

Origins of Football and Rugby

Before 1850, sport only played a very small role in British society. In fact, even today's most popular game, football, was played by only the richest schoolboys around the nation. Rugby, and many other games we now know and love, were yet to be invented. Football and rugby are everywhere in modern British life and, even if we don't particularly like them, it is hard to escape their collective presence. So how did these sports begin?

Back in the early Victorian era, many public figures were worried about the state of school education and had concerns as to the behaviour of schoolboys. Despite strict punishments, it seemed that only their weekly games lessons got the best of them. Deciding it could help them understand the vital skills needed in life, headmasters believed that more physical education was needed.

An early form of football instantly became the most popular with school children everywhere. Each school decided on their own sets of rules and began to develop into teams and later they formed clubs. However, there was to be one major problem. When clubs began to organise fixtures, they found the other 'football' teams played with different rules. Some could pick up the ball, others argued on how many players should be allowed to play. To stop any further confusion, a meeting was arranged at a pub in London.

The meeting was the first of the Football Association. Eleven clubs joined together in 1863 and agreed upon a set of rules. These still are the basic rules of modern football. Despite this, one club called Blackheath was not supportive of the removal of one important law: This was the law on 'hacking'.

'Hacking' was the kicking of an opponent's shins in order to regain possession - considered, by some, to be a 'manly' interaction. Most teams were against the violence and were happy to see the rule taken out of the game. Annoyed, Blackheath began to develop their own code of football - Rugby.

Rugby was immediately popular and soon became the sport of choice in most British public schools. By 1871, rugby had its first international match between England and Scotland and had a lot more clubs than football. In response, Charles Alcock, the chairman of the FA, decided to create a new competition named after the Football Association. The FA Cup was born.

The tournament was an instant hit and by the start of the next decade had 62 teams competing. Some of the new teams involved were from the industrial north of England and featured local factory workers and miners. These players were incredibly skilful and liked to pass the ball rather than simply dribble like earlier sides did. After Blackburn Olympic won the cup in 1883, their victory was met with suspicion.

Many people were unhappy that the side was being paid to play. Before then, football and other sports, like rugby, were meant to be played for the sake of playing and not for financial profit. However, new clubs were having to miss work to play and so needed to be paid in order to compete. Eventually, the FA decided to allow 'professionals' to play alongside the older, more established clubs.

Rugby had prided itself on being an amateur game, but by 1895 it too had a problem with professionals. Northern sides had increasingly started to make payments to players, and this divided opinions. Those in favour of paying players split and formed the 'Northern Union' which later became The Rugby Football League.

Despite their struggles, both football and rugby continued to grow into the next century. Football managed to reach every corner of the world and now boasts more supporters than any other sport. Rugby has also grown and kept a loyal following in nations like Wales, England, Scotland and even as far as Australia and New Zealand. One thing is for sure, football and rugby's incredible beginnings should not be forgotten.

Reading task:

1. How many clubs joined the Football Association in 1863?
2. What was 'hacking'?
3. Which two countries played the first international rugby match?
4. Why did some players need to be paid?
5. Which team won the FA cup in 1883?
6. What is the role of the question in the opening paragraph?
7. What does the word despite mean? Can you write a new sentence using the word?
8. What is the main difference between a professional and an amateur?
9. True or false? Rugby has more supporters than football. Explain your answer using evidence from the text.
10. Why?

Writing task:

Imagine you are living in the early Victorian era and the first form of football has started to be seen in schools. You are writing the article at the point when rules have not been fully decided and it is all very new still. You have all the information that you need in the reading above to help you include facts and you should have a good understanding about what went on. You can choose the tone of your writing, are you in support of this new idea and do you think it will help with behaviour in schools? What are the concerns over rules? And how are they being addressed? Could this just cause more trouble? Or is it a fantastic revolutionary idea?

Here are some tips and a structure to follow when writing your news paper report and I have also included a WAGOLL.

- Create a snappy, exciting headline (maybe you could use alliteration)
- Written in 3rd person
- Formal language
- Openers and connectors are really important
- Include the 5Ws in your lead paragraph (who, what, where, when, why)
- Newspaper paragraphs are short and always in chronological order
- You could include an interview or even a few interviews, using reported speech
- Include pictures along with captions

Newspaper Checklist

Headline - This is the part of your article that grabs the reader's attention as they look at the newspaper. It is usually just a few words that sums up the article or makes the reader want to know more, it is often in a larger font.

Lead Paragraph - This is the first paragraph of the newspaper article. In this paragraph you need to include the key pieces of information that makes the reader want to read more.

Example:

Girl aged 12 builds rocket to Mars in Welsh shed. Annie-May from Cardiff has successfully constructed an unmanned rocket in her back garden with the hope of sending it to the red planet Mars.

Interview - This is often included further into the newspaper article and may be an interview with the people directly involved in the story or a witness, friend or professional expert. Direct speech should be used.

Example

"The snow was so heavy I couldn't open the door", a local resident told us.

Indirect Speech - This is used to add greater detail to a newspaper report when a direct interview has not occurred.

Example

Experts say that an outbreak of flu is highly likely during this winter.

On the next page is a WAGOLL:

BOY OVERBOARD!

July 29th 1988

By Sharon Hart

In a dramatic series of events last night, a young boy fell overboard from his family's boat into the stormy water of the Coral Sea (off the east coast of Australia).

Michael Finnegan (12 years old today) was enjoying a round-the-world trip with his family when it is believed he lost his footing and fell into the sea.

The Finnegan family set sail from Southampton on September 10th 1987 in their small boat, the Peggy Sue. Travelling with Michael were his mother (Sue) and his father (John), as well as the family pet dog, Stella.

So far on their journey, they have visited



Michael on board Peggy Sue

Spain, Cape Verde, Brazil, Cape Town, Perth and Sydney. John, whose idea it was to set off on the trip, said that the journey was the trip of a lifetime and that so far it had been an amazing adventure.

According to the Finnegans, the evening of the incident had been largely uneventful, although Mrs Finnegan had been taken ill with stomach cramps.

John and Sue went to bed at around 10pm on

the night of the incident, leaving Michael steering the boat on deck (the self-steering had broken). It is thought that Stella the dog had been wandering around and possibly playing with Michael's football, because when John awoke in the middle of the night, all three had disappeared.

Speaking to BBC news this morning, Sue said tearfully, "We are so worried about our boy. He's all alone and could be anywhere by now. We need to find him!"

The search for Michael is underway, with police and coastguards scouring the area in the hope of finding him safe and well.