

SOCCER'S MISSING MEN

SCHOOLTEACHERS AND THE SPREAD
OF ASSOCIATION FOOTBALL

J. A. Mangan and Colm Hickey

Soccer's Missing Men

Schoolteachers and the Spread of Association Football

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First published 2009 by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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Typeset in Times by Value Chain, India
Printed and bound in Great Britain by MPG Books Ltd., Bodmin, Cornwall

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN10: 0-415-34834-X
ISBN13: 978-0-415-34834-8

Soccer's Missing Men

Now unknown or forgotten, influential schoolmasters took the game of association football to many parts of England. They had several roles: they brought the game to individual schools, they established regional and national leagues and associations, and they founded professional football clubs. They also exported the game around the world, working as moral missionaries, passionate players and energetic entrepreneurs. The role of teachers in association football is a much neglected aspect of English cultural history. It is a story that deserves to be told because it allows a fundamental reappraisal of the status and position of these teachers in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century society.

This volume was previously published as a special issue of the journal *Soccer and Society*.

J.A. Mangan is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Emeritus Professor, University of Strathclyde, Founding and Executive Academic Editor of *The International Journal of the History of Sport* and Founding Editor of the journals *Sport in Society* and *Soccer and Society* and the series *Sport in the Global Society*. His latest monograph, (with Callum McKenzie) *Militarism, Hunting, Imperialism: 'Blooding' the Martial Male* will be published by Routledge in 2009. A Collection, *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory - Chinese Challenge in the 'Chinese Century'* (edited with Dong Jinxia) was published by Routledge in 2008.

Colm Hickey trained as a teacher at the former Borough Road College and has an MA in the History of Education from the University of London and an MBA in International School Leadership from the University of Hull. He holds a PhD in Educational Studies from the University of Strathclyde. He has co-authored a number of articles on the social history of sport with Professor J.A. Mangan in the *European Sports History Review*, and has contributed to the collection *Sport in Australasian Society* and *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. He is headteacher of St. Thomas More Catholic School, a Specialist Sports College in Wood Green, London. His interests include watching football, particularly Charlton Athletic.

SERIES EDITORS' FOREWORD

SPORT IN THE GLOBAL SOCIETY was launched in the late nineties. It now has over one hundred volumes. Until recently an odd myopia characterised academia with regard to sport. The global groves of *academe* remained essentially Cartesian in inclination. They favoured a mind/body dichotomy: thus the study of ideas was acceptable; the study of sport was not. All that has now changed. Sport is now incorporated, intelligently, within debate about *inter alia* ideologies, power, stratification, mobility and inequality. The reason is simple. In the modern world sport is everywhere: it is as ubiquitous as war. E.J. Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian, once called it the one of the most significant of the new manifestations of late nineteenth century Europe. Today it is one of the most significant manifestations of the twenty-first century world. Such is its power, politically, culturally, economically, spiritually and aesthetically, that sport beckons the academic more persuasively than ever – to borrow, and refocus, an expression of the radical historian Peter Gay – ‘to explore its familiar terrain and to wrest new interpretations from its inexhaustible materials’. As a subject for inquiry, it is replete, as he remarked of history, with profound ‘questions unanswered and for that matter questions unasked’.

Sport seduces the teeming ‘global village’; it is the new opiate of the masses; it is one of the great modern experiences; its attraction astonishes only the recluse; its appeal spans the globe. Without exaggeration, sport is a mirror in which nations, communities, men and women now see themselves. That reflection is sometimes bright, sometimes dark, sometimes distorted, sometimes magnified. This metaphorical mirror is a source of mass exhilaration and depression, security and insecurity, pride and humiliation, bonding and alienation. Sport, for many, has replaced religion as a source of emotional catharsis and spiritual passion, and for many, since it is among the earliest of memorable childhood experiences, it infiltrates memory, shapes enthusiasms, serves fantasies. To co-opt Gay again: it blends memory and desire.

Sport, in addition, can be a lens through which to scrutinise major themes in the political and social sciences: democracy and despotism and the great associated movements of socialism, fascism, communism and capitalism as well as political cohesion and confrontation, social reform and social stability.

The story of modern sport is the story of the modern world – in microcosm; a modern global tapestry permanently being woven. Furthermore, nationalist and imperialist, philosopher and politician, radical and conservative have all sought in sport a manifestation of national identity, status and superiority.

Finally, for countless millions sport is the personal pursuit of ambition, assertion, well-being and enjoyment.

For all the above reasons, sport demands the attention of the academic. *Sport in the Global Society* is a response.

J.A.Mangan, Boria Majumdar
and Mark Dyreson – Series Editors

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As Robert Hands in *The Times* recently observed the growth of sports studies in recent years has been considerable. This unique series with over one hundred volumes in the last decade has played its part. Politically, culturally, emotionally and aesthetically, sport is a major force in the modern world. Its impact will grow as the world embraces ever more tightly the contemporary secular trinity: the English language, technology and sport. *Sport in the Global Society* will continue to record sport's phenomenal progress across the world stage.

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Preface: an original, important and seminal work

Mike Huggins

Let me begin, briefly, in self-reflective mode. *Soccer's Missing Men: Schoolteachers and the Spread of Association Football* merges three of my personal passions: sports history, football and primary education. I was brought up with soccer in the north-east of England. Much of my subsequent career has been associated with the primary (or elementary) sector of education, teaching young children from 5 to 11, training school teams, running schools, lecturing first at a College of Education and then two universities, inspecting primary schools and writing about the curriculum. Playing soccer myself, I recognized early on that primary teachers and students were well represented in the semi-professional Northern League. Reading the soccer press in the 1980s, I noticed that many leading referees were schoolteachers. George Courtney, for example, a primary head teacher from Spennymoor, who had trained at Chester College of Education, was the top English referee, refereeing many internationals, World Cup and European Cup matches. I played cricket on a ground formerly used by Redcar and Coatham AFC, a team which was in the early 1880s one of the two top soccer sides on Teesside, then the leading centre of the north-east game. The Harrison brothers formed the team in the late 1870s. One was a teacher at a local elementary school, and the other a school inspector.¹ But despite my own considerable knowledge of the history of education, as I moved from education and began to build up my expertise in a later-life university career teaching social and cultural history in the late 1990s, I still did not appreciate, like many before me, how centrally important primary schoolmasters have always been to the diffusion and evolution of soccer in England, both at professional and grassroots levels. The clues were there. I failed to see them.

Mangan and Hickey suffer from no such cultural myopia. *Soccer's Missing Men* is a breakthrough in depicting the contribution of the elementary schoolteacher to late Victorian sport in general, and to soccer in particular. It is a highly original, important and seminal piece of work, a landmark in scholarship which should lay the foundations for further work, and which offers a number of really distinctive insights.

Firstly, this study offers a new and fascinating view of a hitherto neglected dimension of the cultural diffusion and assimilation of athleticism, that highly compelling and globally influential ideology which was first fully explored in J.A. Mangan's classic study, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public Schools: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology*. In subsequent work Mangan painstakingly uncovered the subtle complexities of its spread to the grammar schools, Oxbridge and the British Empire. Now he and Hickey demonstrate that over the last three decades of the nineteenth century through to the first two decades of the twentieth century many of the teacher training colleges, although varying in the strength of their commitment and trajectories of innovation, were equally powerful conduits of the dissemination of athleticism and what were perceived as its key values: physical and moral courage, decency, obedience, loyalty, cooperation, self-sacrifice

and duty. In 1886 the Cross Commission was set up to examine the training colleges, and its report in 1888 encouraged curriculum and cultural change, of which athleticism became a key feature. *Soccer's Missing Men* shows that its impact was not uniform, and there was some resistance. But though there were a few principals and students who were inflexibly opposed, many others recognized athleticism's beneficial social, moral and physical importance, not least because it also helped to raise the status of colleges, by emulating the practices of socially superior educational institutions such as the elite universities of Oxford and Cambridge. These teacher-training colleges, like the boarding schools, were similar to what Erving Goffman called 'closed' or 'total' institutions, where the values of athleticism could be successfully promoted ensuring cultural homogeneity and social cohesion throughout the student community.²

Mangan and Hickey perform a substantial service in rescuing these early soccer-playing schoolteachers from undeserved neglect. Elementary education has been treated with far too much condescension in terms of sport's diffusion. Moreover there is one vital point that cannot be too strongly stressed. Those young, enthusiastic men who took soccer with them from these training colleges, were former pupil-teachers, who had first learned their teaching skills alongside an elementary teacher, and their background was very different to the pupils of better-off parents at public schools and grammar schools. Like them, they too had their 'bloods', their rituals and symbols. But they were working class, not middle class!!

A second seminal contribution of the volume is that it challenges, revises and corrects received views of the early spread of football. There is already a substantial literature on the multiple sources of early soccer's evolutionary spread. The earlier work of Tony Mason, James Walvin and others made clear the importance of the new forms of soccer in the public schools and universities.³ More recently Adrian Harvey provided a necessary corrective in arguing that such influence has been exaggerated and that football was being played in an organized fashion in a variety of forms across England prior to that date. After the founding of the Football Association in 1863 football's growth through the 1870s and 1880s owed much to its increasing adoption by the English working classes. Clearly diffusion took place in a complex range of ways, and not least through school football, since teachers were often very influential, popular with pupils, moral, modest, idealistic and genuine, passing on moral messages that could at times inspire in some an ethical response. This helped the games ethic take firm root in schools, so that future generations of pupils were exposed to it. There have been previous studies of the place of soccer in early education, but these have been largely published by educational publishers and thus probably missed by most social historians.⁴ Colm Kerrigan's recent *Teachers and Football: Schoolboy Association Football in England 1885–1915* confined itself largely to London's schoolboy football associations, and thus over-emphasized the role of university settlements and public school influence in the 1870s and 1880s, before schools took over their own associations in the 1890s. Whilst it made clear the energy teachers put into the promotion of soccer amongst their pupils, it failed fully to appreciate the power and presence of athleticism. Though exhaustively researched, its narrowness of focus limited its impact and it showed little interest in adult soccer.

This is where Mangan and Hickey make their greatest impact, demonstrating conclusively that elementary schoolteachers played a key role in adult football, through the founding and furthering of many of the major clubs that we know today, as in the Midlands, for example, where Wolverhampton Wanderers, Aston Villa, Northampton, Walsall and Stoke amongst others had links with schoolteachers. In addition, elementary schoolteachers also played key roles in the early district and county associations. They were referees, administrators, or county and league secretaries at a time when these were extremely important roles in the

game. Some went on to be FA council members, vice presidents and presidents. They organized touring sides abroad and had a global impact.

Thirdly, this volume adopts a rare approach in its detailed focus on individual schoolteachers in relation to their times and context. British social historians have rarely attempted to meet the increasing public demand to humanize their findings through more sports biography. The detailed biographies of inspiring and practical diffusers such as Walter Holmes open up new, fascinating and in-depth understandings of the ways in which athletic teacher missionaries aided the ideological dissemination of athleticism. *Soccer's Missing Men* provides painstakingly accumulated, detailed evidence of the background, aspirations, enthusiasms and achievements of schoolmasters who made their mark on the early professional and amateur game, many up to and sometimes well beyond the First World War. A few, of course, still do so.

A fascinating fourth seminal feature is that religion is stressed rather than underplayed, as in many social studies of soccer. Back in 1972, in the very first edition of *History of Education*, the leading social historian Asa Briggs formulated the journal's theme as 'part of the wider study of the history of society, social history broadly interpreted, with...religion thrown in'.⁵ It is important to remind ourselves that in part at least, football spread its cultural power and sense of shared values through religion, via clergymen, lay preachers, and church and chapel teams. As Mangan and Hickey demonstrate, many of these men were elementary schoolteachers and muscular Christians, who exemplified in their lives the Christian precepts they followed.

Finally, *Soccer's Missing Men* makes clear that this is not the end but the beginning of a complex story, and the writers rightly recognize that it has raised many further questions and set an agenda for future fascinating and revealing work. Its systematic stress on local detail is exemplary. While their detailed research covers London and Midlands in some depth it also deals with the North East, South East, North West and the empire. One major theme they suggest worth further examination is the varying nature of the association between athleticism, the elementary schoolteacher and the training colleges and teacher-training centres in different cultural contexts, and the nuances of its impact. It may well be, for example, that in more working-class urban areas in the north teachers' impact was even greater than in the more middle-class metropolitan area. They also make the very important point that there are still many 'roots' of soccer to uncover both in Britain and abroad, and that there is a very long route still to travel to do this. In sum, Mangan and Hickey have produced a work of profound good sense, a landmark in the scholarship of education, soccer and athleticism, which will appeal to anyone with an interest in the social significance of sport in society.

Notes

1. Huggins, 'The Spread of Association Football'.
2. Goffman, *Asylums*.
3. For an earlier overview see Mason, 'Football and the Historians'. For a more recent restatement of this position see Russell, *Football and the English*, 5–10.
4. Kerrigan, 'Thoroughly Good Football'.
5. Briggs, 'The Study of the History of Education', 5.

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