

Recent Developments in Sports History in the United Kingdom

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During the 1970s several new degree courses in sports studies, physical education and human movement studies were introduced in British institutions of higher education.

Analysis of the syllabi revealed that 67.4% of these courses included a historical component. Of these 16.2% offered history of sport/physical education as a discipline in its own right, 27.9% integrated history into the socio-cultural area, 16.2% offered it with comparative physical education, 4.6% with philosophy of sport and 6.5% some other combination. The findings of a survey also revealed that the majority of these history courses were introduced at the very beginning of the degree and seldom followed through in subsequent years.

At the graduate level, the story was much the same. Of 7 universities offering a master's degree in physical education, only one offered a straight forward history option.

The lack of suitable courses at undergraduate and master's degree level appears to have stunted research. In turn this has restricted the number of suitably prepared sports historians from improving the content and teaching of such courses. It has also restricted the growth of literature in the subject field.

Unfortunately, trends over the past five years indicate that the time allocated to the history of sport in undergraduate degree courses will continue to decline. Components in sports management, biomechanics, and exercise physiology are expanding in Britain at the expense of the humanities.

On the positive side, a Bibliographical Centre for the History of Sport and Physical Education has been established at the University of Liverpool. This includes a computerized data base for all secondary source literature on the history of sport, published in the English language. A series of separately prepared bibliographies are forthcoming. A British Society of Sports History has recently been founded, and the first issue of a British Journal of Sports History is due out early next spring.