

RACE AND RACISM IN AMERICAN SPORT

Fair Play vs. Dirty Fighting: Muscular Christianity, Racism, and the Introduction of Jujutsu to the United States

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Western and Eastern sports competed for superiority in the field of self-defense in the early years of the twentieth century. Muscular Christianity, promoted at first by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in the 1860s, later grew beyond that organization into a British rationale for fair play in sport. This sense of fair play was perhaps most strongly represented by the transition of boxing from a bareknuckle art into a sport regulated by the *Marquis of Queensbury Rules*. The western methods of boxing and wrestling, once considered the pre-eminent forms of self-defense, were threatened by the rise of Japanese military power at the turn-of-the century. Japanese victories in first the Sino-Japanese War and then the Russo-Japanese war were linked by many sportsmen to their practice of the art of jujutsu and to its modern sport counterpart, judo. In 1905, the United States experienced a short but intense fad for jujutsu, perhaps sparked by its practice by President Theodore Roosevelt. Jujutsu and judo came into direct competition with the "manly" arts of the west. The Japanese were defeated by both racism and the popularity of boxing and wrestling, but they at least established a tenuous foothold in America. The characterization of jujutsu and judo as "dirty fighting" by the Muscular Christians eventually gave the Japanese stylists victory, since the two World Wars taught Americans that fair play had little part in warfare.