

They Wore *THAT* in Physical Education! A Historical Sportswear Fashion Show

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Sport and clothing are a reflection of a society's economic and social development. Changes in fashion have usually evolved slowly, but sometimes rapidly. Sport has had a role in changing fashion. As the work week shortened, people had more leisure time and city dwellers filled their time with sports participation and spectator sports. Particularly, between 1850 and 1920 economic and education opportunities improved and people who participated in sport wanted functional and fashionable clothing for their activities. Both in competitive team sports and in individual pursuits participants chose clothing specifically suitable for activity.

As collegiate sport became more commonplace and schools were including physical education in their program businesses such as Spalding, Moore, and Jantzen developed and marketed sport clothing and athletic equipment. A football uniform of 1890 with its lack of padding, zippers, velcro, protective features but accompanied by a nose-guard shows the tremendous changes in that sport's clothing in the last 100 years. An early gym costume, 1910, with its voluminous yardage, black color, hard to launder fabric illustrated the limitations on movements that females had to contend with in those first physical education classes. A 1930s Jantzen suit of the style introduced by Esther Williams contrasted sharply with the woolen knit suit of 1900 with its above the knees bloomers topped by a knee length skirt and worn with long black stockings with red horizontal strips. These items and many others gave NASSH historians a good many laughs and greater insight into the interaction of sport, clothing and technology as they were 'fetchingly' modelled by



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handsome members of the association. As the members modelled, a description of each item was presented.

Transitions in style and fabric have had a direct relationship to existing conditions and the spirit of the age. As male and female roles in sport have changed, the influence of technology in fabric construction and design has advanced and as societal customs have evolved, sport clothing over the last 100 years has dramatically changed. It is truly linked to profound changes in everyday life and has become increasingly important in our world.