsports.com>. Diakses. Senin, 11 Maret 2024. Pukul. 10:30 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Galang, N. (2023). Erick Thohir Ungkap Impian Sepak Bola Indonesia Mulai Terwujud. <https://www.skor.id>. Diakses. Senin, 11 Maret 2024. Pukul. 10:10 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Hornby, A. S., Lea, D., and Bradbery, J. (2020). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jansen, J., et al. (2018). Nationality Swapping in the Olympic Field: Towards the Marketization of Citizenship.? *Citizenship Studies*. v. 22, n. 5, p. 523–539, 2018. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080>. Accessed. Wednesday, 6 March 2024. At. 14.26 Central Indonesian Time.
- Janssen, S. (2024). Verdonk Gaat Voor Bijzondere Interlandcarriere Oranje Haal Ik Toch Niet Meer. <https://www.vi.nl>. Accessed. Monday, April 29, 2024. Time. 10.26 Central Indonesian Time.
- Khoiriyah, B. A. 2025. Erick Thohir Ungkap Alasan Penting Tambahan Pemain Naturalisasi untuk Perkuat Timnas Putri Indonesia di Kualifikasi Piala Asia 2026.

- <https://wartakini.co.id>. Diakses. Senin, 2 Juni 2025. Pukul 16.00 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Luntungan, A. Y. (2013). Naturalisasi Warganegaraan Asing Menjadi Warganegara Indonesia Menurut Undang-Undang Nomor 12 Tahun 2006 Tentang Kewarganegaraan. *Lex et Societatis*. Vol. I. No. 5.
- Lyu, D., and Leite, E. J. (2023). Naturalization in Chinese Football Legal Issue, National, and Identity. *Movimento : Revista da Escola de Educação Física* 29 DOI:10.22456/1982-8918.125536.
- Marques, R.F. R., and Marchi, J W. (2021). Migration for Work: Brazilian Futsal Players' Labor Conditions and Disposition for Mobility. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, v. 45, n. 3, p. 272–299, 2021. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177>. Accessed. Wednesday, 6 March 2024. At. 09.43 Central Indonesian Time.
- Oonk, G. (2020). Sport and Nationality: Towards Thick and Thin Forms of Citizenship. *National Identities*. v. 24, n. 3, p. 197 - 215, 2020a. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080>. Accessed. Wednesday, 6 March 2024. At. 14.00 Central Indonesian Time.
- Oonk, G. (2020). Who May Represent The Country? Football, Citizenship, Migration, and National Identity at the FIFA World Cup. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, v. 37, n. 11, p. 1046–1065, 2020b. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080>. Accessed. Wednesday, 6 March 2024. At. 14.48 Central Indonesian Time.
- Revo. (2024). 7 Pemain Naturalisasi Siap Bela RI, Nilai Sandy Tembus Rp26 Miliar. <https://www.cnbcindonesia.com>. Diakses. Senin, 11 Maret 2024. Pukul. 21:09 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Rosid, A. (2023). Empat Keuntungan Timnas Indonesia Jika Berhasil Naturalisasi Thom Haye, Nomor Dua Multifungsi. <https://banten.tribunnews.com>. Diakses. Selasa, 12 Maret 2024. Pukul. 06:50 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Rosiade, A (2025). Klarifikasi Pihak RS soal Tuduhan Mees Hilgers Pura-pura Cedera. <https://sport.detik.com>. Diakses. Kamis, 12 Juni 2025. Pukul 11.35 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Smith, A. (2013). *Nationalism : Theory, Ideology, and History*. Publisher. Oxford: Wiley
- Thohir, E. (2023). Erick Thohir Menjawab Kritik Banyaknya Pemain Naturalisasi di Timnas Indonesia: Kenapa Enggak.? <https://www.bola.com>. Diakses. 3 Maret 2024. Pukul. 11:33 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Wijaya, H. H. (2020). Bukan Cristian Gonzales, Ini Pemain Naturalisasi Pertama Timnas Indonesia. <https://www.bolasport.com>. Diakses. Rabu, 6 Maret 2024. Pukul 08.55 Waktu Indonesia Tengah.
- Zhang, P. (2019). Research on Legal Issues of Naturalised Athletes Eligibility for International Competitions. *China Sport Science*, v. 39, n. 8, p. 81-83, Aug.
- Zhang, Y. (2020). The Identification Construction of Asian Football Players' Naturalisation Path and Chinese Context. *Journal of Shenyang Sport University*, v. 39, n. 4, p.69-74, Jul. 2020.