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“THE NEWS THAT SELLS”: SPORT AND
THE PRESS IN BRITISH SOCIETY, 1855-1914

by

MATTHEW J. MCINTIRE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

“THE NEWS THAT SELLS”: SPORT AND
THE PRESS IN BRITISH SOCIETY, 1855-1914

By

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This dissertation examines the development of sporting news in the penny press and its effects on British society between 1855 and 1914. The birth of the penny press in the 1850s was a vital element in the re-creation of horse racing, soccer, and cricket during the last half of the nineteenth century. These sports and the press became interdependent partners; the transformation of horse racing, soccer, and cricket was linked to their coverage in the press. By the end of the 1880s, no morning or evening newspaper in pursuit of a mass audience could afford to neglect sporting news.

Beginning in the late 1850s, the press encouraged the organization and promotion of horse racing, soccer and cricket on a regional and national scale. In the case of horse racing, a mass betting culture emerged which depended on the training intelligence, starting prices, and predictions published by penny newspapers. Newspapers were also a critical factor in the growth of soccer and cricket as popular, commercialized sports with regularized schedules. The press was instrumental in the

formation of the Football Association in 1863 and, by 1870 it had invented the county championship in cricket. With the success of these sporting ventures the press gained regular content for its columns and material to devote to special evening editions. Sporting news facilitated the collective experience of horse racing, soccer, and cricket on a national scale.

Newspapers were cultural productions which constructed and articulated the meanings of sport. By the 1880s, even as professional athletes rose to prominence in soccer and cricket with the aid of the press, newspapers remained wedded to the amateur ideal. This ethos also triumphed at the 1908 Olympic Games in London as the press celebrated British sport in its battle against the world. The press was a creative force which helped to shape the multi-faceted meanings of racing, soccer, cricket, and the Olympics.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: TURNING FIRST TO THE SPORTING PAGES

The development of every branch of sport, and the growth of a strong public taste for taking part in or for looking on at games have been not the least striking features in the social life of the latter half of the Victorian era. Racing has an immeasurably larger following than it ever had before: cricket and football may be said without exaggeration to have become highly organised industries. . .¹

J. H. Millar's comment about the transformation of sport in late nineteenth century Britain neglected to mention perhaps the most significant institution involved in this change, the press. In its sporting news, the press chronicled "the great sports craze" which swept over late Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Published in weekly, evening, and morning newspapers, sporting news provided a supplement to experiencing sporting contests in person and linked athletes, administrators, and other followers of sport.²

Sporting news emerged as a popular periodical genre during the second half of the nineteenth century. Penny sporting newspapers aimed at a popular audience challenged the near monopoly on sporting news established prior to 1850 by the weekly paper, Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle (hereafter Bell's Life). Much earlier than this, by 1815, according to historian Adrian Harvey, the press had

¹ J. H. Millar, "Golf: Its Present and Future," Blackwood's Magazine 162 (July 1897): 102.

² The phrase is John Lowerson's and describes the late Victorian middle classes' embrace of sport. Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 3.

altered the scope of sporting culture by making it national and it aided in the development of a commercial sporting culture which was in place by the 1840s.³ During this earlier period, however, much of the sporting world lacked the regular and consistent competition on which later penny and halfpenny newspapers would capitalize. Herein lies the crucial difference: after the 1850s, sporting news became a daily occurrence and consisted of much more than just information concerning the London betting market.

By 1914, while playing and watching sport remained an activity enjoyed by a minority of the population, the previous sixty years had witnessed a transformation of sport as much of it became institutionalized, codified, and commercialized. The geographical terrain of sport also expanded from local and regional contests to national and international competitions. Between the late 1850s and 1914 newspapers were active participants in the transformation of sport even as they chronicled it. The medium itself underwent a simultaneous change as the press also became an increasingly commercial concern at the expense of its historical position as a liberal, political institution.⁴ By 1912, a newspaper's sales had become the sign of success, as the title of the new trade journal, Circulation Manager, illustrated. "The

³ Adrian Harvey, "The Evolution of Modern British Sporting Culture 1793-1850" (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1995), 74-129, 361. In the case of horse racing, Mike Huggins also has claimed that a commercialized industry existed by 1830, although the nature of commercialization had changed by 1870. Flat Racing and British Society, 1790-1914: A Social and Economic History (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000), 143.

⁴ Alan J. Lee has argued that "in the simplest of terms, the press had become a business, not only first, but increasingly a business almost entirely, and a political,

News That Sells,” explained the journal, included stories of murders, court accounts of murder verdicts, reports of cabinet changes, and “important” football and cricket results.⁵ Later issues also stressed the significance of racing news to the health of a newspaper’s circulation, especially evening papers which “have four dead months every year due to the suspension of flat-racing” between December and March.⁶

The aim of this study is to explain the development of sporting news as a popular periodical genre in the period before 1914. Although historians recognize the significance of sporting news, they have largely ignored it as a subject deserving of historical study. One historian has devoted a chapter of his doctoral thesis to the impact of the sporting press on the sporting culture of the early nineteenth-century.⁷ For historians of the press, sporting news has been of almost no interest except in terms of the increasing space devoted to it in newspapers at the end of the century.⁸ A trio of historians have acknowledged the importance of sporting news as an ingredient in the New Journalism;⁹ and while Virginia Berridge’s study of the Sunday

civil and social institution hardly at all.” The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 232.

⁵ Circulation Manager, December 1912, 5.

⁶ Circulation Manager, February 1913, 11; March 1913, 5; May 1913, 14; March 1914, 9.

⁷ Harvey, 74-129.

⁸ For example, see Lucy Brown, Victorian News and Newspapers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 244-245.

⁹ Lee, 127-128; Joel H. Wiener, “How New Was the New Journalism?” in Papers for the Millions: The New Journalism in Britain, 1850s to 1914, ed. Joel H.

press includes some valuable information about sporting news, it ends in 1886, when commercialized sport was just beginning to attract significant interest from the male working class.¹⁰ Another historian, Aled Jones, has discussed the “powers of the press” in his study of newspapers and the public during the nineteenth century. His work, however, was not concerned with the power of sporting news.¹¹ In their research historians of sport have made extensive use of the sporting news published by newspapers.¹² However, the only historian who has explored the post-1850 sporting press is sports historian Tony Mason, who first brought the importance of sporting news to light in his 1980 study on association football. He “impressionistically” traced the development of the football press between the 1880s

Wiener (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 54; John Goodbody, “The Star: Its Role in the Rise of the New Journalism,” in Papers for the Millions, 148-149.

¹⁰ See Virginia Stewart Berridge, “Popular Journalism and Working-Class Attitudes 1854-1886: A Study of Reynolds’s Newspaper, Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, and the Weekly Times,” (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1976), vol. 1, 142-150, and the appropriate tables in vol. 2, 76, 151, and 154-159. On the working-class role in the commercialization of sport, see Wray Vamplew, Pay Up and Play the Game: Professional Sport in Britain, 1875-1914 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 51-72.

¹¹ Aled Jones, Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1996).

¹² For example, see Tony Mason, Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915 (hereafter AF), (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980); Steven Tischler, Footballers and Businessmen: The Origins of Professional Soccer in England (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981); Charles Korr, West Ham United: The Making of a Football Club (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986); Keith A. P. Sandiford, Cricket and the Victorians (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1994); Tony Collins, Rugby’s Great Split: Class, Culture and the Origins of Rugby League Football (Portland: Frank Cass, 1998); Huggins.

and 1915, and explained that “there is an important symbiotic relationship between the expansion of the game, both amateur and professional, and both the growth of a specialised press and the spread of football coverage in general newspapers although the exact nature of such a relationship is difficult to establish.”¹³ The same can be said of cricket and horse racing, sports which, along with football, had captured the imagination of the late Victorian and Edwardian press and public.

Both the periodical and sport were part of the structure of work and leisure in industrial society and regulated in time, as Margaret Beetham has explained in the case of the periodical and Dennis Brailsford in the case of sport.¹⁴ As sport developed a regular schedule of contests during the latter half of the nineteenth century, sporting news became a regular subject in newspapers. It was an ideal fit: newspapers, a periodic printed form, increasingly had a periodic subject to report on, whether it was horse racing, football, cricket, or any number of other sports. These sports provided stories at regular intervals for the press and, in turn, the press furnished the sports with free publicity. By 1876, there was enough sport occurring on a daily basis as well as sufficient demand among the reading public for the Sportsman, a sporting paper published four days a week, to begin appearing daily.

¹³ Mason, AF, 187-195. Also see Mason, “Sport,” in Victorian Periodicals and Victorian Society, eds. J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. Van Arsdel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 291-297.

¹⁴ Margaret Beetham, “Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre,” in Investigating Victorian Journalism, eds. Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 19-32; Dennis Brailsford, Sport, Time and Society: The British at Play (London: Routledge, 1991).

Perhaps historians thus far have avoided exploring the press and sport because of the obstacles Tony Mason encountered in what remains the only foray into the previously uncharted history of sporting news during the second half of the nineteenth century. His explanation of the problems bears quoting at length:

When writing about sporting news in this period the historian faces two particular difficulties. The first is the nature and the bulk of the material. These decades witnessed not only the expansion of organized sport but a corresponding growth of newspaper coverage of it. Not only did the specialist sporting press grow; by 1914 few local or national newspapers were without their sports columns. Very little of this material was in any sense reflective. It makes it very difficult to know how and where to begin, especially when there is no historiography to joust with or feed off. The second difficulty is the absence of those detailed printers' and publishers' records which could illuminate not only the day-to-day running and organization of a paper but the relationship between the paper and its readers. Of three of the four specialist sporting dailies which existed together for a short period in the 1880s, Bell's Life was taken over by the Sporting Life in 1886; that paper was bought by Oldham's Press in 1920; the company captured the Sportsman four years later. The records of Oldham's were destroyed during the war. Moreover the daily and weekly newspapers which devoted an increasing amount of their space to sporting news have not kept records that would explain in detail how and why they did it.¹⁵

This study concentrates on the spread of sporting news in the press by examining the five leading specialist sporting papers: Bell's Life, the Sporting Life, the Sportsman, the Sporting Chronicle, and the Athletic News; and five major daily papers, The Times, the Daily Telegraph, the Evening News, the Star, and the Daily Mail. In 1855, Bell's Life was easily Britain's leading sporting paper and The Times

¹⁵ Tony Mason, "Sporting News, 1860-1914," in The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries, eds. Michael Harris and Alan Lee (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 168-169.

was the dominant daily, “quality” newspaper. The other newspapers were penny or halfpenny papers which began appearing periodically after 1855. Except for the Sporting Chronicle and the Athletic News, both published in Manchester, all of these newspapers were based in London, the publishing center of Britain. They were among the most important penny and halfpenny papers of the late Victorian and Edwardian period and each paper’s handling of sporting news was significant in varying ways. While they catered to the London market and had a southern orientation, their sports coverage transcended this geographic area and included sporting news from the provinces. These newspapers were the primary contributors to the transformation of sport after 1855 as they published racing, cricket, and football news from throughout Britain and made it available to the masses. The information printed in their columns facilitated mass betting, promoted the national and regional organization of sports, and fashioned the meaning of sport as the embodiment of what it meant to be British.¹⁶

Sporting news was a vital component of British society in the late nineteenth century. While the newspapers examined in this study all were published in England, they published sporting news from throughout the British Empire. These papers helped to shape the idea of English sport, whether horse racing, football, or cricket, as a gift of civilization from England to the far reaches of the British Empire, whether that meant Scotland or India or Bermuda. Sport became central to the idea of Britain and the empire during the Victorian period, as J. A. Mangan’s extensive research has

¹⁶ See Beetham, 21-22, for a discussion of periodicals as “products” in the economic system as well as producers of meaning.

shown, and newspapers helped to shape this concept.¹⁷ By 1908, when London played host to the Olympic Games, the performance in the Olympic stadium was seen by some as a measure of the strength -- or decline -- of Britain.

A new era in the history of the press emerged with the publication of the penny papers, the Daily Telegraph in 1855, and the Sporting Life (first published as Penny Bell's Life and Sporting News) in 1859. "Sporting Intelligence" was a news subject with a long pedigree in the British press and the advent of the penny press gave a popular audience easier access to news about horse racing and its associated betting markets. The organized, commercialized betting explosion of the second half of the nineteenth century was dependent on the betting information the press published each day.¹⁸ Both the general daily and the sporting varieties of penny newspapers "democratized" access to the training reports, racing entries, starting

¹⁷ J. A. Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and The Games Ethic and Imperialism (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986). Also see the collections of essays he has helped to edit, J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1914, eds. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987) and J. A. Mangan, ed., Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture at Home and Abroad, 1700-1914, (London: Frank Cass, 1988).

¹⁸ Ross McKibbin, "Working-class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939," in The Ideologies of Class: Social Relations in Britain, 1880-1939 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 120; David Dixon, From Prohibition to Regulation: Bookmaking, Anti-Gambling, and the Law (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 43; Mark Clapson, A Bit of a Flutter: Popular Gambling and English Society, c. 1823-1961 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 29.

prices, and race predictions required for bettors to place an informed bet.¹⁹ “Sporting Intelligence” connected racing, betting, and the press in a synergistic association as the press collected, reported, and effectively gave legitimacy to the betting news punters studied each day in search of a winner. Beginning in the late 1880s any morning or evening newspaper seeking a mass readership had to offer much more than simple racing entries and results to take advantage of the growing sporting consciousness of the British population and its desire to bet on horse racing. These developments were a critical element in the commercialization of horse racing during the last half of the century.

The press was a vital and powerful medium of communication and promotion for sports on a regional and national scale both before and after 1914. Correspondence and articles published in newspapers prompted discussions leading to the formal organization of the Football Association in the 1860s. The press provided free publicity by covering and reporting on older, established sports like horse racing and cricket, and emerging games like soccer and rugby.²⁰ Clubs and race meetings realized the importance of this publicity by furnishing journalists with special accommodations, including special viewing areas and telegraph operations. Prominent journalists who covered sporting events often were ex-athletes who

¹⁹ Ellen Ross, Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1914 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73, has used the term “democratized” to explain the growth of betting among the working class, including women.

²⁰ Mason, AF, 195; Vamplew, Pav Up, 56.

remained involved in the clubs and organizations of the sporting world long after their playing days had ended.

The emergence of a cheap press was only one of a number of developments in leisure occurring at mid-century. For Victorian society “leisure in its modern form became progressively more plentiful, more visible, more sought after and more controversial.”²¹ A prosperous, industrial economy translated into growing economic security and increasing time for leisure and the many activities, such as organized sport, available to more of society. The middle class was the greatest beneficiary of this security and its accompanying increase in the opportunities for and acceptance of play alongside work.

Before 1914, the middle class was the social foundation for the amazing interest in organized sport in society. In his penetrating look at the English middle classes’ role in the spread of organized sport, John Lowerson has identified professional men as the group who led the “great sports craze.” These men, many of whom had attended public school and university, sought to establish themselves socially and economically in communities via sports clubs. The increasing body of clerks and teachers associated with the lower-middle class, which arose between 1891 and 1911, along with tradesmen, dealers, and shopkeepers, provided the participants to sustain the incredible “craze” in sport.²² As a historian of the “mass reading

²¹ Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England: Rational Recreation and the Contest for Control, 1830-1885 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 56.

²² Lowerson, 3 and 6-12.

public” has explained. “these people, because of the special requirements of their daily work as well as the general cultural tradition of the professional class, constituted an important audience for reading matter.”²³ These were the men who, as sports participants, administrators, and readers, furnished the consumer base which newspapers and periodicals appealed to with their sporting news.

Changing circumstances provided the impetus behind the commercialization of leisure after the mid-century. Britain’s unique position as the first industrialized state brought prosperity to much of society, even amidst its continuing economic and social inequality. Unlike the era prior to the 1840s there is a consensus among historians that real wages rose among the working class as a whole throughout the next sixty years and were still relatively high even after 1900, when they suffered a downturn, compared to the 1890s.²⁴ While there are difficulties for historians in reconstructing the economic data throughout this time frame, there is no debate that real wages were on the upswing between 1870 and 1900.²⁵

Workers slowly added to the consumer base of the press as they gained more disposable income during this period. Their prosperity also included more free time

²³ Richard D. Altick, The English Common Reader (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 83.

²⁴ E. H. Phelps Brown, and Margaret H. Brown, A Century of Pay (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1968), 444-445; T. R. Gourvish, “The Standard of Living, 1890-1914,” in The Edwardian Age, ed. Alan O’Day (London: Macmillan, 1979), 22, 32-34.

²⁵ This discussion of the economic and social prerequisites for the commercialization of leisure, including the difficulty in generalizing about the standard of living, is based on Vamplew, Pay Up, 47-54.

for leisure activities like reading and sports, and, most significantly for this study, reading about sports. A reduction in working hours for the working class became the trend after 1850. In part, the reduction was the product of philanthropic and self-interested employers who realized that leisure might be beneficial to worker productivity. On the whole, however, workers in the factory system had to fight for reduced working hours, which resulted in the Ten Hours Act of 1847. The familiar Monday to Saturday work week with reduced hours on Saturday in many areas, supplanted “Saint Monday,” the custom in some industries in which workers skipped work or failed to put forth a full effort on Mondays, to relieve their onerous labor requirements.²⁶ Legislation in 1850 terminated the Saturday workday at two o’clock in the textile industry, and an 1874 statute pushed up the limit to one o’clock. By the 1870s, most industries had adopted the Saturday half-holiday and the increased leisure time fostered the growth of numerous leisure activities, among them reading, and watching and participating in sports.

Some historians have argued that the development of sport during the late nineteenth century was revolutionary. An increasing number of people were able to experience a broadening spectrum of sports as both participants and as spectators, and this was an important aspect of urban popular culture.²⁷ The popularity of older

²⁶ Douglas A. Reid, “The Decline of Saint Monday 1766-1876,” Past and Present 71 (1976): 76-101.

²⁷ Hugh Cunningham, “Leisure and Culture,” in The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, vol. 2, ed. F. M. L. Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 305.

sports like cricket, golf, bowls, and horse racing grew enormously, and new sports like cycling, lawn tennis, and mountaineering were developed. Association and Rugby football became organized, codified, and institutionalized, having emerged from their folk football and public school roots.²⁸ This did not mean, however, that there were not sports whose popularity was on the decline; for example, professional foot racing, or pedestrianism as it was known at mid-century, the Scottish sport of shinty, an early type of hockey much like Irish hurling, and professional rowing.²⁹

Commercialization was a defining characteristic of the sporting industry during this period as it offered services to sports consumers, whether as participants or spectators. While industry produced balls, uniforms, shoes, bicycles, and golf clubs for the growing middle-class demand, the gate-money sports which dominated the sporting news -- horse racing, football, and cricket -- are the concern of this study. Prior to mid-century commercial considerations were part of the fabric of cricket and horse racing, but both sports experienced substantial changes by 1900.³⁰ The sport that underwent the most remarkable transformation was football as two national forms of the game emerged after 1860, association football, or soccer, and rugby.

²⁸ Mason, AF, 9-20; Collins, 1-28.

²⁹ Neil Tranter, Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1914 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 14.

³⁰ For a discussion of the early history and commercialization of cricket, see Sandiford, 19-33 and 53-54; Vamplew, The Turf: A Social and Economic History of Horse Racing, (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 18-22; Huggins, 18-37 provides an introduction to the changes in racing between 1800-1914.

Cricket, soccer, and rugby sought to attract larger crowds by offering the public the most competitive contests on a frequent basis. One of the groups that was spending more at the gate was the working class. For the most part leisure at sporting grounds was a male experience in which they spent money on admission, food, drink, and betting. Leisure for most women occurred in the home, but betting on horse racing attracted women as well.³¹ The need for a regular roster of competitive events in horse racing meant that jockeys went from “little more than liveried servants” in the early nineteenth century to earning £1,000 or more a year. An owner of a successful stallion could charge those seeking to breed horses with more speed or endurance 600 guineas per service and earn over £20,000 per year.³² Racing companies began enclosing racecourses and charging an entry fee early in the century, but this was not common throughout the country until the 1880s.³³ By the turn of the century, an observer recognized that “the modern racing enclosure is a product of the last quarter of the century, and with the general public it has secured an enormous amount of popularity,” as many enclosed courses sprang up around Britain.³⁴ These meetings could draw up to 10-15,000 spectators, according to

³¹ Ross, 73.

³² Vamplew, Pav Up, 56-57.

³³ Huggins, 152-153.

³⁴ Charles Richardson, The English Turf: A Record of Horses and Courses, ed. E. T. Sachs (London: Methuen, 1901), 174-175. Also see Vamplew, The Turf, 38-46, and Vamplew, Pav Up, 57-58.

contemporary observers, and the attendance at major meetings was frequently twice that, while crowds might reach 70,000-80,000 on public holidays.³⁵

With the creation of the Football Association (F.A.) in 1863 and the Scottish Football Association (S.F.A.) ten years later, soccer soon was the most competitive sport in Britain. Teams played knockout competitions for the F.A. Cup (1871), the S.F.A. Cup (1873), and numerous local and regional cups. Soccer matches, which often drew attendances of several thousand spectators in the 1870s, became so popular that thousands and thousands of spectators regularly were packing grounds from the 1890s on. In 1888, to ensure top attendance at their matches, twelve of the leading clubs in the North and the Midlands formed the Football League. To accommodate and draw larger gates clubs employed professional players and improved their grounds by erecting grandstands, where people could sit and watch a match protected from the rain, and building terraces, where the standing crowd had a better view.³⁶ By 1912, Celtic, Rangers, Manchester United, Everton, Liverpool, and Chelsea all had “fine grounds.”³⁷ After the turn of the century, the F.A. Cup Final routinely drew over 60,000 spectators, even reaching 100,000 on three occasions before 1914.³⁸

³⁵ Richardson, 213, cited in Vamplew, Pav Up, 7.

³⁶ Mason, AF, 138-140.

³⁷ J. J. Bentley, “Is Football a Business?” World’s Work (1912): 384-389.

³⁸ Mason, AF, 141-143. The Daily Mail, 25 April 1910, 11, listed the FA Cup Final attendances from 1900 to 1910.

Cricket was a gate-money sport long before the creation of the county championship sparked increased interest in the game. The press began choosing the champion county on an informal basis beginning in the early 1870s, over twenty years before an official county championship was sanctioned by the Marylebone Cricket Club, the governing body of cricket. First-class county cricket attendances increased steadily after 1850 and reached 4,000 in the 1860s, 8,000 in the 1870s, and sometimes 10,000 during the 1880s. These numbers do not include attendances at league cricket matches, a Saturday afternoon spectator sport popular in the North and Midlands.³⁹

Hugh Cunningham has suggested that the “key difference” between the eras before and after 1850 might be spectatorship which became more common and frequent during a sport’s season in the later period compared to the annual, sporadic events of the earlier years.⁴⁰ In terms of the provision of sporting news, a regular schedule of competitive contests was vital to filling up the columns of newspapers. So this regularity was the “key difference” after 1850. It did not affect only those who were spectators but also those who experienced sporting contests by reading sporting news.

With sporting events providing news for the press, newspapers enabled readers to become members of a sporting community of fans and bettors. Benedict Anderson has highlighted the significance of the press in the formation of the

³⁹ Vamplew, *Pav Up*, 58-61.

⁴⁰ Cunningham, “Leisure,” 310.

“imagined communities” of nationalism.⁴¹ As noted earlier, while newspapers were instrumental in the spread of the “games ethic” as a symbol of the British Empire in this process of imagining during the nineteenth century, these printed pages also worked on other levels.⁴² Whether sports enthusiasts could attend a sporting event or not, in newspaper columns they followed their favorite football or cricket club, and bettors sought out the latest results from the track. Newspapers created communities of followers at the local level where clubs had their loyal backers who identified with their team and at the national level where readers from one part of Britain could discuss the particulars of play with someone from another area.⁴³ Newspapers’ latest racing information also linked bettors and their bookmakers, as well as allowing punters in London, Birmingham, and Newcastle to follow races at Doncaster, Newmarket, and Epsom.

The press was an essential element in the sporting revolution during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. As horse racing became more prominent as a leisure activity, it spawned a penny sporting press. By the 1880s, sporting news was plentiful compared to mid-century; racing news was a staple feature of most evening newspapers, which also published football specials on Saturday evenings and cricket

⁴¹ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁴² See above, page 7.

⁴³ Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions, 1870-1914,” in The Invention of Tradition, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 288-289.

special editions during the season. Before the changes in sports chronicled above, sporting news was insignificant compared to the political news provided by most newspapers. Those with an interest in sport could find only small amounts of racing news in daily newspapers. Their only recourse was to buy one of the few, expensive weekly or monthly sporting periodicals.⁴⁴

The proliferation of sporting news in the late nineteenth century was without precedent in the history of the press. The same held true for the growth in the range and scope of sport. Throughout the eighteenth century newspapers were the instruments of parliamentarians and other political activists who used them to disseminate opinion and build support. By the beginning of the nineteenth century other groups, often with religious or working-class connections, had developed their own newspapers to promote reform. Their objectives included the promotion of temperance, and the abolition of slavery, smoking, and vivisection.⁴⁵ Religious publications offered readers Christian education, news, and entertainment, while working-class newspapers, whether they were unstamped, Chartist, or trade union publications, sought political reform.⁴⁶ The role of newspapers, as Brian Harrison

⁴⁴ Harvey, 77-78.

⁴⁵ Michael Harris and Alan Lee, "Introduction," in The Press in English Society, 108.

⁴⁶ Louis Billington, "The Religious Periodical and Newspaper Press, 1770-1870," in The Press in English Society, 113-132.

has explained, was to inspire, to inform, and to integrate, and newspapers throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and beyond practiced it.⁴⁷

As part of the political reform movement which began during the late eighteenth century, radicals had attempted to establish their own press upon a new social basis, the emerging working class. Government opposition to the political views of this radical press was considerable and resulted in a restrictive taxation of the press which hindered its further expansion. The radical press, however, did find a niche from which to cultivate a wider readership: the Sunday paper. Beginning in the 1840s, commercialism was wedded to the reform cause in the development of popular Sunday newspapers. Aimed at the working class, they offered material based on subjects from older types of popular culture, like ballads, chapbooks, almanacs, and stories of murders and executions.⁴⁸ This new popular journalism criticized the social and political establishment while also publishing police news, court reports, and other items with a sensational or scandalous character.

A new era began for the press in the 1850s with the 1853 abolition of the advertisement tax and the 1855 repeal of the stamp duty on newspapers. A new daily press emerged, both provincial and metropolitan, whose papers cost only a penny.

⁴⁷ Brian Harrison, "Press and Pressure Group in Modern Britain," in The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings, eds. Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 282. Alan Lee, Origins, 18, also argues that "the press had a distinctively integrative role to play" in Victorian England.

⁴⁸ Harold Perkin, "The Origins of the Popular Press," in The Structured Crowd: Essays in English Social History (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble, 1981), 53-55; Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961; Reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Pelican Books, 1965), 198.

The battle to create a cheap press has been explored thoroughly elsewhere.⁴⁹ What the repeal of the stamp duty and the other taxes on knowledge in the 1850s supplied were the conditions upon which a cheap daily press targeted at a wider readership could flourish. Alan Lee's research shows that at least 65 provincial dailies costing 1d. or ½d. per copy were founded between 1855 and 1870. The newspaper scene in London changed considerably as well with the price of most dailies dropping to 1d. The newcomers to the metropolis included the Daily Chronicle, the Daily Telegraph, the Standard, and the evening papers, the Echo, the Evening Standard, and the Pall Mall Gazette. More popular than the dailies, however, were the weeklies, especially the Sunday penny papers, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper and Reynolds's Newspaper.

Publishing was a business which catered to the rising demand for leisure commodities by producing ever-larger numbers and titles of newspapers, periodicals, and books. Most proprietors ran their newspapers and periodicals as commercial ventures in search of profits by providing literary and political criticism, instruction, sensation, or combinations of these.⁵⁰ The proliferation of newspapers and

⁴⁹ On the "unstamped press," see W. H. Wickwar, The Struggle for the Freedom of the Press, 1819-1832 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1928); Joel H. Wiener, The War of the Unstamped: The Movement to Repeal the British Newspaper Tax, 1830-1836 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969); P. Hollis, The Pauper Press: A Study in Working-Class Radicalism of the 1830s (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). For the period after 1836, see H. R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers: Chapters in the History of Journalism, vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887).

⁵⁰ The tension between this liberal ideology concerning the press's role as an agent of opinion and instruction which was the primary consideration before 1855, and the commercial imperative that increasingly asserted itself after 1855 is explored in Lee, Origins.

periodicals meant more information about more subjects was available on a wider scale than ever before. As two historians of the press have explained, “though it is difficult to generalize when faced with the extravagant range of material produced during the later nineteenth century, modifications in the content of the periodicals and newspapers were broadly characterized by the interconnected processes of ‘specialization’ and ‘diversification.’” With the repeal of the taxes on newspapers a penny press consisting of both special and general interest publications emerged which targeted different groups of readers by interest, class, gender, and age.⁵¹ The proliferation of sporting news in the periodical press was a prime example of these processes in action.

Over the next half century general-interest dailies diversified their coverage by expanding the amount of non-political news, such as sport, in their columns. Information from the numerous horse-race meetings throughout England had been included in many newspapers as “sporting intelligence” since the early eighteenth century. These reports included the race entries for the day, race results from the previous day, and often betting odds for the races set at Tattersall’s. Newspapers as diverse as The Times and the Northern Star provided this race coverage. The Daily Telegraph, a London penny paper, began including a regular column of horse racing news in 1856, authored by “Hotspur,” which was, perhaps, the first of its kind in a daily newspaper. Halfpenny evening newspapers spread throughout Britain in the

⁵¹ Harris and Lee, 109; Lee, Origins, 70.

1880s and began printing football and cricket editions as these sports came into public prominence during the same period.

A large market of readers developed, after mid-century, eager to read about sports. The emergence of a voluminous periodical literature specializing in sport was, on the one hand, the result of a new phenomenon, the formal organization of various sports from the 1860s on. On the other, it was also a consequence of the rising popularity of an old sport, horse racing, and the gambling inexorably bound to it. The British Library Newspaper Library catalog has over 200 periodicals, which appeared between the 1860s and the 1910s, listed under the variations of the title words athletic, cricket, football, racing, and sport. As the following list illustrates, sporting periodicals ranged from general sporting papers such as the Field, and the Id, Sporting Life, Sportsman, and Sporting Chronicle, which began as weeklies and eventually became dailies, to specialist publications including the Fishing Gazette (1877), Cricket (1882), Golf (1890) and numerous cycling papers.⁵² Sporting papers were part of the specialist press that Fox Bourne labeled “class and clique papers.”⁵³ Bell’s Life (1822), the first successful weekly sporting paper and its rivals the Sporting Life (1859), the Sportsman (1865), and Manchester’s Sporting Chronicle (1871) published sporting news with a heavy concentration on horse racing unavailable in the daily press.

⁵² According to John Lowerson, 253-254, before 1914 at least twenty-nine cycling publications had ended in failure. For other sporting publications, see Lowerson, 251-257, Mason, “Sporting News,” and the British Library Newspaper Library Catalogue.

⁵³ Fox Bourne, 2:295.

The growth of these papers illustrates the market appeal of sporting news and the increasing popularity of sport as a leisure activity in English social life. Fox Bourne voiced a guarded skepticism about this specialized form of journalism and its impact: "It is a more curious than agreeable fact that, besides receiving more or less attention from nearly every general newspaper, 'sport' should have so many prosperous journals exclusively devoted to it."⁵⁴ In the same year, the poet, and social and literary critic, Matthew Arnold, who worked as a school inspector, provided an assessment of changes in the general interest press. Arnold wrote:

We have had opportunities of observing a new journalism which a clever and energetic man has lately invented. It has much to recommend it; it is full of ability, novelty, variety, sensation, sympathy, generous instincts; its one great fault is that it is feather-brained. It throws out assertions at a venture because it wishes them true; does not correct either them or itself, if they are false, and to get at the state of things as they truly are seems to feel no concern whatever. Well the democracy, with abundance of life, movement, sympathy, good instincts, is disposed to be, like this journalism, feather-brained . . .

Penny and halfpenny papers were most popular in the industrial towns where this "democracy," the majority of Britons, was most conspicuous. This cheap, popular press and, particularly, W. T. Stead, who edited the Pall Mall Gazette, were the targets of Arnold's attack, which identified the New Journalism for the first time.

⁵⁴ Fox Bourne, 2:322-323.

The Pall Mall Gazette, however, was a London evening newspaper, not a cheap penny or halfpenny paper focused on the “democracy” in the industrial towns.⁵⁵

Stead believed that journalism had become “the rival of governments,” and could exert extra-parliamentary pressure by communicating with every social class and by ascertaining the will of society.⁵⁶ Much like Arnold, Stead claimed “the million . . . are as dumb as a horse, which you may scourge to death without its uttering a sound.” A newspaper which listened to the masses, however, and served as their voice could give them hope.⁵⁷ Stead’s innovation was his fusion of moral conviction and sensationalism. He employed agitations and crusades, like the Maiden Tribute, in his newspapers to mobilize public opinion in opposition to or in favor of government policy.⁵⁸

Recently scholars have reevaluated the connection of the Old Journalism to the New and have highlighted the continuities between the two. The New Journalism associated with Stead and the Pall Mall Gazette, like the Old Journalism which had

⁵⁵ Matthew Arnold, “Up to Easter,” Nineteenth Century 21 (1887): 638-639. For an introduction to the New Journalism see, Lee, Origins, 117-130. On the mistake of Arnold associating the masses with the readership of the Pall Mall Gazette, see Laurel Brake, “The Old Journalism and the New: Forms of Cultural Production in London in the 1880s,” in Papers for the Millions, 12-15.

⁵⁶ W. T. Stead, “The Future of Journalism,” Contemporary Review 50 (1886): 663, 669; also see Lee, Origins, 119.

⁵⁷ Stead, 669-670.

⁵⁸ J. O. Baylen, “The ‘New Journalism’ in Late Victorian Britain,” Australian Journal of Politics and History 18 (1972): 371, 385.

preceded it, was not aimed at the mass readership that concerned Arnold.⁵⁹ Stead's exposés in the Pall Mall Gazette, moreover, which had caused such a sensation, were not a first for the paper. During his tenure as owner and editor of the paper, Frederick Greenwood had published investigative pieces, such as "A Night at A Workhouse" (1866), long before Stead had become editor.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, some newspapers in the 1880s were very different from their predecessors. Their typography, content, and business organization all had changed. To keep costs down before the 1850s, when the taxes on newspapers were in effect, newspapers used small headlines and even smaller print to pack as much information as possible onto each page. A look at any newspaper published before the 1880s, and more than a few after, reveals a formula of small uninteresting headlines and even smaller print within its columns. Repeal of the newspaper taxes combined with the adoption of much cheaper wood pulp-based newsprint meant that space could be used for more visually effective headlines. Evening newspapers were at the forefront of the design changes and the Evening News, the Pall Mall Gazette, under Stead's direction from 1883 to 1889, and the Star, edited by T. P. O'Connor from 1888 to 1890, all employed them. Front-page advertisements, a badge of respectability for Victorian era newspapers, shrank to only one or two columns as front-page news became "an important sales weapon, the

⁵⁹ Brake, 2-24.

⁶⁰ B. I. Diamond, "A Precursor of the New Journalism: Frederick Greenwood of the Pall Mall Gazette," in Papers for the Millions, 25-45.

latest news the chief selling point” on the street.⁶¹ Headlines and crossheads grew larger to grab the attention of possible readers and illustrations became a regular part of evening newspapers.⁶²

Before the spread of the New Journalism most newspapers printed only advertisements, and political, parliamentary, foreign, and other miscellaneous news along with their leading articles. Politics was the lifeblood of the nineteenth-century press and throughout most of the century political parties funded the newspapers, which were “political journals.”⁶³ Daily newspapers were not commercial concerns, but political ones. Not surprisingly, political news dominated the coverage before 1880 with parliamentary speeches frequently occupying whole pages. Organized teams of reporters in Parliament recorded the proceedings for inclusion in the next day’s edition. The political news in The Times often occupied six unbroken columns across a page and its leaders, which primarily commented on political matters, filled from three to five columns.⁶⁴ Politics remained important, but it ceased to monopolize the news as the New Journalism wedded the respectable, political

⁶¹ Lee, 120-121.

⁶² Wiener, “How New?” 51-52.

⁶³ James Grant, The Newspaper Press: Its Origin – Progress – and Present Position, vol. 1 (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871-1872), 256.

⁶⁴ Wiener, “How New?” 51-54.

subjects of the daily press with the diversity of popular material present in the Sunday press.⁶⁵

Instead, newspapers seeking to appeal to the “feather-brained” employed the successful formula of the Sunday newspapers, which meant less politics and more gossip, crime, scandal, and sport. Anticipating Arnold’s attack on the New Journalism, journalist Francis Hitchman had complained in 1881 that

it is a somewhat unpleasant reflection that there are millions of Englishmen who never read anything else [except newspapers], and that amongst them the organs which command the largest circulation are those Sunday papers which are chiefly distinguished by the objectionable violence of their tone, by their frequent selection of disgusting law reports, by their attacks upon the reigning family, and by otherwise pandering to the worst instincts of the uneducated classes.⁶⁶

The first newspapers to attract a mass audience of working class readers were the Sunday newspapers, Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper, founded in 1842, and Reynolds’s Newspaper, established in 1850, which combined crime reports with their proprietors’ radical political sympathies.⁶⁷ The results were “exposés of governmental corruption, ministerial obstinacy, the stupidity or knavery of politicians, the greed of employers, and the sexual immorality reputedly endemic in the ruling class.”⁶⁸ The

⁶⁵ Harry Schalck, “Fleet Street in the 1880s: The New Journalism,” in Papers for the Millions, 75.

⁶⁶ Francis Hitchman, “The Penny Press,” Macmillan’s Magazine 43 (March 1881): 386.

⁶⁷ See Berridge, vol. 1.

⁶⁸ Altick, 344-345.

Sunday papers' emphasis was not on politics but on the popular content of older forms of literature, such as ballads, broadsheets, and almanacs.⁶⁹ The evening papers born in the 1880s adapted this formula for use in the daily market. Sporting news was a fundamental element in this formula to popularize newspapers during the 1880s. As indicated above, public interest in sports increased enormously during the last quarter of the century and gave newspapers a dramatic subject to include in their columns. The "Latest Results" from race meetings throughout Britain as well as football and cricket special editions were standard features for most provincial and metropolitan evening papers by the end of the 1880s.

Why did newspapers believe there was a market of potential readers to be exploited? While the advent of penny newspapers attracted new readers because of the reduced price, Lucy Brown has suggested a few developments that resulted in a "buy-your-own mentality" which reduced the extended circulation of a paper having more than one reader. Although sharing newspapers continued into the twentieth century, the fragility of newsprint used from the 1880s on made sharing less practical.⁷⁰ Until the 1860s when kerosene lamps became common and many towns

⁶⁹ Williams, 198.

⁷⁰ On the sharing of newspapers in middle class households, see Altick, 83; for sharing among working class youth in Salford early in the twentieth century, see Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 127.

installed gas lighting, reading at home was difficult due to the poor lighting.⁷¹

Railway journeys meant free time during which many travelers read, a development which W. H. Smith exploited by placing bookstalls at railway stations. Lucy Brown, like Harold Perkin before her, also has argued against the notion that a rise in literacy following the 1870 Education Act increased the demand for newspapers on a large scale.⁷² Rather, “these general considerations suggest that the main emphasis, in explaining the progress of circulations, should be on price. Working people, in the 1850s and 1860s, bought Sunday papers (at a total cost of a penny or two a week), and a daily paper at the time of a royal visit or an execution, but a penny daily was too expensive.” Most workers could not afford the 6d. a week for a daily. When halfpenny dailies, with their sports and weekend serials, became available in the 1880s, their price and wider range of subjects catered to an audience as yet untapped by the penny dailies.⁷³

The association of sport and gambling played a large role in the inclusion of information regarding both in the daily press. Horse racing news provided the foundation of this association and consisted of racing entries, starting prices, and training reports, and by 1900 most metropolitan dailies had their own “Hotspur.” The “turf advisor,” or “tipster,” often attended the different race meetings, gathering

⁷¹ See Altick, 92-94, for an instructive discussion on the state of household lighting during the 19th century.

⁷² See Perkin, “Origins,” 47-56.

⁷³ L. Brown, 27-31; Lee, *Origins*, 35-41. Lee, *Origins*, 35-37, surveys the numerous places where copies of newspapers passed through multiple hands.

intelligence by attending workouts, conversing with horse people, and watching the daily races. He provided his readers with commentary on the day's happenings both on and off the track along with his forecast of winning horses for the following day's racing. Many newspapers offered more than just racing news for the bettor; contests for predicting the outcome of several soccer matches, with the winner receiving cash prizes, began appearing in the football press during the 1880s. Critics of the press and particularly, the National Anti-Gambling League, founded in 1890, opposed the publication of racing information and the football coupon, which gave entrants the opportunity to win cash prizes by choosing the winners of selected football matches and the number of goals scored in each match.⁷⁴ The opposition to betting news was related to the general condemnation of aspects of popular culture associated with the physical inadequacy and social decline among the working class which worried many reformers. Critics argued that publishing betting news and the latest results from football matches and race meetings encouraged professionalism, gambling and the anti-social behavior of sporting crowds.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Dixon, 155-166.

⁷⁵ For two examples, see Creston, "Football," Fortnightly Review 55 (1894): 25-38; Robert J. Sturdee, "The Ethics of Football," Westminster Review 59 (1903): 180-185. For surveys of this general theme, see Mason, AF, 222-250; Steven Tischler, Footballers and Businessmen: The Origins of Professional Soccer in England (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 123-141; and R. W. Lewis, "'Touched Pitch and Been Shockingly Defiled': Football, Class, Social Darwinism and Decadence in England, 1880-1914," in Sport in Europe: Politics, Class, Gender, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 117-143. For horse racing, see Vamplew, The Turf, 207-212; Huggins, 204-228.

One newspaper publisher who took full advantage of competitions to stimulate sales was Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe), who added the Evening News to his growing stable of periodicals in 1894, and in 1896 brought out the first successful halfpenny morning newspaper, the Daily Mail. It was the epitome of the New Journalism, challenging the quality morning papers by combining features of these papers with items common to popular journalism. These features included political, foreign, domestic, and financial news written in a brief readable style as well as reports on fashion, travel, sport, and news for women. Although both contemporaries and historians have disapproved of the commercialism he brought to the newspaper industry, James D. Startt has reminded us that Harmsworth transformed journalism while still attempting to create a quality product that was comprehensive, accurate, and interested in its readers.⁷⁶

The commercialism Harmsworth represented had profound effects on the industry. Establishing and operating a newspaper was expensive as production costs, especially plant and staff expenses, were increasing as the nineteenth century came to a close.⁷⁷ At mid-century, according to estimates, producing a London daily took £10,000 to £20,000 while, by the 1870s, the amount was up to £100,000.⁷⁸ The

⁷⁶ James D. Startt, "Good Journalism in the Era of the New Journalism: The British Press, 1902-1914," in Papers for the Millions, 277-278 and 281; Harold Herd, The March of Journalism: The Story of the British Press from 1622 to the Present Day (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), 233; Baylen, 385.

⁷⁷ L. Brown, 8-11.

⁷⁸ Lee, Origins, 83.

capital intensive nature of the newspaper industry prompted proprietors to gather more newspapers under their direction at the end of the century, a trend which continued long after 1900 as the President of the Institute of Journalists, Robert Donald, acknowledged in 1913: "Combination has been the chief characteristic of industry all over the world, and the press could not remain outside this tendency. One company sometimes owns or controls a series of newspapers."⁷⁹ The newspaper chains of Northcliffe, Pearson, and the Morning Leader group dominated the metropolitan press in 1910 as they accounted for approximately 66.9% of the morning circulation and 82.6% of the evening circulation.⁸⁰ None of the daily and evening newspapers these groups controlled could afford to neglect sporting news. Sport and the news it produced had become such a predominant aspect of British society that journalist Bernard Darwin observed in 1940 that

. . . sport is one of the most obvious features in the general background of life, and of all interests it is perhaps the one which is common to the greatest number of people of all classes. It is said that when the Briton buys a newspaper he turns first of all to the sporting pages. That is not true in times of political anxiety, but it is probably as true as are most generalizations in more easy-going times, and many of the names that figure on those pages are in the nature of household words.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Newspaper World, 23 August 1913, 18.

⁸⁰ Alan Lee has suggested that these numbers "exaggerate" the sales of the morning press and "underestimate" those of the evening press, Origins, 293.

⁸¹ Bernard Darwin, British Sport and Games (London: Longmans Green, 1940), 11.

CHAPTER 2

RACING NEWS: HORSE RACING AND THE PENNY PRESS

“We cannot but feel that it is an arduous undertaking to give at the price of the lowest, the matter of the highest. It is a new experiment in sporting literature to accost both high and low, to make the paper worthy of perusal by the polished courtier, and yet within the means of the humble artisan . . .”¹ Launched after the repeal of the Stamp Duty in 1855, the Sportsman and its peers among the penny sporting papers aimed to give a popular audience information about horse racing at a cheap price. Racing news was a subject with a long pedigree in the British press and the birth of the penny press gave a mass audience easier access to news about horse racing. This news refashioned horse racing from a sport based on local, periodic events of regional interest into one which attracted widespread national attention on a daily basis. At the time sporting news consisted of little more than horse racing because other sports lacked the organization and regularity needed to ensure public interest.²

The press capitalized on betting’s fundamental link to racing by publishing betting information under the “Sporting Intelligence” heading which, in turn, provided fuel for the organized commercial betting explosion of the second half of

¹ Sportsman, 12 August 1865, 4.

² George Scott, Reporter Anonymous: The Story of the Press Association (London: Hutchinson: 1968), 39.

the nineteenth century.³ By the mid-nineteenth century a large market of punters had emerged in Britain and the lowering of tariffs on newspaper publishing gave proprietors an opportunity to feed the hunger of Britons for betting intelligence.⁴ Racing news connected racing, betting, and the press in a synergistic association as the press collected, reported, and effectively gave legitimacy to the racing news bettors studied each day in search of a winner.⁵ Both the general daily and the sporting varieties of penny newspapers democratized access to the training reports, racing entries, starting prices, and race predictions required for bettors to place an informed bet.⁶ By the end of the 1880s any morning or evening newspaper in pursuit of a mass audience realized that quality racing news, including predictions from a racing prophet, promised a significant boost in circulation.

³ Ross McKibbin, "Working-class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939," in The Ideologies of Class (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 120; David Dixon, From Prohibition to Regulation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 43; Mark Clapson, A Bit of a Flutter (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 29.

⁴ David C. Itzkowitz, "Victorian Bookmakers and Their Customers," Victorian Studies, 32 (1988), 9; Carl Chinn, Better Betting with a Decent Feller: Betting and the British Working Class 1750-1990 (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 69-70. Clapson, Flutter, illustrates that workers in Manchester were betting in the new betting shops of the 1840s, 22-23. Ross McKibbin, "Working-class Gambling," 102-103, claims the betting market began its growth during the 1880s.

⁵ This concept is a variation of Tony Mason's description of the connection between football and the press as "sybiotic." Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915 (hereafter AF) (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), 187.

⁶ Ellen Ross, Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1914 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 73.

The Growth of Racing News

The nineteenth-century sporting press allowed sport to develop into a significant institution in Victorian society by publicizing, promoting, and furnishing the public with information about sport. Although many sports, including football, benefited from the information published by the many sporting newspapers launched in the second half of the nineteenth century, horse racing was the chief beneficiary. The publication of racing and betting news in the penny sporting papers allowed even working men access to the valuable details necessary to make an informed bet. Not surprisingly, most daily non-sporting newspapers in pursuit of a popular audience soon realized that quality racing news, including predictions from a racing prophet, promised a significant boost in circulation. Racing news was news that sold newspapers.

Sporting news was long a topic of ancillary interest to the daily press during the first seventy-five years or so of the nineteenth century. The sport with the longest pedigree of coverage in newspapers was horse racing. Even before the arrival of the penny sporting newspapers following the repeal of the Stamp Duty in 1855, daily newspapers provided racing information to their readers. This news was not a specialized topic with organizational or typographical features to set it apart from the small, tightly-packed type which filled a newspaper's columns. Usually, it consisted of the previous day's results and the entries for the day's racing with an occasional article describing the anticipation or result of a big race. Papers as diverse as The Times, the Manchester Guardian, and even the Chartist journal, the Northern Star, published results from horse race meetings. Throughout the nineteenth century the

classic races - the Derby, the St. Leger, the Two Thousand Guineas, the One Thousand Guineas, and the Oaks - and the sporting competitions between Oxford and Cambridge generated public interest.

The scope and dimension of sporting news in the daily press was minuscule in 1875 compared with that of 1900. In the 1870s the scant results of provincial meetings were non-existent in the non-London dailies and without daily sporting newspapers the interested public had to wait for the Sheet Calendar or the Saturday weeklies to furnish the results. Those interested in results from meetings not reported in London papers relied on information available from pubs which had the results wired directly from the racing towns.⁷ The sporting press had expanded into a daily format when the Sportsman became a daily publication in 1876, and soon the Sporting Chronicle and the Sporting Life followed. These papers conveyed vital information about racing to individuals interested in betting on the Turf. During the 1880s newspapers, especially the evening papers, began to see the importance of racing news to attract potential readers. By 1895 most daily newspapers published race programs, starting prices, predictions, and betting news, and fought against the criticism of anti-gamblers.⁸ While this “excellent information” was probably of little use to veteran bettors, who might evaluate form and make selections using Ruff's Guide to the Turf, which appeared twice annually, for those with a small amount to bet, the daily newspaper offered many of the racing particulars needed to place an

⁷ Charles Richardson, The English Turf, ed. E. T. Sachs (London: Methuen, 1901), 1-2.

⁸ W. J. K., “Betting and Gambling,” Westminster Review, 140 (1895): 145.

informed bet.⁹ In his study of working-class gambling, Ross McKibbin has argued that the popular and sporting press began to court a larger audience with the publication of starting-price odds and race results during the 1880s. This easily accessible information in turn made off-course betting on horse racing much easier.¹⁰ Another historian, Tony Mason, has tentatively identified the nineties as the “key decade so far as the sports consciousness of the daily press is concerned.” No one can dispute his argument that for sports in general “certainly no paper beginning then and aiming for a popular readership felt that it could neglect sporting news.”¹¹

While general sports coverage seems to have increased during the 1890s, with increasing attention paid to sports like football and cricket, the 1880s was the decade in which newspapers eager to appeal to a mass audience transformed the nature of racing news on a large scale. In various ways, the emergence of the evening press was the catalyst for these changes in “sporting intelligence,” as racing news was known at the time. By 1892, a racing insider observed that

nowadays every newspaper of importance has to furnish a daily modicum of sporting intelligence, which proprietors find to be a costly item in the ever increasing sum of their expenditure. But it is a circumstance that cannot be helped; there is in reality more interest taken in the handicaps for the Cesarewitch and the Cambridgeshire by

⁹ Louis Henry Curzon, A Mirror of the Turf (London: Chapman and Hall, 1892), 183.

¹⁰ McKibbin, 102-103.

¹¹ “Sporting News, 1860-1914” in The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Centuries, eds. Michael Harris and Alan Lee (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986), 174.

five-sixths of the daily readers of the daily newspapers than there is in all the other items of news added together . . . ¹²

Reader demand for racing news kept it in the columns of the daily press as editors fed that demand. Circulation increased with the inclusion of racing, according to newspapermen and journalists. As A. Dick Luckman, ex-sporting editor and racing writer ("The Scout" of the Daily Express), explained, "yes, indeed, racing is before any other sport in attracting a big circulation."¹³ Regular coverage of racing in daily newspapers, whether sporting or non-sporting enabled interested people to bet on a sport they might not have been able to follow so easily.

Newspaper trade publications publicized the positive impact racing had on newspaper circulation. While the morning papers specialized in providing the latest information from the course, the evenings had access to the latest results from meetings around the country and racing news had a greater impact on their daily sales. The arrival of halfpenny evening newspapers meant people could purchase papers on a daily basis. For some of these readers, the main incentive for buying a newspaper was its racing news. "The evening newspaper that is first on the streets with the winner of the Grand National or Derby, or with any important item of news, gets the first sale. The newspaper that is behind has to pay the same for its news, but through its lackadaisical methods, loses many would-be purchasers," revealed the

¹² Curzon, 183.

¹³ A. Dick Luckman, Sharps, Flats, Gamblers and Racehorses (London: Grant Richards, 1914), 187.

author of a series of articles on newspaper production.¹⁴ Many of the readers who bought evening newspapers for their racing results, no doubt had placed a bet on a horse and were curious whether fortune had smiled upon them. A paper's racing tipster could also draw readers.

With the opening of the flat-racing season in late March, evening papers counted on racing news to increase their circulations. According to the Circulation Manager, racing news acted like a "tonic" when the news season was slow by raising circulation between twelve and twenty percent over what it was when no racing occurred.¹⁵ The jump in circulation was not restricted to London, as provincial papers experienced similar bounces. Many halfpenny evening papers offered early editions for sale, sometimes even before noon, which were small versions consisting of racing and betting news. Most were labeled the "one o'clock edition."¹⁶ By 1913 these early editions doubled, and sometimes tripled, similar evening newspaper sales during the off-season, while the editions out after four o'clock increased five to ten percent.¹⁷

¹⁴ R. K., "Some Notes on Newspaper Production - VIII.," Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1905, 5.

¹⁵ Circulation Manager, March 1913, 5; for a less optimistic view see Circulation Manager, March 1914, 9.

¹⁶ Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Betting (hereafter Betting), Parliamentary Papers (hereafter PP), 1902 (389) vol. 5, p. 75, qq. 1599-1600.

¹⁷ Circulation Manager, March 1913, 5.

Even though racing's effect on morning newspapers was never as beneficial as it was on their evening brethren, it had become an essential component of the popular press by the 1890s. Two of the most successful of the mass circulation newspapers launched in the 1890s, the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, founded in 1900, both incorporated racing news as a regular feature. The original editor of the Daily Mail, Kennedy Jones, was an avid racing fan, but Alfred Harmsworth, the proprietor had no interest in the sport. Harmsworth recognized its importance to a paper's public appeal, however, and made sure the Mail contained racing news, even coining the pseudonym of the Mail's racing prophet, "Robin Goodfellow," which is still seen in the paper today.¹⁸ The other leading halfpenny paper, the Daily Express, also included racing news as well as the enduring tipster, "The Scout." Racing news had come to play an essential role in the success of the popular press.

The Production of Racing News

What methods did newspapers use to obtain and print their sporting intelligence so quickly? Technological innovations in the field of communications meant that by 1900 any Londoner could learn the results of meetings as distant as Manchester, within minutes. A truly national racing circuit had emerged by the turn of the century as racing fans and punters throughout Britain were able to follow racing beyond their local meetings. Newspapers employing the services of telegraphs

¹⁸ Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London: Cassell, 1959), 202. According to the authors, "there were few days on which [Kennedy Jones] did not have a bet."

enabled literate Britons to follow racing in the press. Racing broke out of its regional concentration with the developments in transportation in the 1830s. A national circuit of horse-race meetings developed from the half a dozen regional circuits due to the ease of transport provided by the railways.¹⁹

Railways were not the sole cause of racing becoming “the amusement of the many instead of the comparatively few.”²⁰ The arrival of the telegraph meant that racing results from anywhere around the country were available within minutes of the finish of a race. In 1840, the Paisley Advertiser reported that Paisley race-course planned to install a telegraph system to communicate race results to list-house keepers and that these plans interested other courses.²¹ “List bookies” posted their odds in public houses, billiard rooms, and sporting tobacconists.²² Before 1840, and for some years after, carrier pigeons communicated results until telegraph lines had reached race courses. Riders on horseback also delivered results, and as late as 1840 crowds gathered on Waterloo Bridge and the Strand to witness the Bell’s Life

¹⁹ “Art.,” “Horse-racing,” Quarterly Review, 161 (October 1885): 441-469; Wray Vamplew, The Turf (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 17-61; Vamplew, “The Sport of Kings and Commoners: the Commercialization of British Horse-Racing in the Nineteenth Century,” in Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History, eds. R. Cashman and M. McKernan (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 307-325; Vamplew, Pav Up and Play the Game (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 47; John Tolson and Wray Vamplew, “Derailed: Railways and Horse-racing Revisited,” Sports Historian 18, no. 2 (1998): 34-49; Mike Huggins, Flat Racing and British Society, 1790-1914 (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 25-26.

²⁰ “Art.,” 452.

²¹ “Paisley Races,” Paisley Advertiser, 11 July 1840, cited in Chinn, 69.

²² Itzkowitz, 12.

messenger race past with word of the Derby outcome.²³ Newmarket did not announce plans for the construction of an on-course telegraph office connected by underground wire to the railway office until 1860. Prior to the new arrangements riders traveled across town carrying information and later the results posted on the course were viewed with a telescope at the railway telegraph station. The latter method, unfortunately, only worked when the weather cooperated and the telescope had a clear view of the results displayed on the course.²⁴

Private telegraph companies came into existence in the 1840s and 1850s, and the first news services transmitted sports and business news to newsrooms, clubs, and public houses via the telegraph.²⁵ A “virtual” monopoly on news conveyed by wire existed by the 1860s, as the three major telegraph companies launched an Intelligence Unit for the press making for a costly service which provincial papers found both undependable and inadequate. The Press Association (PA), a cooperative news gathering agency, was formed in 1868 out of the provincial papers’ need for a cheap and reliable news service.²⁶ The group who founded the PA, the Provincial Newspaper Society, lobbied for state control of the telegraphs, and in 1870 an Act of

²³ Scott, Reporter Anonymous, 18; J. D. Symon, The Press and Its Story (London: Seeley, Service and Company, 1914), 93-94.

²⁴ The Times, 12 March 1860, 12.

²⁵ Alan J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 60.

²⁶ For the history of the Press Association, see Scott, Reporter Anonymous.

Parliament gave the Post Office authority over the telegraph companies and set transmission rates. Charges for press telegrams were cheaper than private telegrams, and the PA and other news agencies created over the next few years took advantage as the use of the “wire” for news dispatches substantially increased.²⁷ According to an appreciative Bell's Life, with the Post Office takeover, the traffic in dispatches had increased over two hundred percent in two years to almost a quarter of a million messages.²⁸ With the telegraph, news agencies could collect information from various geographically distant sporting events, classify the results, and forward them to newspapers throughout Britain.²⁹

While the PA served provincial newspapers, agencies like the Central News also supplied other customers such as hotels and working men's clubs with news, much of it of a sporting nature. An 1874 advertising prospectus from the Central News that historian Lucy Brown has uncovered, offered customers a sporting news service with the always important London betting, and the description and results of the day's racing for £2 11s. per month.³⁰ The general news service of the Exchange

²⁷ See Lucy Brown, Victorian News and Newspapers (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 13-15, on rates and 120-125, on agencies and their news services.

²⁸ Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle (hereafter Bell's Life), 20 January 1872, 6.

²⁹ L. Brown, 124.

³⁰ L. Brown, 120-121.

Telegraph Company, founded in 1872, included sporting news in the regular service they offered as the following excerpt from the 1883 tariff indicates:

GENERAL NEWS CLASS I. - Giving all the important	Monthly
News which transpires from 9 a.m.	Charge
to 6 p.m., including Foreign Telegrams ..	£3 0 0
The same to 3 p.m.	1 10 0
CLASS II. - Giving the more important	
portion of Class I., two or three Tele-	
grams daily, between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m.	1 6 0
The results of the Derby, Oaks, Two Thousand	
Guineas, Ascot Cup, Chester Cup, St. Leger,	
Cesarewitch, Cambridgeshire, The Great Boat	
Races, and the Winners of the Waterloo Cup,	
Purse, and Plate are included in General News,	
Class I and II.	
EVENING NEWS, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. ..	0 15 0
SUNDAY NEWS, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ..	0 8 8 ³¹

The above notice only includes prestigious national sporting events and omits most of the race meetings occurring throughout the year plus cricket and football results.

For each race meeting the PA and Central News sent a staff of between four and eight journalists, depending on the importance of the meeting. Each journalist had a certain responsibility: one or more men obtained the starting prices in the betting ring while another “read” the race by describing the action on the course and still another recorded the “reader’s” account. After the race, the journalists interviewed the jockeys and compared their written report to the jockeys’ accounts before writing the text they sent to the papers.³² According to Arthur M. Binstead,

³¹ J. M. Scott, Extel 100. A Centenary History of the Electric Telegraph Company (London: Ernest Benn, 1972), 31-32.

³² Richardson, 3.

who wrote for the Sporting Times as “Pitcher,” by 1904 two-thirds of the racing journalists worked for one of the large press agencies. These journalists wrote reports of various lengths for each race. A 150 word digest was sent out by telegraph immediately after the race. A fuller account of 300 words was dispatched a little later, while a third report contained the betting information from the ring, and a fourth sketch provided the introduction: “that part of a daily racing report in which the reporter dallies with the meteorological outlook, speculates on the strength of the company and the state of the going, and criticises the starter.”³³ Some evening newspapers arranged for their reporters to wire parts of reports which they had written prior to leaving for the race course. Before leaving the office a journalist might compose an introduction containing the history of a particular race or meeting, or what a meeting promised in terms of horses expected to run.³⁴

A specialized knowledge of racing was not a prerequisite for a journalist. While one late nineteenth-century racing journalist argued that “race-reporting is quite easy,” another racing journalist of a later generation claimed that, “it is a safe and common assumption in Fleet Street that however little a writer knows on most subjects, nineteen out of twenty readers know less.”³⁵ Often sporting writers had no

³³ Arthur M. Binstead, A Pink ‘Un and a Pelican (London: Sand and Co., 1904), 20.

³⁴ R. K., “Some Notes on Newspaper Production-VIII,” Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1905, 5.

³⁵ Martin Cobbett, The Man on the March (London: Bliss, Sands and Co., 1896), 32; Percy Swaffer, Fleet Street Goes Racing (London: Hutchinson, 1939), 14.

regular routine due to their constant movement from week to week and had to adapt to various environments to complete their articles. One journalist explained that his stories were “scribbled in turn in the press-room, in trains, at offices, at home, or probably over a meal at an hotel or restaurant.”³⁶ At the turn of the century copy was not due as early for morning newspapers as during the 1930s, and without the emphasis on speed, writing and then telegraphing or telephoning copy into the office before leaving the course was not necessary. Journalists in 1900 had more freedom to wine and dine before composing an article which often resulted in “more flowery and . . . more entertaining and provocative copy,” according to Percy Swaffer writing in the 1930s.³⁷ For most of their reports, journalists worked independently of their colleagues from rival papers as they conducted “patient research and analysis” and drafted their racing articles.³⁸ The Grand National at Aintree, however, was one assignment where journalists worked in unison. With its four and a half mile length and huge field of horses, this steeplechase was impossible to cover alone. Journalists drew on their interviews of jockeys and on their colleagues’ accounts to reconstruct the long journey over the treacherous course.³⁹

³⁶ “A Tipster,” “Tipsters and Tipping,” in The Racing World and Its Inhabitants, ed. Alfred E. T. Watson (London: Macmillan, 1904), 306. These chapters previously had appeared in Badminton Magazine.

³⁷ Swaffer, 13.

³⁸ Martin Cobbett, Racing Life and Racing Characters (London: Sands and Co., 1903), 244.

³⁹ Swaffer, 18.

Results from big races like the Grand National and the Derby were extremely important to evening papers and their circulations. By 1913 many of these papers had arrangements in place like the following to ensure that Derby week was their biggest circulation week of the year: “the London papers under their present excellent arrangements are able to put the paper on sale containing the result within a minute and a half of the winner passing the post, but rapid as this is, it is maintained by some keen editors and managers that it will be possible to do this almost instantaneously.” One London evening attempted on one occasion to use “the Marconi system of wireless telegraphy,” before it was a proven technology, by setting up the system at Epsom Downs and linking it to its headquarters. Not knowing if the system was reliable, however, the paper decided against the scheme.⁴⁰

Many newspapers used telephones as well as telegrams to receive and deliver the most up-to-date news possible to the public. Although newspapers might have private telephones for inter-departmental communication, the most important telephone was the Post Office telephone, by which papers received race results. With the Post Office telephone installed next to an “inside” telephone, a compositor in the printing room had all of the horses’ names in type and was ready to put them in order when the results arrived. At one newspaper, the installation of an “inside” phone for such ease of communication cost 30s., which was recouped easily by the extra papers sold in one week.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Circulation Manager, May 1913, 14.

⁴¹ R. K., Newspaper Owner, 8 April, 1905, 5.

Some evening newspapers also employed private telephone lines connecting them with race courses, football grounds, and cricket fields. At the newspaper offices, in the sub-editor's room

as telephonic copy is being written out it can be placed, folio by folio, in a box (with two compartments) stationed in a small aperture in the partitions and turned over to the sub-editor's side of the screen. The box causes a slight click, and the copy boy, or someone near, removes the folio, and turns back the box, thus keeping the composing room well ahead by not delaying several sheets of important news matter until a quantity has accumulated.⁴²

Technology had enabled newspapers to collect, classify, and publish more racing news with greater efficiency as it became increasingly important to a newspaper's circulation.

The Sporting Press

The publication of "sporting intelligence" designed to appeal to an increasing market of avid bettors was instrumental in making horse racing and, especially, the gambling associated with it a national institution. As the Daily Telegraph observed in 1866, "practically, the only 'sport' which in England may fairly be described as national is comprised in the single word 'horse racing.'"⁴³ Long before the penny literature came on the market, Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle

⁴² R. K., Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1905, 5. One Lancashire evening paper used private telephones to transmit police and court news and it was so efficient that its one o'clock edition had "full police-court" reports from six or seven Lancashire towns.

⁴³ Daily Telegraph, 20 August, 1866, 4

established itself as a unique institution in British newspaper publishing, a paper which concentrated on sporting news. With its distinctive motto, “Nunquam Dormio” - we never sleep - and its eternally open eye occupying the center of its masthead, Bell's Life, which first appeared in 1822, contained police intelligence, theater reviews, and other information about London life. The paper, however, built its early success upon its chronicling of prize fighting and pedestrianism, and by 1847, Bell's Life was claiming that its sales each week exceeded 26,000.⁴⁴ For British sportsmen, Bell's Life was the Saturday paper they could not do without, welcome in the homes of the highborn and also revered as ‘The Poor Man’s Bible’ in the pubs where it was consulted.⁴⁵ More than one sporting enthusiast recalled the “literary feast” Bell's experts prepared for each issue. Sporting journalist Robert Patrick Watson declared it “a wonderful revelation to the man of sport” whose “life would have been a blank without it.”⁴⁶ Dyke Wilkinson, a bookmaker and a contributor to the Licensed Victualler's Gazette under the pseudonym, “The Old Guv’nor,” reminisced that reading Bell's as a child was his “chief delight.”⁴⁷ Public

⁴⁴ Bell's Life, 23 May 1847.

⁴⁵ Robert Patrick Watson, Memoirs of Robert Patrick Watson (London: Smith, Ainslie, 1899), 343-344. The New University Club subscribed to Bell's Life. See Steven Koss, The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain, vol. 1 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1981), 159.

⁴⁶ R. P. Watson, 343.

⁴⁷ Dyke Wilkinson, A Wasted Life (London: Grant Richards, 1902), 17.

school students used the weekly as a textbook to supplement their sporting education on the playing fields of Rugby.⁴⁸

More importantly, perhaps, was Bell's relationship to the culture of sports gambling. The results of sporting contests published each week in its columns governed the monetary transactions of bookmakers and gamblers.⁴⁹ It also featured challenges offered and accepted by athletes eager for competition and a chance to win a stake.⁵⁰ What follows is one example out of scores printed in each issue:

JOHN DAVIS of Newbridge accepts the challenge of Manks (the Warwickshire Antelope) and will run him at Landsdown, six weeks after his race with Maxfield, two miles for £100 a side. Mr T. Spring to be stakeholder. A letter addressed to the Maltsters' Arms, Newbridge, Glamorganshire will be immediately attended to. Each party must bear his own expenses. Davis says that he hopes after his races with Maxfield and Manks he will be able to accomodate Jackson (the American Deer).⁵¹

Due to its stature and reliability, Bell's Life frequently acted as the stake holder for contests; Tony Mason has uncovered evidence which estimated that the paper

⁴⁸ Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's School-Days (first published, 1857; Reprint, Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1993).

⁴⁹ R. P. Watson, 343.

⁵⁰ For earlier challenges published in periodicals, see Adrian Harvey, "The Evolution of Modern British Sporting Culture 1793-1850" (Ph.D. thesis, Oxford University, 1995), 94.

⁵¹ Bell's Life, 23 May 1847, 7.

handled between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a year during the 1850s.⁵² The paper's influence also stretched to the limited mediation of sporting controversies.⁵³

The first issue of Bell's Life brought out by Robert Bell, appeared on March 3, 1822, and by June it had incorporated its rival paper Life in London, which had made its debut in January. Only two years later, Bell's Life had a new owner, William James Clement, the proprietor of the Observer and the Morning Chronicle, and the publisher of William Cobbett's Weekly Register. Under the capable hand of Clement, Bell's circulation grew from an estimated 3,000 to over 30,000.⁵⁴ In 1827, Clement bought another rival paper, Pierce Egan's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle, which the noted and enterprising journalist had begun in 1824, after his dismissal from Bell's Weekly Dispatch.⁵⁵ The key to Bell's prosperity was Clement's moving the journalist Vincent George Dowling from the Observer to Bell's Life in 1824. Dowling edited the latter until his death in 1852.⁵⁶ The

⁵² Mason, "Sporting News, 1860-1914," 169.

⁵³ Harvey, 116-119.

⁵⁴ Stanley Morison, The English Newspaper: Some Account of the Physical Development of Journals Printed in London between 1622 and the Present Day (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), 243. According to Morison, Robert Bell of Bell's Life was not the same Robert Bell who edited Bell's Weekly Dispatch. Frederic Boase, Modern English Biography, vol. 1 (first published 1892; Reprint, New York: Barnes and Noble, 1965:), col. 644.

⁵⁵ Morison, 246; John Ford, Prizefighting: The Age of Regency Boximania (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), 176; J. C. Reid, Bucks and Bruisers: Pierce Egan and Regency England (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), 127.

⁵⁶ Illustrated London News, 13 November 1852, 406. This issue also included an engraved portrait of Dowling on page 408.

editorship remained in the family after Dowling's death, as his son Frank took over and guided the paper for a further fifteen years.

As the spread of railways revolutionized the turf during the late 1830s and 1840s the coverage of horse racing in Bell's Life increased. Owners began to race their horses all over Britain as the new transport network enabled horses to travel great distances. More importantly, attendance climbed as eager followers of the turf could attend race meetings far from home. Greater attendance swelled the race committees' funds as spectators' spending on food, drink, and gaming enabled the committees to charge more for booth rentals.⁵⁷ By the 1850s racing was no longer a regionally-based national sport of long distance heats run by older horses. It had been transformed into an exciting national sport based on its schedule of major meetings with modified race programs. Younger horses racing in sprints and handicaps, rather than the long distance events of old, provided an uncertainty about the result that ensured exciting racing and an enticing betting market for punters.⁵⁸

Bell's Life regularly covered horse racing and it tapped into the increasing interest in the turf at a price far below that of other sporting periodicals. Followers of

⁵⁷ Mike Huggins, Flat Racing and British Society, 1790-1914 (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 118-119 and 125-126.

⁵⁸ On the changes in horse racing, see Wray Vamplew, The Turf (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 17-61; "The Sport of Kings and Commoners: the Commercialization of British Horse-Racing in the Nineteenth Century," in Sport in History, eds. R. Cashman and M. McKernan (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1979), 307-325; and Huggins, 18-37. Vamplew's Pay Up and Play the Game (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 77-180, explores the importance of uncertainty in attracting spectators to sporting events.

the turf needed reliable, up-to-date information, and monthlies like the Sporting Magazine, not only were published too infrequently, but their price of 2s. 6d., put them out of the reach of everyone but the well off.⁵⁹ Even at a price of 6d. (7d. stamped), which fell to 5d. (6d. stamped) in the 1860s due to competition from penny rivals, Bell's Life was well beyond the means of the working-class punter.⁶⁰ For a time in 1869 and 1870, the four page Wednesday issue sold for 1d. and the eight page Saturday issue was 2d., but the discount did not last long as the price steadily increased back to 6d. by 1873. Aimed at an educated audience, it found its way into respectable households as an exemplar of sporting virtue.⁶¹ As the Sporting Mirror recalled in 1881, until the birth of the penny sporting press, Bell's Life had been the only oasis in a desert of sporting news: "We individually can of course remember the old days, long before the cheapest sporting literature came into the market, and when Bell's Life in London was the only medium whereby turf and other intelligence became circulated."⁶²

The journalist responsible for much of the paper's early success as a racing paper was William Ruff. Ruff was with the paper for over twenty-five years, and had inherited the editor's chair in the Turf department from his father. His turf reports

⁵⁹ The Sporting Magazine acquired the New Sporting Magazine in 1846, a year after it had merged with the Sportsman and the Sporting Review. Harvey, 120.

⁶⁰ See below, page 54.

⁶¹ "The Sporting Press," Saturday Review, 9 February 1856, 275.

⁶² Sporting Mirror 1 (July 1881): 188.

also appeared in the daily papers and the name Ruff became a ‘household word’ because of his popular Guide to the Turf, which first appeared in 1842. Bell’s Life noted the importance of his work at his death in 1857: “the utmost reliance was at all times placed upon the accuracy and impartiality of his reports; and his honesty and integrity were unbounded.”⁶³

The repeal of the Stamp Duty on periodicals in 1855 had offered an opportunity for enterprising publishers to tap into a new market demanding sporting intelligence. Four years passed before an inexpensive competitor challenged the supremacy of Bell’s Life in providing sporting news to the public. On March 24, 1859, Penny Bell’s Life and Sporting News, the first penny sporting paper, appeared as an inexpensive alternative to Bell’s. Together George Maddick and Samuel O. Beeton produced the penny namesake of the original sporting weekly, under the editorship of Henry M. Feist and soon they were in court defending the use of the name “Bell” in their title. The new weekly merely sought to cover the same journalistic ground as the venerable Bell’s Life, according to the defendants, not to fool the public into believing it was a penny edition of its rival. A court order quashed the name, but the paper, under its new banner, the Sporting Life, became a formidable challenger to the supremacy of Bell’s Life.⁶⁴

⁶³ Bell’s Life, 4 January 1857, 4.

⁶⁴ H. R. Fox Bourne, English Newspapers, vol. 2 (London: Chatto and Windus, 1887), 321; Charles Moore, “The Sporting Press,” Newspaper Press Directory (1903), 89.

The Sporting Life was the first cheap, quality newspaper to concentrate on covering sport. Like Bell's Life, the main news offering of the new publication was horse racing, a development which meant that "the narratives of the turf are no longer confined to old-fashioned journals, the circulations of which limited them to the bar of a tavern or the trainer's table."⁶⁵ The Sporting Life featured the authoritative racing journalism of Henry Feist, who had authored the "Hotspur" column of racing intelligence in the Daily Telegraph for a time.⁶⁶ Feist's father, Charles, had educated numerous jockeys over the eighteen years he had operated a school in Newmarket, while also working as the Newmarket correspondent for the Sunday Times. Following the career path of his father, Henry edited the Sporting Life and wrote a column for it under the pseudonym "Augur" until his death in 1874. Charles Blake, who had written for the paper since 1868, succeeded Feist in the editor's chair and his tenure lasted until 1891. The Sporting Life publicized Blake's expert opinion on horse flesh because he was a veterinary surgeon.⁶⁷

The new entry into the market appeared on newsstands on Wednesdays and Saturdays for over twenty years before expanding to four days a week in 1881, adding Tuesday and Thursday editions. With the "great sports craze" in full swing by

⁶⁵ Sporting Life, 22 August 1866, 2.

⁶⁶ Sporting Mirror 1 (May 1881): 107; Fox Bourne, 2:321; Boase, vol. 1, cols. 1031-1032.

⁶⁷ Sporting Life, 28 March 1883, 2; Mason, "Sporting News," 181.

the 1880s demand increased as did the supply of sporting material to be published.⁶⁸ Only two years later the Sporting Life became a daily paper in an attempt to adapt to and take advantage of the developments associated with sport and its audience. As it explained,

new things are continually cropping up, and the world of sport, like every other world of greater or less importance is undergoing change, and 'knowing no finality.' Hence, in our wish to adapt sporting journalism to sporting requirements, it has been decided, according to plentiful notices given in previous issues to bring out the Sporting Life daily. We have not adopted this course without a great amount of study and calculation, but we take the forward step with unqualified confidence.⁶⁹

This confidence seems to have been well-founded if we believe the announcement intended to attract advertisers which regularly appeared on Sporting Life's front page two years later: "LARGEST CIRCULATION OF ANY SPORTING PAPER IN THE WORLD." As early as 1876 the paper had claimed a weekly circulation of over 200,000.⁷⁰

Although the development of organized sport prompted expanded coverage by both Bell's Life and the Sporting Life, these papers also experienced new competition. Where there had only been weekly publications, in 1865 a penny upstart, published twice weekly on Tuesday and Saturday, arrived. In its first issue it

⁶⁸ John Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914 (New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 3.

⁶⁹ Sporting Life, 28 March 1883, 2.

⁷⁰ Sporting Life, 10 May 1876, 2.

fearlessly put forth its challenge: "racing has always formed, and must continue to form, the most prominent feature in an English sporting newspaper. THE SPORTSMAN fears no rival in this branch of its contents." In fact, the Sportsman claimed that its two competitors, feeling threatened by this new addition to the sporting press, had refused to run advertisements hailing its debut. The new journal did not neglect the rest of the sporting world in its eight pages: its first issue included a report on "The Championship of the Thames" rowing contest, over a page's worth of information on cricket, and promised that "Pedestrianism, much neglected by the sporting press, and yet as deserving of a 'sacred poet' now, as in days of yore, we intend to make a special feature."⁷¹

A decade later, the Sportsman increased its output from two days a week to four, including a double edition on Saturday of eight pages for twopence. Most importantly, only a year later, it announced its debut as perhaps the first daily sporting paper in the world by telling readers that

with the publication of the present number of The Sportsman commences a fresh chapter in the history of the newspaper press. Until now there was never issued, either in England or abroad, a sporting daily paper. The first to project and execute such an idea, we enter upon the task in the full persuasion of success. It has seemed to us that the time was ripe for the experiment.⁷²

The architect behind this success was Charles Hitchen Ashley, who had been on the racing staff of the Sporting Life before becoming the lead racing reporter of the

⁷¹ Sportsman, 12 August 1865, 4

⁷² Sportsman, 20 March, 1876, 2.

Sportsman soon after its launch in 1865. Ashley also ran a racing results service which first furnished intelligence to the telegraph companies and then to the Press Association after its formation in 1868.⁷³ He ascended the journalistic ladder to the top of publishing in 1874, becoming a partner in the Sportsman and ensuring its position as a leading sporting paper.⁷⁴ Each issue featured “Vigilant’s Note Book,” whose numerous authors included John Corlett, longtime proprietor of the twopence weekly, the Sporting Times, and his successor as “Vigilant,” J. Mitchell.⁷⁵ The experiment was such a success that over three decades later, a prominent commentator labeled it the “leading” sporting paper in London.⁷⁶

From the northwest, another penny racing paper entered the business of supplying turf intelligence in 1871, the Manchester Prophetic Bell. Edward Hulton, a compositor with the Manchester Guardian, as his son recalled, had impressed E. O. Bleakley, a cotton broker, with his study of form, and received a £100 investment from Bleakley to launch a racing newspaper.⁷⁷ With great foresight Hulton envisioned Manchester as a greater press center for regional distribution than London because of its railway service and its greater concentration of population within a fifty

⁷³ Scott, Reporter Anonymous, 39.

⁷⁴ Sporting Mirror 2 (November 1881): 118.

⁷⁵ Sporting Mirror 1 (June 1881): 149. In 1888, “Vigilant” was the subject of a profile by “Captain Coe” in the Star, 8 December 1888, 2.

⁷⁶ Hugh Chisholm, “British Newspapers,” Encyclopaedia Britannica, 11th ed., vol. 19, 562.

⁷⁷ Master Printer and Newspaper Owner, 14 April 1904, 14.

mile radius. The northern public eagerly interested in sport could receive sporting news hours earlier from a Manchester paper than one published in London.⁷⁸ Hulton parlayed this vision and Bleakley's faith in his handicapping ability into a publishing empire which, at his death in 1904, published an estimated five million copies of various journals per week.⁷⁹ Not only did Hulton edit and publish the Prophetic Bell, which became the Sporting Chronicle in 1875, but he created a full range of newspaper publications in Manchester, including the Athletic News, the Sunday Chronicle, the Evening Chronicle, and the Daily Dispatch. Although I have not found any corroborating evidence, a journalist who worked for Hulton has claimed that the empire set up satellites of the Sporting Chronicle in other Northern towns, including Newcastle, to print and distribute "local 'tissues'".⁸⁰

The four-page Sporting Chronicle, available Tuesday through Friday, offered the requisite advertisements on page one as a nod to respectability, followed by the daily feature, "a digestive article . . . from the eminently prophetic pen of 'Kettledrum.'"⁸¹ "Kettledrum's Notes," written by Hulton, appeared in each issue and provided his racing predictions for the day. The sporting paper also included notes on greyhound racing, or coursing as it was known, and intelligence from the

⁷⁸ Alex M. Thompson, Here I Lie: The Memorial of an Old Journalist (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1937), 41.

⁷⁹ Master Printer and Newspaper Owner, 14 April 1904, 14.

⁸⁰ A. Thompson, 42.

⁸¹ Sporting Chronicle, 19 January 1875, 3.

Chronicle's Newmarket correspondent along with results from a wide variety of sports like shooting, pedestrianism, billiards, boxing, and aquatics.

Like the other successful sporting papers, by the 1880s the Sporting Chronicle had become a daily, while also expanding from six to seven columns, and eventually eight columns. Although the Sporting Chronicle was a paper which provided national coverage of racing, it also retained its local flavor and published results and short descriptions of a variety of sporting competitions in the greater Manchester area. Occasionally, its leaders would promote sports other than racing, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Hare and Hounds afford good practice for those who aspire to distinction on the cinder-path, particularly over the longer distances; and Football is one of the noblest and most manly of our games calling for the exercise of a high degree of courage, coolness, resolution, nerve, and other attributes which are essential to a man's success in life.⁸²

Sporting papers offered readers far more than just the information printed in their columns. Telegraph services were an extension of the papers' mission to report and comment on the state of racing. For a separate fee, papers supplied up-to-the-minute racing results from anywhere in Britain for readers unwilling to wait for their publication in evening or morning editions. The results could be wired to them for 2s. as soon as horses had crossed the finish line.⁸³ Bettors eager for tips with an air of exclusivity could sign up for a paper's telegraphic intelligence service. The

⁸² Sporting Chronicle, 11 March 1875, 2.

⁸³ Sporting Life, 28 March 1883, 2.

paper's advertisements billed these tips as providing better chances for betting success because they included the latest racing intelligence. A simple fee ensured a bettor access to this "latest" intelligence that could not make it into a paper's columns.

The columns of sporting papers were not the only way the press publicized and promoted sport. Each paper exploited the expansion of literacy and the diversity of sport by publishing an array of sporting guides, annuals, and almanacs full of information for the follower of sport. These publications ranged from the Sportsman Special, available every race day, to the Sporting Life Racing Guide, issued every Saturday, to the Sporting Chronicle Annual, and they supplemented the information available in their daily namesakes.⁸⁴ Although they concentrated on horse racing in their columns and supplemental publications, all three daily sporting papers moved beyond just a single sport. The Sporting Life offered cricket score sheets for a penny each or ninepence a dozen while the Sporting Chronicle library included the Coursing Record, a complete report of greyhound meetings in Great Britain and Ireland.

Betting and the Penny Sporting Press

The appearance of penny sporting papers made racing news more accessible to the reading public. With its publication of starting prices, probable runners, race

⁸⁴ A few other guides published by the Sportsman included the Sportsman's Pocket Book: A Complete Record and Handy Work of Reference for the World of Sport, the Sportsman's Weekly Guide to the Turf, and the Sportsman's Monthly Guide to the Turf.

analysis, and predictions the penny sporting press was a key factor in the creation of a mass betting culture as these papers became popular among the public.⁸⁵ Even at its high price, Bell's Life had a wide audience spanning the aristocracy and the working class who read it in public houses.⁸⁶ Penny sporting papers like the Sporting Life and its followers, the Sportsman and the Manchester Sporting Chronicle became institutions in the sporting culture of British society because a leisure market of hundreds of thousands of Britons was ready for low cost sporting news. Each paper remained in business for over fifty years with the Sporting Life, after its merger with the Sportsman in 1924, continuing to spotlight the turf until the Mirror Group decided in 1998 to end "one of Britain's great sporting traditions."⁸⁷ Advertisements in the 1885 edition of the Newspaper Press Directory proclaimed that the Sporting Life "possesses the largest circulation of any Sporting Paper in the World," and that "the Sportsman has the largest circulation of any sporting paper."⁸⁸ With a cost of six times less than Bell's Life, the genre's pioneer, first the Sporting Life and then the Sportsman provided similar racing information and reports as Bell's Life. The Sporting Chronicle soon joined the duo of penny challengers to the supremacy of Bell's Life at the lower-priced end of sporting news. This trio of penny sporting

⁸⁵ W. J. K., 144-145; McKibbin, 102-103; Dixon, 43-44.

⁸⁶ Dyke Wilkinson, Rough Roads: Reminiscences of a Wasted Life (London: Sampson and Low, 1912), 11-12; Chinn, 69.

⁸⁷ Guardian, 5 March 1999, 23.

⁸⁸ Newspaper Press Directory (1885), 198 and 199.

papers democratized turf information allowing the working class ready access to intelligence previously available only to those in or close to the racing world. Their success and longevity helped to legitimate the papers as purveyors of reliable news; all three publications were still in business in 1920.

These three sporting papers claimed for themselves a legacy of making the Turf friendlier to large and small bettors alike. Their reports from race meetings and training centers, along with their publication of starting prices and race programs helped to eliminate a great deal of the fraud prevalent on the Turf. The sporting papers, metaphorically speaking, held a magnifying glass over the racing world in their quest to offer readers the latest sporting news. What the sporting press printed in its pages was practical information for those who bet on thoroughbred racehorses.⁸⁹ Correspondents and columnists analyzed the performances of horses both in competition and in training. They also scrutinized the movements in the betting markets for the benefit of their readers. All this informed opinion was meant to lower the amount of risk to a potential bettor. The happenings on the Turf no longer were clouded by the secrecy practiced by so many owners, trainers, and bookmakers to their monetary advantage and the eventual cost of the betting public. At the turn of the century an anonymous author writing in Badminton Magazine argued that these papers had lifted the veil shrouding the racing world because “few

⁸⁹ Huggins makes this point, although he claims that it was the work of the daily press between 1850 and 1860 and he does not provide any evidence from newspapers to back up his assertion, 99-100

things happen in the Turf world, either on a racecourse or at the numerous training centres, without their being immediately communicated to the general public.”⁹⁰

Sporting papers served the needs of the betting public by publishing racing information, and during the fifty-five years following the appearance of the Sporting Life, the sporting press built an audience hungry for sporting news. Betting in Britain was a centuries old pastime enjoyed by all social classes. Beginning in the 1860s penny sporting papers served bookmakers and their customers by providing training reports, starting prices, racing tips, and probable starters and jockeys. This information was crucial to the prospective bettor. During the last twenty years historians have begun to explore the historical dimensions of the Victorian and Edwardian betting public. The culture of betting on racehorses was one which cut across class lines as newspapers provided information which eager punters used to judge form. Handicapping a race is not an easy task as the bettor must consider the following variables: a horse’s pedigree, its past performances in both races and training, its jockey and the weight it must carry, the condition of the course, and then compare these against the same variables for every other horse in the race.

A few scholars have examined the culture and commercial expansion of betting in the latter half of the nineteenth century and have argued that betting had an intellectual character. As Ross McKibbin has pointed out, the purpose of consulting all the information in the press was to eliminate as much chance from the act of

⁹⁰ “A Tipster,” 291.

betting as possible.⁹¹ Working-class betting became an integral component of working-class culture and fueled the phenomenon of mass betting.⁹² Betting was not an activity practiced by the working class alone; in fact, many of the sporting publications were priced out of the reach of the working class. No doubt the latter could consult them in the numerous public houses which subscribed to them, but a publication could not survive on a circulation supported only by pubs. The sporting press' readership had to extend to the middle class for the papers to survive, since the only papers the working class purchased with any regularity before 1900 were Sunday and, occasionally, evening newspapers.⁹³

The creation of a penny sporting press and its extension into the Sunday, daily, and evening papers helped to democratize betting on racehorses. Clearly a

⁹¹ McKibbin, 119. See Richard Hoggart, The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments (London: Chatto and Windus, 1957), 114, for a brief mention of skill in working-class gambling as well as Itzkowitz, 20-29, and Clapson, 62.

⁹² See Hoggart, [part 1]; Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 21, 127, and 130; Paul Thompson, The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society (London: Wakefield and Nicolson, 1975), 201 and 296; Standish Meacham, A Life Apart: The English Working Class, 1890-1914 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 127; Gareth Stedman Jones, "Working-Class Culture and Working-Class Politics in London, 1870-1900: Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class," in Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History 1832-1982 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 203-204; E.J. Hobsbawm, "The Making of the Working Class 1870-1914," in Workers: Worlds of Labor (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 207.

⁹³ Virginia Stewart Berridge, "Popular Journalism and Working-Class Attitudes 1854-1886: A Study of Reynolds's Newspaper, Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, and the Weekly Times" (Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1976), vol. 1.

market was ready for exploitation as the subsequent success of the main papers, the Sporting Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Chronicle, all illustrate. Access to knowledge spawned betting on an unprecedented scale after the birth of the Sporting Life in 1859, as these sporting newspapers offered information previously unavailable to the mass betting public. At the turn of the century, an observer of this mass betting phenomenon noted that around 1850, “where the aristocratic few betted pretty generally, speculation is now a hobby of the masses, and, in consequence, enlightenment for those who do speculate is much more sought after.”⁹⁴ Fifty years later, almost all papers employed a tipster, who forecast winning horses for its readers.⁹⁵ This was only one example of the explosion of information offered for the public’s pleasure.

Historian David Itzkowitz has offered a cogent explanation of the unique character of betting on racehorses which, for the purposes of this study, illustrates the importance of the penny sporting press to this relationship between horse racing and betting:

It is an interesting, if ironic, feature of horse race betting that it depends for its existence on the public perception of the essential honesty of racing (who but a fool would bet on an event known to be fraudulent?), but also that most people who take part are convinced that there is some secret information that, if they are only privy to it, would transform them into winners. The question is how to obtain that information. In the old days, when racing was a small world and most bettors were familiar with horses, it was easier for those who wanted information to come by it. But in the middle of the nineteenth century, many who bet regularly had never seen a racehorse, much less a horse

⁹⁴ “A Tipster,” 291.

⁹⁵ See the section below on the morning and evening press, 89-108.

race. A new “profession” - that of the racing tipster - evolved to meet the needs of this ever-growing number of bettors.⁹⁶

With the arrival of the Sporting Life, the sporting press began serving the mass market, bettors with small amounts of money to risk. Penny sporting papers made important and necessary betting information, which previously had been aimed at an upscale market, available to the masses. Even with all the racing information available to a prospective punter, one category of intelligence garnered the attention of the literate racehorse betting market: tipping.

Bettors consulted the predictions of tipsters for various reasons. Some might have had the money for a flutter but not the time to study form and make their own choice. Others who might have consulted the necessary information and made their own pick used tipsters to reinforce their own choices. Tipsters claimed that they had access to information that the vast majority of bettors could never obtain. The allure of tipsters, as H. Bissell explained, was that

The racing man knows that it is advisable to be supplied with reliable information, and admits that to be successful he should acquire a correct judgment of the merits of horses, and a precise knowledge of
THE OWNERS' AND TRAINERS' INTENTIONS.

But the business and working man has no time to acquire this skill and knowledge, and so he does what he believes is the next best thing, viz., turns to the tipsters, who he understands have made the subject a life-study.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Itzkowitz, 22.

⁹⁷ H. Bissell, Modern Racing Tipsters (Tipton: Hall Street, 1899), 1-2.

Two types of tipsters attempted to influence punters: the advertising tipster, who promoted his horse picking prowess in newspaper advertisements and sold his tips to the public; and the journalist tipster, whose picks were published regularly by a newspaper. The journalist tipsters who plied their trade in the press offered predictions to anyone who picked up a sporting paper. Each sporting paper employed a columnist who reported on current and up-coming race meetings and published his tips. These individuals were the “experts” whose proximity and connections to the turf helped to provide the elusive information (and/or insight) which might make their readers winners. Opinions in racing circles were much more favorable toward the journalist tipster than toward the advertising tipster. Only A. G. Markham, the honorary secretary of the Racing Correspondent’s Association, a group of tipsters who advertised in the Sporting Life and the Sporting Chronicle, offered a positive comment on his colleagues and their profession when he testified before the Select Committee on Betting in 1902. Markham argued that

the advertising tipster does not profess to give the winner of every race; that is why he is superior to the paper tipster. The paper tipster has to give a selection for every race whether he knows anything about the horse or not. He has to give a horse to win every race. The advertising tipster has to do nothing of the sort; if there are two or three meetings he can pick which meeting he likes; he is not bound to tip on every race, and does not do so.⁹⁸

Others had negative views about advertising tipsters with one commentator declaring that they peddled a “line of turf illusion.”⁹⁹ A twelve-page provincial pamphlet

⁹⁸ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 145, q. 3143.

⁹⁹ Curzon, 171.

penned by journalist H. Bissell was “set so dead against tipsters as a class,” that it sought to “expose the execrable and underhand methods employed by the swindling majority.”¹⁰⁰

Journalists, due to their medium, were the respectable tipsters who were consulted as authorities. “Vigilant” of the Sporting Life, “Augur” of the Sportsman, and “Kettledrum” of the Sporting Chronicle were institutions among the race-going public and their reports, critiques, analyses, and predictions remained the primary features of their papers even after 1914. Daily newspapers, especially evening papers, followed the example of these leading sporting papers and adopted the tipster feature. By 1902, it had become such an accepted, and one could argue, respectable part of a newspaper’s coverage each day that the 1902 Select Committee Report on Betting only saw fit to condemn advertising tipsters; there was no mention of the journalists employed by newspapers.¹⁰¹ Some believed the sporting intelligence in the daily sporting journals provided solid information. A tipster for the Field, “Long Odds,” claimed in his pamphlet on how to choose winners, that even novice horse racing bettors could be successful following the suggestions given by tipsters in the established sporting press. The sporting papers he listed as offering punters reliable predictions included: the Sportsman, the Sporting Life, the Field, Land and Water, the

¹⁰⁰ Bissell, 8 and “Preface.”

¹⁰¹ Betting, PP, 1902, pp. v-viii.

Sporting Times, and the Licensed Victuallers' Gazette.¹⁰² These were the same periodicals from which the general interest daily papers published their sporting prophecies each week.¹⁰³

Using rational calculation -- taking into account all of the possible variables which might come into play during a race -- in pursuit of a winner did not mean a bettor, or even a tipster, would be successful. Racing prophets relied on a variety of information concerning horse, jockey, trainer, and the condition of the course to make their choices. First and foremost, "the book of form," a horse's past performances in races, was the most vital piece of information to consider.¹⁰⁴ Form, however, was only a beginning; the jockey's experience, strength, and weight also had to be contemplated. Would the jockey be able to rein in and conserve the energy of a horse that liked to sprint to the front, only to wear itself out; or would he be able to urge a horse, who liked to run from off the pace, into contention before it was too late to win the race? One also had to recognize that a horse might have to run a race to improve its fitness before it could be expected to run its best.¹⁰⁵

After considering all of the above variables a tipster had to choose a horse. Writers had to prophesize a winner utilizing all of the above variables and make a tip

¹⁰² Curzon, 183; "Long Odds," Horse Racing and the Winners (London: Horace Cox, 1892), 5-7.

¹⁰³ See, for example, Bolton Evening News and District Reporter, 3 July 1882, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Swaffer, 20.

¹⁰⁵ "A Tipster," 302.

based on the form a horse had shown in public. L. H. Curzon believed these writers took their jobs too seriously, using only calculation, because the element of chance was a key ingredient in any racing bet.¹⁰⁶ Another tipster argued that predictions were based on a tipster's own "fancy," the results of which are immeasurably influenced by luck.¹⁰⁷ Percy Swaffer, a Fleet Street tipster of a later period, was more blunt about the prospects of tipping winners, claiming that "it's a matter of sheer luck in deciding on one of four, five, or six, as is so often necessary even in small races."¹⁰⁸ All punters and prophets who predicted winners were drawn to long shots, those horses at long odds overlooked by the betting public who might have had a respectable chance to win. Punters loved big paydays, but the most successful tipsters, according to Swaffer, "are those that give the most winners, not those who stumble on a long-priced one now and again."¹⁰⁹

By the turn of the century, the racing establishment had accepted the press practices which were controversial twenty-five years before. With the public's embrace of information from race meetings and training centers published in the sporting press and the simultaneous commercialization of racing, the Jockey Club had no choice but to abide public scrutiny of racing practices. A tout confirmed this

¹⁰⁶ Curzon, 185.

¹⁰⁷ "A Tipster," 300.

¹⁰⁸ Swaffer, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Swaffer, 23.

perspective in Badminton Magazine: “at the present time the game is comparatively easy, because with few exceptions, there is practically no opposition made by any trainer to having his horses watched.”¹¹⁰

This observation of horses provided another key component of the sporting press after 1867, “Training Intelligence.” The sporting papers employed individuals at training centers throughout Britain who watched and reported on the exercise work of race horses. This information was vital in evaluating a horse’s chances of winning a race. Anyone betting on a horse wanted to know whether it was physically sound and whether its exercise had been easy or difficult. The text printed in each issue dealing with training was very different from the timed workouts for horses available in publications today. “Training Intelligence” was a list of news from Newmarket, Chilton, and other centers where owners had their horses stabled, and often included qualitative observations by a paper’s correspondent.¹¹¹

The correspondents, or touts, as they were known, were not always an accepted part of the racing world because “tout, in racing parlance, is a spy on other people’s business.” Before the birth of the penny sporting papers touts had worked for large bookmakers and gamblers, and now, as an anonymous tout explained, “although many of them still work for the ‘pencillers,’ they principally derive their

¹¹⁰ “A Tout,” “Touts and Touting,” The Racing World and Its Inhabitants, 255.

¹¹¹ See, for example, the issues of the Sporting Life, 9, 12, 16, 19, 23, 26, 30 January and 28 August 1867, 2.

incomes by gleaning information for the newspapers.”¹¹² Because of the exclusive nature of touting in its original form -- touts worked only for bookmakers and backers -- touts had a reputation of influencing the betting market to the detriment of owners wanting to make some money.

The publication of training reports in the sporting press was a controversial development. In its debut issue in 1859, Penny Bell's Life and Sporting News (later the Sporting Life) had offered readers “Training Intelligence” in a column which covered the exercise work of horses at Newmarket, East Ilsley, Richmond in Yorkshire, and Middleham.¹¹³ Such information seems to have disappeared soon after the paper's inception, not to appear again until 1867. Critics of the sporting press claimed that these papers had stripped owners and trainers of their independence in preparing horses and choosing their races. In 1866, Edwin Parr, a trainer, brought a libel action against the Sporting Life because a writer had condemned the race preparation of a horse under Parr's care, named Redan, as inadequate. The Sporting Life defended its publication of criticism arguing that “In the common interests of the public and the welfare of the national pastime, we are often compelled to examine and discuss transactions with a strict and impartial pen.”¹¹⁴ One critic argued that the scrutiny of racing undertaken by the sporting newspapers had destroyed the freedom of owners and breeders to run their stables as

¹¹² “A Tout,” 241-42.

¹¹³ Penny Bell's Life and Sporting News, 24 March, 1859, 1.

¹¹⁴ Sporting Life, 4 April 1866, 2; Daily Telegraph, 20 August 1866, 3-5.

they saw fit.¹¹⁵ Sir John Dugdale Astley recalled that during his Jockey Club stewardship he had attempted to prevent touts from practicing their craft. His “persecution” of them during the late 1870s had failed, and by 1895 he had revised his judgment explaining that “I really believe that their numbers, and necessarily divided opinions, as published and circulated to their private employers, now does an owner no great harm”¹¹⁶

Touts’ and racing journalists’ observations were subjective and very often mistaken, as some of them acknowledged. A Sporting Chronicle correspondent offered his own view on racing journalists in his “Newmarket Turf Notes” in 1876, writing: “when I see our horses do their work on the heath, then go home and read the sporting papers, I can hardly think the writers have the least knowledge of our horses.” What was the source of his lack of confidence in racing intelligence? “Those who have been writing up Petrarch all the winter are at their wit’s-end to find out the cause of his decline in the betting for the two Thousands Guineas. Special Commissioners [some sporting papers used this label for racing correspondents] come here and come back none the wiser, and the rubbish they write about him is ridiculous.” Two days later Petrarch won the Two Thousand Guineas and there was

¹¹⁵ Robert Black, Horse-Racing in England: A Synoptical Review (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1893), 225 and 262.

¹¹⁶ Sir John Dugdale Astley, Fifty Years of My Life in the World of Sport at Home and Abroad, 5th ed., (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1895), 272.

speculation that his owner, Lord Dupplin, had manipulated the betting market to his advantage.¹¹⁷

In 1866, a petition brought before the Jockey Club sought to suppress the gathering of information by touts and its publication in sporting papers. Another petition laid before the Jockey Club ten years later by a group of owners and trainers made the same request. The latter group argued that training horses was a private matter and that the information gathered by touts and published in sporting papers was obtained surreptitiously. They alleged that stable boys and attendants received payments from touts, which The Times characterized as “demoralizing and corrupting,” in exchange for intelligence about their training operations, thus breaching the confidentiality of the stables.¹¹⁸ The Sporting Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Chronicle all denied bribing the employees of stables to procure information on horses.¹¹⁹ At the same time, The Times did acknowledge the attempts by owners to capitalize on their stables in the betting market and the deception it entailed: “as long as most owners of horses try to ‘keep dark’ the distribution of merit in their stables, so long will private impudence invade the privacy of training.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Sporting Chronicle, 2 May 1876, 2.

¹¹⁸ The Times, 8 May 1876, 11.

¹¹⁹ Sportsman, 6 May 1876, 4; Sporting Life, 10 May 1876, 2; Sporting Chronicle, 17 May 1876, 2.

¹²⁰ The Times, 8 May 1876, 11.

It would seem that the next logical step, which The Times failed to take in its concern about the Turf, was proposing to completely open up the racing world to public scrutiny. The public and its patronage of race meetings had helped to raise stake money for races around the country. Some stables, however, sought to keep their training operations a secret in order to win races at the greatest odds possible. As Bell's Life contended "it is plain that the preparation of horses for the great prizes of the Turf cannot be carried on under conditions of profound secrecy."¹²¹ The training reports published in sporting papers did not provide unequivocal intelligence about the workout of horses because touts could not know how much weight a horse carried in training. They did, however, publicize the workouts of physically sound, healthy horses which was all a reader wanted to know. The sporting papers aimed to give everyone with a penny to spend on racing intelligence a better chance to win a bet. In the past, bettors had been subjected to fields of horses unfit to run, but inserted into races to manipulate the odds. The Sporting Chronicle pointedly noted that "if Messieurs the Milkman are determined to ply their not very honourable profession, they must be prepared to run the risk of publicity."¹²² It seems that the Jockey Club refused to act on the petition to end the practice of touting in the newspapers, if the absence of any further reports in the sporting press is considered evidence. Even if the Jockey Club had considered closing the turf to touts, it was

¹²¹ Bell's Life, 13 May 1876, 6.

¹²² Sporting Chronicle, 17 May 1876, 2.

unlikely that readers would ever have accepted such a decision, since they had been consulting training reports for almost a decade when this petition was presented.

Information about the physical condition of horses, which touts provided after observing workouts, previously had been confined to those in racing circles - owners, trainers, jockeys, and stable hands who had witnessed training sessions or had heard training gossip. The sporting press, after 1867, supplied readers with new details meant to give them an advantage when they made their analysis of the field and laid their bet. A year earlier the Sporting Life had asserted that “the increased influence and fearlessness of an independent sporting press” was the impetus behind the clean-up of the turf.

A new and intelligent class of writers has arisen, and in dealing with racing matters, the employ of a wholesome independence, which is productive of the most salutary results. Although many of the brazen adventurers of the Turf may jauntily affect to despise the castigations of the sporting Press, they wince under the wide-spread publicity given to their short comings or backslidings.¹²³

One might be skeptical of such claims made by the sporting papers concerning their role in the clean-up of the turf. One only has to recall David Itzkowitz’s assertion that the betting public’s perception of the turf must be that it is honest, otherwise the public would not bet. It was certainly in the press’ best interests to promote openness and transparency concerning the training practices on the turf. A crooked sport would not draw bettors and, therefore, the sporting press might not

¹²³ Sporting Life, 22 August 1866, 2.

draw as large an audience. The Sportsman explained, however, that some trainers and owners wanted to return to the days before papers printed training reports:

Their argument appears to be that perfect secrecy as to the capabilities and condition of an animal would enable the stable to get the money on to the greatest advantage. The public, however, sees the matter from an exactly contrary standpoint, and demands the same openness in the conduct of racing affairs as is accorded to the speculators in stocks and shares.¹²⁴

Even an otherwise unapproving nineteenth-century historian of the press, H. R. Fox Bourne, praised the penny sporting press' role in transforming gambling on racehorses because "a semblance of honesty was introduced into the business, and it was no longer possible for the public to be beguiled into speculating upon animals about which nothing was known."¹²⁵

A key to the relationship between a bookmaker and a backer was the publication of starting prices. The starting price of a racehorse was the average of the odds offered by the racecourse bookmakers at the start of a race. During the late 1870s, according to Carl Chinn, who has written a detailed history of the mass betting phenomenon, bookmakers headquartered in France began using starting price odds as a method of settling cash bets by post.¹²⁶ How did the Sporting Life and the Sportsman obtain the starting prices which they published? Both papers employed men on the course to observe the machinations between punters and layers in the

¹²⁴ Sportsman, 6 May 1876, 4.

¹²⁵ Fox Bourne, 2: 322.

¹²⁶ Chinn, 118.

betting ring -- “where the solid business is done” -- over the odds offered on each horse about its chances for victory.¹²⁷ From these observations the correspondents calculated the average odds offered to bettors before the start of the race. Charles Richardson believed that no job in racing journalism was “better done” than the reporting of starting prices.¹²⁸ Henry Batty-Smith, managing director of the Sportsman, explained to the Lords’ Select Committee on Betting, how his paper formulated the starting prices it printed. The Sportsman’s representative

is in the ring from the commencement of the betting, that is to say, directly the betting commences in each race until the flag falls for the race and he watches the bets that are made, the fluctuations of the horses in the market, and he makes what he considers a fair return of what is the absolute condition of the market at the moment the horses start.¹²⁹

Bookmakers and bettors looked to the Sportsman, the Sporting Life, and the Sporting Chronicle as the authorities on starting prices. These three sporting papers supplied the morning and evening papers with the starting prices published in their pages.¹³⁰

How important were starting prices to betting in late Victorian and Edwardian Britain? Even John Hawke, honorary secretary of the National Anti-Gambling

¹²⁷ Luckman, 255.

¹²⁸ Richardson, 3-4.

¹²⁹ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 128, q. 2771.

¹³⁰ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 128, qq. 2763-2770.

League, acknowledged the vital role starting prices played in street-betting transactions:

“S. P.” betting - starting-price betting - is done a great deal in the streets, and also, of course, sometimes in the public houses. These men who do that pay according to the starting prices given in the “Sportsman” or “Sporting Life” and other newspapers Of course, the working man, or the wage-earner, probably would not trust the bookmaker, but he puts his money down, and he knows that he will be paid according to the starting price published in the newspaper.¹³¹

The papers promoted their importance as starting-price authorities. A leader in the Sporting Life of April 4, 1885 contended that it “was chosen by the great majority of starting price commission agents and backers as the organ by which their transactions should be ruled.”¹³² In its Jubilee issue of 1915, the Sportsman explained that when the penny sporting papers began their challenge to the supremacy of Bell’s Life and the Jockey Club in the 1860s:

Starting-price betting was unknown . . . and meetings of class were comparatively few, with the result that the sporting public found its interest centred on the big races, and betting on future events was on a scale that is unknown to-day. Books were opened on the Chester Cup and similar races months before the event, people began to bet on the Derby while the horses were still yearlings, and with no up-to-date paper to guide them backers were at the mercy of the layers, who were able to get money out of horses that had no chance of seeing the post. In fact, there are many instances of horses figuring prominently in the market for races long after they had broken down, and history has it that a dead horse was once favourite for a big race.¹³³

¹³¹ Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Betting (hereafter Betting), PP 1901 (370), vol. 5, p. 12, q. 119.

¹³² Sporting Life, 4 April 1885, 2.

¹³³ Sportsman, 12 August 1915, 2.

By the time of the Select Committee's 1902 Report on Betting, starting prices had become such a significant component of the relationship between punter and bookmaker that the Committee advised against their prohibition.¹³⁴ The Select Committee believed the testimony of the witnesses who claimed that starting prices protected bettors from the dishonesty of bookmakers creating their own odds.¹³⁵

Throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, individuals and organizations viewed gambling, which at this time was confined largely to horse racing, as a serious social and economic problem. The National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL) was organized in 1890 and it became one of the principal extra-parliamentary pressure groups of the late Victorian and Edwardian era. The NAGL's activities helped to spur the formation of the Select Committee on Betting of 1902. An enormous amount of anti-gambling literature circulated identifying betting as a threat to sport and society.¹³⁶ Much of this literature enabled Ross McKibbin to reconstruct the world of working-class gambling and its opposition in his article on the subject. Within this literature and among the various institutions concerned about

¹³⁴ Betting, PP, 1902, pp. v-vi.

¹³⁵ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 7, qq. 95-99; p. 48, qq. 1031-1036; p. 53, qq. 1145-1147; p. 156, qq. 3313.

¹³⁶ For example, see E. Bowen-Rowlands, "A Glance at the History of Gambling," Westminster Review 135 (1891): 648-661; John Hawke, "Our Principles and Program," New Review 10 (1894): 705-717; S. Churchill, Betting and Gambling (London: James Nisbet, 1894); B. S. Rowntree, ed., Betting and Gambling (London: Macmillan, 1905). For a much more extensive list, see the notes in McKibbin, "Working-Class Gambling," as well as Dixon, 38-81.

gambling the consensus among critics was that the crux of the problem was working-class gambling. These examples of anti-gambling activity only touch the surface of the concern over betting which extended to churches, social and religious organizations, and the government.¹³⁷ Opposition to gambling eventually led to the statutory prohibition of betting with off-course bookmakers in 1906 when Parliament passed the Street Betting Act.¹³⁸

Such legislation, however, did not affect the publication of racing news by the press. Even following the passage of the Street Betting Act, the Newspaper Owner maintained that racing news

has much to do with the circulation of evening - and especially halfpenny evening - papers, and we regret to believe that this circumstance synchronizes with the gambling habit throughout the country. People - especially working people - are, in the hundreds of thousands, betting on the different races and buy the evening papers at the earliest moment to see whether their associates have won or lost.¹³⁹

Racing and the Sunday Press

The most popular journals in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were not the morning and evening dailies, but Sunday weeklies. During the nineteenth century, the leading sellers among all newspapers were the Liberal weekly papers that sold for 1d., Lloyd's Weekly News and Reynolds's Newspaper. Sunday

¹³⁷ See Dixon, Chapter 3.

¹³⁸ See Dixon, Chapter 4, and 109-147.

¹³⁹ "Questions and Answers," Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1911, 10.

papers had replaced the unstamped radical press of the early 1830s and provided their lower middle-class and working-class readership with serial fiction, “diluted radicalism,” and increased coverage of crime.¹⁴⁰ Readers bought them for news, information, and, just as importantly, entertainment, as the Sunday press helped them to satisfy their craving for “vicarious thrills.”¹⁴¹ While Raymond Williams has argued that “the history of the popular press, in the nineteenth century, is the history of the Sunday press,” this was not the case when it came to sporting news.¹⁴² Even as sport grew in popularity during the 1880s, in the mass circulation Sunday papers, which had large working-class readerships, sporting news was relatively unimportant.¹⁴³ Of the few Sunday papers which did focus on happenings in the burgeoning sporting world, the Umpire and the Sunday Chronicle were published in Manchester while London was the home of the Referee.

These exceptions aside, the lack of sports content among major Sunday newspapers indicates that the sports consciousness of these papers lagged behind that of the evening press, which began producing late racing editions and Saturday night football editions in the 1880s. In the content analysis historian Virginia Berridge

¹⁴⁰ Joel H. Wiener, “How New Was the New Journalism?” in Papers for the Millions, ed. Joel H. Wiener (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 60.

¹⁴¹ Berridge, “Popular Journalism,” 1:189, quoted in John Goodbody, “The Star: Its Role in the Rise of the New Journalism,” in Papers for the Millions, 150-151.

¹⁴² Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961; Reprint, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Pelican Books, 1965), 216.

¹⁴³ Berridge, “Popular Journalism,” 1:141.

conducted for her study of popular Sunday newspapers between 1854 and 1886, sports reports made up a small percentage of the non-advertising material, only 2.8% in Reynolds's and Lloyd's, and 5.3% in the Weekly Times.¹⁴⁴ However, the vast majority of sporting reports in Lloyd's, the Weekly Times, and Reynolds's concentrated on racing at the beginning of Berridge's period of study and as early as 1866, the Weekly Times even had its own regular racing correspondent, "Fly-by-Night."¹⁴⁵

Before the News of the World began its comeback during the 1890s, the leading Sunday paper of the period, far outdistancing the competition, was Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper. Lloyd's led the Sunday papers in circulation selling 600,000 copies each week in the early 1890s and eventually becoming the first to have a circulation of one million. Readership, according to the analysis by Berridge, seems to have been concentrated among a largely working-class audience, which itself was largely skilled. Among the Lloyd's readers were many shopkeepers and some women clothing workers and domestic servants.¹⁴⁶

While Lloyd's circulation increased, it was not due to an expansion in its sporting news, which occupied only a small amount of space in the paper during the

¹⁴⁴ Berridge, "Popular Journalism," 1:141.

¹⁴⁵ Berridge, "Popular Journalism," 1:147.

¹⁴⁶ Virginia Berridge, "Popular Sunday Papers and Mid-Victorian Society," in Newspaper History, eds. George Boyce, James Curran, and Pauline Wingate (London: Constable, 1978), 249-250.

1890s. Reflections upon the sporting feats of each week were rare, except for the occasional event which generated more interest than the regular schedule of racing, football, or cricket. The back page contained news of football, hockey, golf, athletics, rowing, billiards, lacrosse, and racing.¹⁴⁷ In this and in most other instances news merely meant results and descriptions of the play. Racing received no special attention as in most other papers and Lloyd's appears to have had no regular racing reporter or tipster. It is unclear why sporting news in Lloyd's suffered from such relative neglect.

By the 1890s, however, Lloyd's was a rare holdout in the Sunday market, as other Sunday papers exploited the importance of sporting news to ensure their success. In particular, three Sunday papers, the Referee, the Umpire, and the Sunday Chronicle, specialized in sporting news and results from the preceding day.¹⁴⁸ The Referee began publication in 1877 as a partnership between Ashton Dilke, the proprietor of the Weekly Dispatch, and Henry Sampson, who edited the Weekly Dispatch as "Pendragon." This new journal of sport and the theater featured the articles of Sampson, whose "influence upon sport in general has been wide-spread and beneficial."¹⁴⁹ Henry Simonis, the historian of journalism, described the Referee as more of a first rate commentary than a newspaper. "One feels in reading the Referee that a dinner party composed of its contributors would indeed be an

¹⁴⁷ For example, see Lloyd's Weekly News, 3 January 1892, 16.

¹⁴⁸ Mason, "Sporting News," 176-177.

¹⁴⁹ Sporting Mirror 1 (April 1881): 72-74.

intellectual feast.”¹⁵⁰ The Umpire, established in Manchester in 1884, was “the first popular provincial Sunday newspaper,” and focused on news from the sporting and theatrical world for one penny.¹⁵¹ It branched out in 1888 by publishing the Umpire Tissue as a special service, which was available on race days during the flat racing season at 11:30 a.m.¹⁵²

A year after the debut of the Umpire, Edward Hulton, publisher of the Sporting Chronicle and the Athletic News, launched the one penny Manchester Sunday Chronicle in 1885. Although this new venture included general news and gossip, and even, for a time, exposés by Robert Blatchford, sport was the foundation of the paper. In essence, the news and gossip supplemented the sport which, unlike Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper and Reynolds’s Newspaper, dominated the new paper. Its early columns contained sporting gossip, “Racing Reflections” by “Galliard,” information on betting in the Manchester and London markets, and results from

¹⁵⁰ H. Simonis, The Street of Ink: An Intimate History of Journalism (London: Cassell, 1917), 148. For anecdotal evidence of the importance of the Referee’s theatrical news, see R. K., “Some Notes on Newspaper Production-XXV,” Newspaper Owner, 23 September 1905, 8.

¹⁵¹ Mark Clapson, “Playing the System: The World of Organised Street Betting in Manchester, Salford and Bolton, c. 1880 to 1939,” in Workers’ World: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939, eds., Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 160-161; Newspaper Press Directory (1885), 92. In 1905, the Hulton publishing empire acquired the Umpire. R. K., “Some Notes on Newspaper Production-XXV,” Newspaper Owner, 23 September 1905, 8.

¹⁵² Frederick Leary, “History of the Manchester Periodical Press,” 430, held in the Archives Department at the Manchester Central Library.

racing, cricket, athletics, cycling, swimming, and football; all of this was given a northern focus.¹⁵³ Hulton developed the paper as a weekly edition of his daily Sporting Chronicle. A Sunday Chronicle journalist explained that Hulton envisioned it as “the sporting man’s aid to digestion after the Sabbath dinner, and a soothing help to a really comfortable post-prandial snooze.”¹⁵⁴

After some disappointing years between 1855 and 1890 another Sunday paper, the News of the World, blossomed during the 1890s under the leadership of Henry Lascelles Carr. Carr, the proprietor of a newspaper from southern Wales, the Western Mail, bought the paper with a group of investors in 1891.¹⁵⁵ Able management transformed the paper from a local weekly selling under 40,000 copies a week in 1891 to a million a week seller fifteen years later.¹⁵⁶ After June 1892 it had expanded to twelve pages and eighty-four columns, and in its Jubilee issue the paper explained its mission:

The great aim is to give something for every class of readers, and to let that special something be the very best, so that the reader can have at will the best of fiction, the best of fashions, the best of dramatic and musical news, the best of sporting tips, and - best of all, and including all –

¹⁵³ For example, see Sunday Chronicle, 23 August 1885. Also see R. K., Newspaper Owner, 23 September 1905, 8-9.

¹⁵⁴ A. Thompson, 61.

¹⁵⁵ While the News of the World, 8 October 1893, 8, stated that the investors were friends, Stafford Sommerfield, Banner Headlines (Shoreham by Sea: Scan Books, 1979), 9, has claimed that they were relatives.

¹⁵⁶ Berridge, “Popular Journalism,” 1:43; Sommerfield, 48.

THE NEWS OF THE WORLD.¹⁵⁷

The formula for turning the paper's fortunes around was to highlight politics, sport, news, crime, and divorce cases in that order.¹⁵⁸ Between 1886 and 1895 sporting news increased from 8.3 percent to 14.4 percent of the paper's content.¹⁵⁹ The paper's most famous journalist was William J. Innes, "a man who has contributed to this paper for the past thirty years, and who is held in esteem by thousands of persons in all parts of the English speaking world."¹⁶⁰ Innes, otherwise known to readers as the sporting journalist "Pegasus," began his career with the News of the World in 1860 by describing the University boatrace.¹⁶¹ He was best known for writing the weekly column, "Sporting Notes and Predictions," in which he covered the racing scene, made predictions, and related other sporting gossip. Innes, and the name "Pegasus," became famous in 1881 by successfully predicting that the American-owned Foxhall, would race to victory in both the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire handicaps. At long odds, Foxhall won both races, creating both a

¹⁵⁷ News of the World, 8 October 1893, 8.

¹⁵⁸ Sommerfield, 44.

¹⁵⁹ Mason, "Sporting News," 177.

¹⁶⁰ News of the World, 8 October 1893, 8.

¹⁶¹ News of the World, 8 October 1893, 8.

reputation for Innes and, supposedly, a small fortune for him.¹⁶² Following the lead of the tipsters in the penny sporting press, Innes also offered subscribers special wires each week for 20s., with his “latest revised predictions & c., on important race days.”¹⁶³

Racing News in the Morning and Evening Papers

Most newspapers did not offer sport as a significant feature until the turn of the century. From the late 1880s onward, however, any morning or evening newspapers seeking a mass audience had to offer much more than the racing news of old to take advantage of the growing sporting consciousness and desire to bet on horse racing among the British population. Following the initiative of the sporting press, morning and evening papers adopted its practices and began publishing similar racing news which provided horse racing with publicity and the betting public with intelligence. The sporting intelligence provided by the popular press laid a solid foundation of information from which a mass betting culture in Britain could thrive during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

The first daily newspaper to publish a regular column of racing news which went beyond odds from the betting markets, and the lists of racing programs and results was the Daily Telegraph, London’s first penny daily newspaper. Born as the Daily Telegraph and Courier on June 29, 1855, it entered the London market selling

¹⁶² Bernard Falk, Five Years Dead (London: Book Club, 1937), 290; Sommerfield, 158-159.

¹⁶³ For example, see News of the World, 19 April 1896, 12.

for twopence and competed with The Times at sevenpence and the Standard, Daily News, Morning Post, and six other dailies at fivepence. Among the changes which distinguished the Daily Telegraph from the older dailies was its lively writing, which became known as “Telegraphese,” and its interest in non-political subjects. The use of the telegraph in transmitting reports to the paper resulted in shorter sentences, with an emphasis on key words to save money.¹⁶⁴ A contemporary historian has explained that “by judicious selection and clever condensation... the conductors of ‘The Telegraph’ contrived to give, in less space than ‘The Times’, a more acceptable account of each day’s occurrences, and it vied with its oldest and wealthiest contemporaries in the variety and fulness of the news brought from abroad.”¹⁶⁵

Variety was the characteristic of the Telegraph, as it became the pioneer of mass journalism after 1855. The paper featured a more popular, readable style than that of the staid dailies, The Times and the Morning Post. Perhaps its drawing power derived from its crime reports, which Lord Burnham acknowledged: “reviewing the files, the honest biographer cannot dispute that the Daily Telegraph thrived on crime.”¹⁶⁶ The Telegraph was an innovator when it came to advertising; it was the first paper to use classified advertisements and it also developed another innovation,

¹⁶⁴ Williams, 219

¹⁶⁵ Fox Bourne, 2:271.

¹⁶⁶ Lord Burnham, Peterborough Court: The Story of the “Daily Telegraph” (London: Cassell, 1955), 81.

the box number which enabled the Daily Telegraph to take in a reported £120,000 in 1882.¹⁶⁷

Part of the effort to give the Telegraph a popular appeal was the paper's emphasis on miscellaneous general news reports. A look at the contents bill for Thursday, April 20, 1865, reveals the diversity of news in the Daily Telegraph:

THREE DAYS LATER from AMERICA
 Pursuit and Rout of Lee's Army
 6 Confederate Generals made Prisoners
 Pres. Davis's Escape from Richmond
 Full Details of the Federal Victories
 The Naval Attack on Mobile
 WEST COAST OF AFRICA MAIL
 Letters from France, Austria, Australia
 The Russian Epidemic: Official Report
 The Law Courts-First Day of Term
 The Alleged Unity Bank Frauds
 Newmarket Races: Hotspur. &c¹⁶⁸

As the last line of the bill indicates part of this miscellany included sport. In the 1850's, Britain's leading sport was horse racing and the Telegraph exploited the public interest in the national pastime by originating "Hotspur" in 1856, whose columns on horse racing are still published in the Telegraph today. It seems that these daily columns were a first in racing journalism, describing and analyzing the happenings at race meetings around Britain. These columns illustrated the style and method of racing journalism which, by the turn of the twentieth century had expanded into nearly every daily British newspaper. The "Hotspur" column and its numerous

¹⁶⁷ Lee, Origins, 87 and 89.

¹⁶⁸ Burnham, 114.

imitators in the press played a vital role in the popularization of the Turf with their reports, commentary and predictions. As Lord Burnham boasted, the “Hotspur” column was “as acceptable to the ordinary reader casually interested in racing as it was to the constant racegoer and the expert”¹⁶⁹

H. M. Feist, a journalist, began writing the column above the “Hotspur” pseudonym soon after Levy’s purchase of the paper, and prior to Feist’s move to the Sporting Life. An obituary suggests that he may not have been the first “Hotspur,” although I have uncovered no evidence to support this allusion.¹⁷⁰ At the Telegraph, Feist helped to build the respect of the “Hotspur” column among the Telegraph’s audience by once choosing the winner of each race on a day’s card. According to one source, although Feist had chosen the winners in his column, he lost money on every race. When a friend noted the contradiction, Feist replied ‘Do you think I should be fool enough to back my own tips?’¹⁷¹ As an experienced racing journalist, even Feist was wary of the advice he offered to readers.

Successors to Feist included a Yorkshireman, Henry Buck, a large betting commission agent who also wrote on racing and on billiards as “Spot Stroke” in the Sportsman.¹⁷² The journalist, however, most responsible for the development of “Hotspur” as a respected tipster and commentator on racing for the Telegraph was

¹⁶⁹ Burnham, 120.

¹⁷⁰ Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News, 2 January 1875, 327.

¹⁷¹ Cobbett, Racing Life, 261.

¹⁷² Boase, vol. 1, col. 460.

Charles Greenwood (1847-1904), who spent 22 years as “Hotspur.”¹⁷³ Greenwood began his career with Bell’s Life before moving to the Telegraph and becoming one of the few racing journalists who parlayed his own betting on racing into a fortune.¹⁷⁴ The acclaim for Greenwood extended beyond the colleagues who worked beside him at the numerous meetings around Britain. Journalists who never had the privilege of working beside “the leading racing authority of the day” praised his skill and writing.¹⁷⁵ More than simply watching and writing about horses and their races Greenwood cultivated relationships with those in racing circles and was friends with many trainers and owners, which provided him with a knowledge of the business side of racing that was second to none.¹⁷⁶ Among followers of racing, according to racing journalist William Allison, his “Hotspur” articles in the Daily Telegraph “were always in eager demand in any and every race week.”¹⁷⁷

Along with his writing, Greenwood possessed unmatched skill as a “reader” of races and published reports were taken from his verbal descriptions of the races he

¹⁷³ Sell’s Dictionary of the World’s Press (1904), 55.

¹⁷⁴ Luckman, 249; Sell’s (1904), 55; Sidney Galtrey, Memoirs of a Racing Journalist (London: Hutchinson, 1934), 286.

¹⁷⁵ Luckman, 248.

¹⁷⁶ Arthur J. Sarl, Horses, Jockeys, and Crooks: Reminiscences of Thirty Years’ Racing (London: Hutchinson, 1935), 248; William Allison, Memories of Men and Horses (London: Grant Richards, 1922), 261.

¹⁷⁷ Allison, Memories, 261.

attended.¹⁷⁸ A colleague of Greenwood's on the Telegraph staff, T. A. Cook, described the usual scene in the press box at Epsom presided over by this giant of the Turf:

He would tell us what was happening at the start, which got away badly, and where the favourite was. He would give the first six at the Bushes, and before Tattenham Corner he could tell us which were out of it. As they came round, he began to concentrate on three or four, warning us to be careful of an outsider or two who were still going strong. After they had passed the tan road he picked the winner. In a close finish he placed the horses. No one doubted a syllable of what he said. Before the race was over most of his observations on the first mile were being read off the tape in London, and with two exceptions, the journalists present invariably used his facts as the basis of their own descriptions.¹⁷⁹

Fellow racing journalist E.C. Mitchell, the first sporting editor and racing tipster ("Captain Coe") at the Star, also praised his morning rival. An illustration of "Hotspur" appeared in the Star, on 15 December 1888, accompanied by the following tribute by Mitchell:

One of the busiest writers connected with the Turf is "Hotspur" of the Daily Telegraph. There is not a race of any importance run in the north, south, east, or west, without his being there to see. Those sportsman who expect to read, say a full description of the Derby, about an hour after the horses are away have little or no idea of the labor that is required to satisfy their wants. The gentleman who peers through his glasses to describe a race like the Derby has to know more of the colors than Judge Clark himself, while he must all the time be sure of his landmarks. "Hotspur" can describe a race as well and as quickly as any man breathing, and no doubt he sees through his glasses certain little matters which assist him in tipping so successfully in the "largest circulator."

¹⁷⁸ Allison, Memories, 261.

¹⁷⁹ Theodore Andrea Cook, The Sunlit Hours: A Record of Sport and Life (London: Nisbet, 1925), 205-6.

The columns over the “Hotspur” name kept London readers abreast of the racing news from around Britain. Unlike the sporting intelligence which would come to dominate the halfpenny press in the late 1880s, information about horses and the racing world was the basis of the Telegraph column, not predicting winning horses.¹⁸⁰ The “Hotspur” columns, and others like them, explored the developments behind the scenes in the British racing world. Readers, especially those with some money to wager, gained entry into an industry of considerable privilege and secrecy. Depending on the day of the week, “Hotspur” might preview the field of horses scheduled to run during the coming week, look ahead at the nominations of prospective horses for important races like the Derby, or recount the races from the day or weekend before. Weather, often the great unknown in British sports, always seems to have led off the “Hotspur” reports. The weather could lead to postponement, cancellation, or merely make attending a racing meeting very uncomfortable. Not only could bad weather make spectators uncomfortable, but it could affect the racing by making the course muddy and slow. Some meetings would also be affected by the “fog fiend,” which made a reporter’s job especially difficult. As one writer noted, “Manchester is much the worst place the reporter has to contend with, owing to the frequency of the fog, and it often happens that nothing can be seen of the races until the field are close upon the stands.”¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Burnham, 120.

¹⁸¹ Richardson, 5.

During the winter months horse racing contests consisted largely of steeplechasing events, which “Hotspur” covered as diligently as the flat-racing season. After the first of the year attention also focused on the racing possibilities during the spring. The cold quiet of winter was the time when racing fans looked forward to the spring meetings and the potential battles between owners, trainers, horses, and jockeys. Racing journalists like Greenwood offered comment on the preliminary shape of the equine contests on the flats, whether at Epsom, Ascot, or Kempton Park, to name only a few. As Greenwood judged in one such January 1889 preview, “so far so good, and if the first batch of nominations is a criterion there should be stirring sport in the newly born year.”¹⁸²

Many of Greenwood’s columns listed the author’s favorites to win races such as the Ascot Gold Cup or the Oaks. In some of the previews, he would make his early selections leading up to a big race which was still weeks away. These selections were supported by “well-reasoned argument.”¹⁸³ His favorite for winning the 1889 double of the One Thousand Guineas and the Oaks at Newmarket was the filly Antibes to whom he devoted a considerable amount of space explaining his preference:

The first-named pair [Antibes and Australia] belong to Mr. H. Milner, and, when Australia was stripped for the Middle Park Plate, a report had obtained currency that she was quite the equal of Antibes, while, to give colour to the same, the latter went in for a smaller engagement a couple of hours earlier. Australia started second favourite in the Middle Park to Donovan, and by no means disgraced herself, as she finished finally close up with Gulliver and Clover, and just ahead of

¹⁸² Daily Telegraph, 7 November 1889, 2.

¹⁸³ Sell’s (1904), 55.

Ben Stoms and the penalised Gay Hampton. Still she does not hold a candle to Antibes in point of looks, and in the matter of form she failed to improve upon acquaintance, as she was beaten out of second place by Enthusiast in the Dewhurst Plate, and was again third in the Doveridge Stakes at Derby to Pioneer and Prebend. Upon the last-named occasion Australia was said to be coughing, and perhaps the race ought to be wiped out in the calculation of her future. But with health and condition equal I should place her decidedly below Antibes, who inherits all the family fashion and character, if slightly lacking the length of her elder sister, Seabreeze. When Antibes commenced life in the Whitsuntide Plate at Manchester she was by no means wound up, and yet she ran well enough to be placed fourth. Her next outing was on the same ground in September, when she aimed at the Lancashire Plate, and, like the remainder of her contemporaries in age, fared badly. For all that, Antibes had been galloped well at home, and when, at Newmarket in the Second October, she met Fleur-de-Lys fresh from triumph in the Champion Nursery at Kempton Park, she started the favourite. There was quite a flutter of excitement when the sisters to Seabreeze and Ormande were led out of their boxes, and considering that the value of the stake at issue did not exceed £200 the race provoked from the beginning to end the keenest interest. The attempt of Fleur-de-lys to wear Antibes down did not succeed, and in the last furlong the wearer of the scarlet jacket forged to the front and obtained a very clever verdict. Fleur-de-Lys, who had come on since her bad failure in the soft ground at York, now went into Winter quarters, and on the other hand Antibes was in colours again at the Houghton Meeting, when she made short work of Marcus, Duncraggan, Royal Star, and Minthe. To the last-mentioned Antibes conceded no less than a stone, and if a half-sister to Minting - as her name would at once suggest - there is no likelihood of Minthe rising above mediocrity.¹⁸⁴

The above example of Greenwood's journalism illustrates the formula behind the discussion of his choices among early contenders for big races. Such an analysis was the standard among the journalists who covered racing during the period. First, Greenwood compared Antibes favorably to her sibling as Antibes came out far ahead of Australia even with her slow start in her first two races. Antibes' next start made

¹⁸⁴ Daily Telegraph, 7 January 1889, 2.

her a winner, which Greenwood recounts with as much dramatic flair as is available to a journalist eager to share with readers the name of the horse he prefers, rather than the one he expects to win. Although it seems that the victorious struggle with Fleur-de-Lys was the race that caught Greenwood's eye, he also considers her convincing win at Houghton as a positive signal of her potential for victory.

When a meeting was under way Greenwood sought to capture the spirit of sport on display around the race course, including happenings on the course and in the betting ring. Even at lesser meetings, such as that at Lewes in Sussex, he offered clear descriptions and judgments about horses, people, and events. He noted the maiden victory of Atheliath with a sketch of his form: "at the outset of his career Atheliath was reckoned full of promise, and, for that matter, the half brother to Bendigo finished second last year to Barn Dance at Kempton Park, to Dinna Forget at Leopardstown, and to The Quack at Derby." After recounting Atheliath's short racing history he offered his considered opinion of the first-time winner, "he is now, although possessed of fine speed, utterly unreliable," which made the horse difficult to place a bet on. In Greenwood's opinion, even a horse with Atheliath's potential was difficult to consider because of his inconsistency.¹⁸⁵

Of the classic races, the Derby was the most storied. The regular Telegraph updates on the London betting for the Derby communicated the pre-race excitement that preceded the race. Greenwood usually had his favorite chosen well before the race, having taken ample time to survey the field, and he offered his analysis

¹⁸⁵ Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1895, 8.

throughout the week leading up to the race.¹⁸⁶ Other racing journalists offered generous amounts of pre-race analysis as well. Almost two weeks prior to the 1895 race the Sportsman began its stretch run to its Derby coverage, and continued to comment on the race each day.¹⁸⁷

The Telegraph dispatched not only Greenwood to cover this race, but also a “special correspondent” who concentrated on the “annual performance” of “the bewildering mixture of all sorts and conditions of men” making the pilgrimage to Epsom Downs in May.¹⁸⁸ The Derby coverage began with this chronicle of 3,000 to 5,000 words by the “special correspondent,” with its sketch of the mass of humanity. The road to Epsom was the subject of descriptive pieces of journalism throughout the country, some more sensational than others.¹⁸⁹

These accounts were synonymous with the journalism which characterized Derby Day. The journalist recounting the scene near Epsom and at the Downs celebrated the Englishness of the spectacle. Year after year in late May or early June, sporting enthusiasts read of the diversity of English society and its characters in those

¹⁸⁶ For example, see Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1892, 8; Daily Telegraph, 25 May 1895, 4.

¹⁸⁷ See the Sportsman, 17 May 1895, 2, and each issue through 30 May 1895.

¹⁸⁸ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5; Cobbett, The Man on the March, 224.

newspapers which reported on the Derby;¹⁹⁰ and in 1895 the Telegraph's "special correspondent" noted the special tradition of the Derby amidst the changes of the century:

Looked at in the mass - and there is no better way of so surveying him than on Derby Day - you see that man in these closing years of the nineteenth century is what he always was - a simple, primitive, pleasure-loving creature, compact of energies and appetites, enamoured of the positive, indifferent to "problems" and untroubled by speculation on any more remote future than that which will become the present when the "winning number" goes up on the telegraph.¹⁹¹

Readers could find similar accounts in other papers as well, including the Standard.¹⁹²

The Telegraph report of the Derby itself was left to the pen of Greenwood. Racing articles consisted of much more than just the details of the race itself. Most racing journalists had started as general sporting journalists, reporting on whatever sport an editor assigned them. With all of their experience, for many of the racing columnists the difficult aspect of creating a daily article about the Turf was not the writing, but the collection of information. Distinguished races required some research into the races' history, as well as the past performances of the entries. Writers often referred to a horse's recent workouts, its physical appearance, and the judgment of the betting market to explain the pre-race context. These past

¹⁹⁰ See, for example, the report on the trek to Epsom Downs by a "special correspondent," in the Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1875, 2.

¹⁹¹ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5.

¹⁹² Standard, 30 May 1895, 2.

performances enabled writers, and readers for that matter, to gauge a horse's readiness to race. Difficult victories could fatigue a horse, while too little racing might leave a horse unable to challenge for a victory. To all this a writer might add information which set a horse apart from its competitors because of its pedigree. Other miscellany a writer might mention included a horse's price as a foal or a yearling, and whether a horse had more than one owner. A horse's performance in various track conditions was vital, as was the type of race -- handicap or weight for age. Along with the information about the horses journalists also detailed the weather and course conditions, as well as describing the crowd - especially those in high society.

All of this information often served to introduce the reporting of the race itself.¹⁹³ For the 1875 Derby, the "Hotspur" column began by introducing the Derby winner, Galopin, and its owner, and then proceeded to discuss the betting market and to sketch the scene in the paddock area, before recounting the race and, finally, offering more comment about betting.¹⁹⁴ Greenwood's account of 1895 began by paying homage to Prime Minister Lord Rosebery, the owner of the winning horse, Sir Visto. Although the physical talent of the entries lacked greatness, everything else about the Derby Day proved magnificent. Spectacular weather, a large crowd, and a competitive field provided an exciting betting market leading up to the race. From the paddock and the post parade, "Hotspur" traced both the physical and market

¹⁹³ Cobbett, The Man on the March, 30-31.

¹⁹⁴ Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1875, 2.

movements of the horseflesh on its journey to the starting line: "Laveno, who seemed to feel the effect of the heat more than the majority of the candidates, dropped out to 100 to 15, and even to a greater extent was the decline of Slow Step, as 100 to 8 went begging in the last quarter of an hour."¹⁹⁵

The race itself dominated the rest of the narrative, as Greenwood recounted the approximately one and one half mile battle of the fifteen Derby horses. The drama extended from start to finish as each horse made an appearance among the colloquialisms which colored "Hotspur's" account. After "the drying-up of the Brook," Curzon and Kirkconnell dueled at the front of the field and "the question seemed to be which of the pair would 'crack' the quicker, as there seemed no necessity to look behind them." When it seemed "the Derby was to all intents and purposes won" by the surprising Curzon, "then the situation suddenly underwent a remarkable change, and with Sir Visto dropping from the clouds on the stand side, he finished twice as fast as Curzon and Kirkconnell, and gained the verdict in exciting style by three parts of a length." In two sentences, the remainder of the field received curt analysis, before Greenwood returned to the winner and his pre-Derby, winter prognosis for just such a victory: "For deserting Sir Visto, who was one of my Winter selections, I had fair grounds on Spring form, and it will always be a more or less difficult task to interfere with the present body of three-year-olds. Plenty of money has been won over Sir Visto by the early investors, and his reception was second only to that bestowed upon Ladas last year." The winning jockey and trainer

¹⁹⁵ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5.

received Greenwood's praise, but he offered his greatest compliment to Lord Rosebery, "an owner who brings honour and credit to the national sport."¹⁹⁶

Coverage of the Derby did not end with "Hotspur's" column, which concluded as usual with his predictions. Another description of the race followed which summarized its particulars including: the purse, the distance, every horse's connections, the starting prices of each horse, a synopsis of the race, past performances of the winner, and the winner's future "engagements." A historical listing of past Derby winners and the results from the rest of the day's race card at Epsom rounded out the Telegraph's coverage.¹⁹⁷

Praise and superlatives rained on Lord Rosebery not only because of his success in consecutive Derbys with horses he had bred himself, but, more importantly, because of his political office. The national cultural significance of this Derby Day was not lost on the Telegraph and its leader writer. Lord Rosebery, serving as Prime Minister, had emerged as the prime sportsman among his "sport-loving compatriots," with the second consecutive of his three Derby victories (1894, 1895, and 1905).¹⁹⁸ Why was this important? A Derby Day was like a national holiday and "National holidays in which Englishmen of all classes unite, enjoyed in

¹⁹⁶ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5.

¹⁹⁷ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 5. Also see the Daily Telegraph, 27 May 1875, 2; Sportsman, 30 May 1895, 6; Standard, 30 May 1895, 2.

¹⁹⁸ See George Plumptre, The Fast Set: The World of Edwardian Racing (London: André Deutsch Ltd., 1985), 79, for a table listing Lord Rosebery's eleven Classic winners.

such transcendently beautiful weather, is good not only for tired Ministers and their political supporters and antagonists, but also for overwrought merchants and stockbrokers to whom the fierce pursuit of gain is the rule and basis of their daily existence.”¹⁹⁹ The race, not the outcome, was what mattered most in this conception of sport. The race, however, did not refer to just the Derby, but the breeding of Derby horses, as the Telegraph acknowledged: “Great as is the delight with which an English crowd sees the Prince of WALES’s and the Prime Minister’s colours borne to victory at Epsom upon the same day, an aspiration, ‘May the best horse win!’ is still more sacred in their eyes.” Perhaps more significant was that the race bolstered the pride of the English in their thoroughbred racing stock and strengthened its financial worth: “From the risk of seeing the Derby won by Curzon, a half-bred gelding, we have at any rate been preserved by that excellent sportsman, the Prime Minister.”²⁰⁰

Perhaps the only racing journalist from among the daily newspapers who rivaled the Daily Telegraph’s “Hotspur” was “Captain Coe” of the Star. Unlike other newspapers which practiced the New Journalism and aimed at a select, educated audience, the Star and its sporting news aspired to mass readership. From its birth in 1888, it fulfilled this aspiration as one of the leading London evening papers with a circulation to match. The Star’s original editorial outlook of radical socialism, under the editorship of T. P. O’Connor from 1888-1891, did not dampen the prominence of

¹⁹⁹ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 6.

²⁰⁰ Daily Telegraph, 30 May 1895, 6.

sport in the paper.²⁰¹ At the finish of the racing season, O'Connor estimated that London evening papers lost between one quarter and one third of their circulations.²⁰² An Irish editor had advised O'Connor of the importance of sport as a feature and thus the new editor included a sporting editor along with those in charge of commercial, dramatic and Parliamentary news.²⁰³ O'Connor hired E.C. Mitchell as sports editor and racing prophet of the new paper. Mitchell had written on sport for the radical London evening, the Echo, under the pen name "Captain Coe." The Echo had not published betting news since 1876 due to the views of its editor-proprietor, J. Passmore Edwards, and he protested to Mitchell about taking the "Captain Coe" name to the Star.²⁰⁴ So with the ghost-writing help of Lincoln Springfield, a colleague at the Star, "Captain Coe" authored a novel so Mitchell could have the personal copyright for the name.²⁰⁵

With the pseudonym in Mitchell's possession, all year long, six days per week, the Star's content-bill contained "Captain Coe's Final's."²⁰⁶ As the paper

²⁰¹ John Goodbody, "The Star: Its Role in the Rise of Popular Newspapers, 1888-1914," Journal of Newspaper and Periodical History 2 (1985), 24-25.

²⁰² Sell's (1906), 104-105, cited in Goodbody, 149.

²⁰³ T. P. O'Connor, Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian, vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1929), 256.

²⁰⁴ Lee, Origins, 127-128; Lincoln Springfield, Some Piquant People (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1924), 40.

²⁰⁵ Springfield, 41.

²⁰⁶ Springfield, 40.

boasted in its Jubilee issue in 1938, "Racing without Captain Coe's Finals would be like London without the Thames, football without the Arsenal, insurance without Lloyd's."²⁰⁷ With Mitchell and his staff the Star became the first newspaper to publish the probable runners for upcoming races and their likely jockeys as well.²⁰⁸ The "SPORTING CHAT" column authored by "Captain Coe" each day was very different from columns dealing with racing in other newspapers, especially the Daily Telegraph. "SPORTING CHAT" incorporated the New Journalism into sporting news by offering evening readers short, crisp notes on the sporting scene in an easy-to-read format. Although most of these one to three sentence paragraphs, individually framed by extra space between each paragraph, concentrated on racing, it was not their only subject. Everything from cricket to rowing to field sports found their way into the gossip, observations, and other news reported by "Captain Coe" each day as the following excerpts illustrate:

If not completed to-day, the University Cricket Match at Lord's will be continued into Thursday, so as to give a chance for a finish.²⁰⁹

Nearly 15,00 visitors paid gate at Stockton yesterday and 10,000 on Tuesday. The crowding was great in the ring and on the stands yesterday, and upon the open ground the people were massed together pretty much as they were on the memorable day when the Hibernian factions joined issue in mortal combat upon the green sward.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ Star, 17 January 1938, 15.

²⁰⁸ Star, 17 January 1938, 15.

²⁰⁹ Star, 4 July 1888, 3.

²¹⁰ Star, 23 August 1888, 3.

Mr. H. McCalmont, who has been chosen hon. sec. of the Army Football Association, will be glad to receive entries for the Challenge Cup. These should be addressed to 9, Grosvenor-place.²¹¹

Times have been so bad with the bookmakers of late that several of them have turned backers, but if I am not much mistaken they will regret the change before long.²¹²

Readers found this sporting news under the heading "TO-DAY'S SPORTING" which included the day's racing results, scratchings, training reports, and the next day's program.²¹³ The small size of the Star ensured that this feature and sport in general did not occupy a large amount of space relative to other newspapers. According to John Goodbody's figures, the Star's inclusion of sport as an important feature did not climb above six percent of the total non-advertising material in its first month of operation.²¹⁴

By the time the Jubilee issue of the Star celebrated "Fifty Years of Racing With Captain Coe," much in racing journalism in the daily papers had changed. In 1888 "the old 'Sportsman' was functioning, but the daily newspapers had no program set out with horses' ages, owners, trainers, full form occupying a page or more - as in the early editions of 'The Star' to-day."²¹⁵ During the first year or so of the Star's

²¹¹ Star, 22 September 1888, 2.

²¹² Star, 6 October 1888, 2.

²¹³ See, for example, 2 July 1888, 3, and 3 July 1888, 3.

²¹⁴ Goodbody, 149.

²¹⁵ Star, 17 January 1938, 15.

existence “Captain Coe’s” column did not include the racing predictions for which the name became so famous. Instead, like many other papers, the *Star* published the predictions from the Sportsman, the Sporting Life, the Field, Country Gentleman, Land and Water, the Sporting Times, and the Licensed Victuallers’ Gazette as “Voice of the Prophets.”²¹⁶ As the *Star* claimed in 1938, other papers like the Evening News, the Evening Standard, the Daily Telegraph, and the Daily Chronicle had

No long and expert analysis of the chances in each race.
No special wires from the training centres . . .

No resident correspondents at Newmarket to gather
information, and to size up the horses as they streak across the Heath
soon after dawn.²¹⁷

A review of the Daily Telegraph of 1888, however, refutes the jubilee *Star’s* contention that “a glimpse at the daily papers of fifty years ago would reveal that racing - gossip, selections, and program - never exceeded a column in all.”²¹⁸ Many papers also contained information about the workouts of horses at the Newmarket training center, and most, if not all, of the daily newspapers in 1892 had reports and weekly observations from the race meetings.²¹⁹

²¹⁶ See for example, *Star*, 3 July 1888, 3.

²¹⁷ *Star*, 17 January 1938, 15.

²¹⁸ *Star*, 17 January 1938, 15.

²¹⁹ Curzon, vi.

The expansion of sporting news in the popular press, especially the essential information for bettors, was critical to the creation of a mass market for gambling. Newspapers, beginning with the sporting press in the 1860s and eventually encompassing almost all of the popular press by the 1890s, published racing programs, odds, and results to the delight of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of readers each day. Even the Street Betting Act of 1906 which outlawed off-course betting did nothing to prohibit the publication of racing news nor did it end the betting of Britons. Racing, betting, and the press had developed an interdependent relationship during the previous half century, which would continue to the present day.

CHAPTER 3

BETTING AND THE PRESS

It has been a common reproach to this country that an Englishman could conclude nothing without a bet. A couple of rain-drops coursing side by side down a window, the spelling of an ambiguous word, or the favourite last half of the Abingdon Mile, were all incentives to an investment.¹

During the nineteenth century the pages of The Times and most other papers, whether metropolitan or provincial, carried a “Sporting Intelligence” column listing horse entries at various meetings, often accompanied by the prevailing odds at Tattersalls, a horse auctioneering firm and betting establishment in London.² The abolition of the Stamp Duty in 1855 enabled penny sporting papers, beginning with the Sporting Life in 1859, to serve bookmakers and their customers by providing training reports, starting prices, racing tips, and probable starters and jockeys. This transformation in the content of sporting news was an example of the related processes of “specialization” and “diversification” occurring within the press throughout the nineteenth century as newspaper titles multiplied.³ The Sporting Life and its brethren specialized in sporting news, especially racing news, while general

¹ Field, 21 November 1863, 497.

² V. Orchard, Tattersalls: Two Hundred Years of Sporting History (London: Hutchinson, 1953).

³ Michael Harris and Alan Lee, “Introduction,” The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries, 109.

interest newspapers diversified their coverage by publishing a condensed version of a similar kind.

Throughout the nineteenth century many individuals and organizations viewed mass gambling, and the news which helped to sustain it, as a serious social and moral problem which threatened sport and society. The consensus among anti-gambling critics was that the crux of the problem was working-class gambling. Anti-gambling activity extended to churches, social and religious organizations, and the government. Opposition to gambling periodically led to Parliament passing anti-gambling legislation. Such legislation, however, had little impact on the publication of sporting news or on the betting culture of the population. Sport, betting, and the press grew dependent upon one another as newspapers and sport became increasingly important in British society. The industry journal, the Newspaper Owner, illustrated the tension between the liberal idea of the newspaper, social and moral reform, and commercial interests. In 1903, it praised the Daily News for omitting betting news: "we wish it well, and hope the time will speedily come when other newspapers will follow the example of The Daily News, and at any rate eliminate betting quotations from their pages." Because newspapers influenced the thoughts and actions of so many people, such a prohibition "would contribute more than anything else to stop the growth of this great national vice."⁴ Eight years later, the journal outlined the dilemma of the modern newspaper as a choice between social responsibility and commercial profitability. It concluded that racing news

⁴ Newspaper Owner and Modern Printer, 18 March 1903, 4.

has much to do with the circulation of evening - and especially halfpenny evening - papers, and we regret to believe that this circumstance synchronizes with the gambling habit throughout the country. People - especially working people - are, in the hundreds of thousands, betting on the different races and buy the evening papers at the earliest moment to see whether their associates have won or lost.⁵

The creation of a penny sporting press and its extension into the daily and evening papers could not have ensued without public demand. With its long heritage and intimate link with sporting events gambling occupied a unique position in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Games of chance incorporating cards or dice, the combat contests of pugilism, wrestling, the cruel sports of cock fighting, bull baiting, and dog fighting, foot racing, and horse racing were all popular amusements which Britons gambled on during the 18th century and for much of the 19th century. Some of these sports, particularly prizefighting and horse racing, had a broad social appeal with wealthy gentlemen acting as patrons. They supported these sports as matchmakers, promoters, trainers, and gamblers.⁶

In many pubs and on the streets, which both served as social centers for the lower classes, petty gambling was a common pastime.⁷ In his mid-nineteenth century study of the laboring poor, Henry Mayhew described the games played by costermongers and children in the streets of London. They passed their leisure time

⁵ "Questions and Answers," Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1911, 10.

⁶ Dennis Brailsford, Sport and Society: Elizabeth to Anne (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 216.

⁷ Brian Harrison, "Pubs," in The Victorian City: Images and Realities, eds. H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 169.

gambling on pitch and toss, card games, 'shove-halfpenny,' skittles, boxing, rat-killing, and dog fights.⁸ Petty gambling also took place in pubs as proprietors sponsored a variety of sporting events involving gambling.⁹

Until their abolition in the 1820s, lotteries, both state-sponsored and unofficial, were popular modes of gambling among the British public. These were games governed by chance, which the state used to finance public works and the war against Napoleon. Lotteries targeted the wealthy classes in their attempt to generate revenue; as Mark Clapson has pointed out, during the French wars, the price of a lottery ticket was £16, far beyond the means of the lower classes.¹⁰ Instead, people from the lower classes joined forces and purchased lottery tickets in groups. Authorities attempted to end lower class participation in lotteries with an Act in 1802. A Select Committee on Lotteries explored the social impact of lotteries in 1808, but lotteries continued to operate during the Napoleonic Wars until their prohibition in 1823.

Abolition, however, had little effect on the gambling practices of the working class as illegal lotteries abounded.¹¹ Publicans and "penny capitalists" among the

⁸ Henry Mayhew, London Labour and the London Poor, vol. 1 (first published 1861-1862; Reprint, New York: Dover, 1968), 11-15 and 476.

⁹ Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians: The Temperance Question in England, 1815-1872 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1971), 48-49.

¹⁰ Clapson, Flutter, 14.

¹¹ John Benson, The Penny Capitalists (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 71.

working class continued to operate their own drawings. In 1868, Thomas Wright, an engineer, noted that workers had ample opportunities to gamble at the pub and at work.¹² Advertisements for sweepstakes run by publicans filled the columns of Bell's Life during the 1840s. Vincent George Dowling, the editor of Bell's Life, explained to the 1844 Select Committee on the Laws Respecting Gaming that "it is the common Practice for the lower Classes to take Tickets of from 2s. to 10l. Those Lotteries are made in Stakes proportionable to the Means of the Individuals who speculate."¹³ The police ignored sweepstakes' advertisements in the press until 1848, when the Attorney General threatened to prosecute newspapers which published these advertisements. The threat prompted an end to the advertisements in the press.¹⁴ The authorities, however, had little chance of suppressing these small-time illegal lotteries which continued to operate until 1956, when "the Clubs Competitions Bill" made the lotteries run by social clubs legal.¹⁵

Betting on horse racing was, perhaps, the most popular mode of gambling during the nineteenth century. Horse racing had developed out of the wagers owners

¹² The Great Unwashed (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1868), 168-169 and also 172 and 174; also see Thomas Wright, Some Habits and Customs of the Working Classes (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1867).

¹³ Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Laws Respecting Gaming (hereafter Lords on Gaming), Parliamentary Papers (hereafter PP) 1844 (604), vol. 6, p. 86, q. 200.

¹⁴ David C. Itzkowitz, "Victorian Bookmakers and Their Customers," Victorian Studies 32 (1988): 10-11.

¹⁵ Clapson, Flutter, 193.

had staked on their own horses.¹⁶ The expansion of racing during the early 18th century prompted the founding of the Jockey Club during the 1750s. With its exclusive membership drawn from the aristocracy and gentry, the Jockey Club became the nominal governing body of the sport, whose mission included controlling the corruption which accompanied the sport.¹⁷

Under the direction of Lord George Bentinck, the Jockey Club initiated a clean up of swindlers and gambling defaulters associated with the sport in the 1840s, when scandals plagued the sport. According to a historian of the Jockey Club, "Turf morality has never stood at a lower ebb than when Lord George began to dominate the racing scene."¹⁸ To rehabilitate the sport's reputation Bentinck prohibited all known defaulters and crooked gamblers from all courses throughout England. One of these individuals, Charles Henry Russell, brought thirty court actions worth about half a million pounds against prominent men as payback against the Jockey Club. The plaintiff took advantage of the seldom invoked Queen Anne statute of 1710 (9 Anne, c. 14), which allowed any person losing over £10 on a wager to take court action to recover the money. The act was likely enacted to keep the amounts of money bet to a minimum, but was rarely, if ever, invoked since gamblers usually paid

¹⁶ For an interesting, but unfavorable survey of horse racing and its connection to betting, see John Ashton, The History of Gambling in England (London: Duckworth, 1899; Reprint, New York: Bart Franklin, 1968), 173-198.

¹⁷ Vamplew has described horse racing as the corrupt sport par excellence, The Turf, 13.

¹⁸ Roger Mortimer, The Jockey Club (London: Cassell, 1958), 72.

their losses. Even if losers did not pay winners had no legal standing on which to obtain their money. Furthermore, any informer could bring action against a winner, who, if convicted, was forced to forfeit three to five times the amount of money won.¹⁹ To counter these lawsuits Lord George enlisted his friend the Duke of Richmond, a non-gambler, to sponsor a bill in 1844 to halt all legal actions against gamblers until a parliamentary investigation into gambling could be conducted.²⁰

The apotheosis of turf corruption occurred while this 1844 Select Committee was sitting. In the 1844 running of the Derby, a race for three year olds, Running Reign ran and won as a four year old. Colonel Peel, owner of the place horse, Orlando, objected to Running Reign's victory and brought legal action against Alexander Wood, Running Reign's owner. The jury found for Colonel Peel and Orlando took the Derby Stakes when Wood failed to enter his horse as evidence.²¹

A Select Committee of the House of Lords examined the "laws respecting gaming" in 1844 and referred Richmond's bill to a separate Select Committee on Gaming in order to study the extent and effects of gambling on the public. Lord Brougham suggested the appointment of such a committee as a method to rationalize the laws relating to gambling: "In one direction they [these laws] were too stringent and severe, and, as it always happened in such cases, in another they were too lax and

¹⁹ Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Gaming (Commons on Gaming), PP 1844 (279), vol. 6, pp. 225-226.

²⁰ Vamplew, The Turf, 200-201.

²¹ Vamplew, The Turf, 89-91.

too easily evaded.²² By impaneling the Select Committees to unravel the complicated legal knot surrounding gambling, Parliament sought to protect “respectable” lords and gentleman from current and future legal actions.

Public betting among the lower classes was perceived as a social problem by most members of Parliament and the witnesses before the Select Committees. Middle class reformers who viewed gambling as immoral sought to outlaw all gambling to protect society from the potentially damaging consequences it might cause. They campaigned against bawdy, irreligious, undisciplined activities like drinking, cruel sports, Sabbath breaking, blasphemy, and gambling. Although these were not exclusively working-class activities, “all these sins were rife at the racecourse, the pub, the theatre, the feast, and the fair”²³ The moral reform movement attacked a working-class culture which included beliefs and conduct considered to be corrupting, wasteful, threatening, and dangerous.²⁴ The “superior” classes needed to act in an upright, moral manner because when they gambled they set a poor example and, according to this view, their actions influenced the lower classes. As D. W.

²² Hansard Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 3rd ser., vol. 72 (1844), col. 218.

²³ Brian Harrison, “Religion and Recreation in Nineteenth-Century England,” in Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 130.

²⁴ See Robert D. Storch, “The Problem of Working-Class Leisure, Some Roots of Middle-Class Moral Reform in the Industrial North: 1825-50,” in Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain, ed. A. P. Donajrodzki (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 138-62, and Storch, “Introduction,” to Popular Culture and Custom in Nineteenth-Century England, ed. Robert D. Storch (London: Croom Helm, 1982), 1-19, for discussions of this attack upon working-class culture.

Harvey, the radical ex-member of Parliament and the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, explained:

I think it is a matter of little importance to hear and to know that men of large fortune have transferred from the one to the other 100,000l.; but I think it is a very undesirable thing that mechanics and persons engaged in industrious pursuits should be crowding round thimble-tables, and going into gambling booths and losing their money. I think the moral and social inconveniences would be much greater from the latter. At the same time, I admit that the existence of the one palliates, and perhaps justifies the conduct of the other, and hence the undesirableness of both.²⁵

The view that gambling was more damaging to the lower classes was echoed in the testimony of Magistrate John Adams, who argued that

Mischievous as gaming is in all classes, its evils are greater in the lower ranks than the higher, from the ruin it necessarily brings on wives and children; no one with small means can gamble without ruining himself; a man who has only 15s. a week, if he loses 5s. a week of that, soon becomes a ruined man.²⁶

Such a view was widespread and influential well into the twentieth century. The sporting culture which included betting on horse races by the aristocracy and the gentry was contested in Parliament. As the Lords Select Committee argued:

this Amusement [horse racing] should be upheld, because it is in accordance with a long-established national Taste; because it serves to bring together, for a common Object, vast Bodies of People in different Parts of the Country, and to promote Intercourse between different Classes of Society; and because without the Stimulus which Racing affords it would be difficult, if not impossible, to maintain that

²⁵ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 75, q. 859.

²⁶ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 48, q. 615, and also see pp. 70-71, q. 801, and p. 74, qq. 856 and 858.

Purity of Blood and Standard of Excellence which have rendered the Breed of English Horses superior to that of any other Country in the World.²⁷

These views expressed the belief that lower class gambling required paternalistic legislation to protect practices linked to English tradition and identity. A steward of the Jockey Club and member of Parliament, Captain Rous, who later headed the Jockey Club, summed up this position best by arguing that “the poor should be protected, but I would let a rich man ruin himself if he pleases.”²⁸

Rather than outlawing gambling, Parliament removed the state from the betting relationship and made wagering a private matter by passing the Act of 1845. As a private affair between individuals, any wager made was not enforceable under the law. In its Report, the Select Committee on Gaming had argued that wagering was “deeply rooted in the habits of the nation” and any penalties imposed for such action “would be looked upon as an arbitrary interference with the freedom of private life.”²⁹ Even with their paternalistic attitudes in this case, the liberty of the individual was still paramount to Parliamentary members. The Duke of Richmond, who chaired the Lord’s Select Committee originally had wanted to make all gambling debts contractual under the law. He relented due to the actions of the Jockey Club

²⁷ Third Report of the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Gaming, PP 1844 (604), vol. 6, p. v.

²⁸ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 184, q. 2857.

²⁹ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. v.

against defaulters and the court decisions which upheld the authority of the stewards to bar defaulters from attending races. As the committee's Third Report explained:

Upon a mature Consideration, however, of the whole subject, they [the committee] do not think it expedient that the Courts of Law should be occupied in the Investigation of these Transactions, but that all Persons who wager with honest Intentions should be compelled by Motives of Self-protection to use greater Vigilance and Care than they now appear to be in the habit of exercising, and that they should refuse to lay Wagers with Men of whose Honour and Solvency they have not sufficient Knowledge.³⁰

Bettors were on their own and would have to suffer the risks of gambling. With this approach it was hoped that bettors would take advantage of the middle class values of hard work and thrift rather than chance to claim their rewards. Such a laissez faire attitude also allowed the Jockey Club and its patrons independence to police racing and its betting without any state interference.

Even with this statute, which seemingly made all gambling acceptable by ignoring it as a private matter, all gambling was not made equal. Gambling on games of chance in places with public access remained illegal under the Vagrant Act of 1824. It punished public betting by anyone, whether in a "street, road, highway, or other open and public place."³¹ Many types of bets had been legal contracts under common law before the passage of the Act of 1845, except those made in gaming houses, where patrons could bet on roulette, hazard, and other games. Gaming houses were "regarded as nuisances," and their proprietors could be punished by fine

³⁰ Third Report of the Select Committee of the HL on Gaming, PP 1844, p. v.

³¹ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 228.

and punishment, according to common law.³² In the absence of a regular police force, this provision of the common law had fallen into disuse during the early nineteenth century. These public gaming houses, however, had gained notoriety in the early 1840s as an urban blight. The prevailing view was that the games at these houses were fraudulent and “demoralizing.”³³

During the early 1840s betting on horse racing among the lower classes probably occurred only when they attended race meetings and much of their gambling was confined to games of chance, rather than horse racing.³⁴ Following the passage of the 1845 Act, a new form of gambling establishment arose in England, the betting house. Many of these betting houses began as cigar shops and accepted wagers on horse races run throughout the country, much like the Off-Track Betting establishments of today. According to the sporting columnist known as “The Druid,” “from 1850 to the end of 1853, the lists were in their glory; and, at one period about four hundred betting-houses were open in London alone. . . .”³⁵ Betting lists detailed the odds offered by bookmakers on horses and were the innovation of the

³² Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, pp. 223-224.

³³ The Times, 26 September 1843, 6. Also see 15 September 1843, 7 and 21 September 1843, 5.

³⁴ Mike Huggins, Flat Racing and British Society 1790-1914 (Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), 118-119.

³⁵ Quoted in Ashton, 210.

bookmakers Drummond and Greville. Those wishing to wager could consult them in betting houses and pubs.³⁶ After examining the lists, the bettor began his quest for a winner, seeking

by signs and testimonies, by all kinds of movements and dodges, the knowing one's opinion. He will drop fishing words to other gazers, will try to overhear whispered remarks, will sidle toward any jockey-legged, or ecurial-costumed individual, and aim more especially at getting into the good graces of the betting office keeper, who, when his business is slack, comes forth from behind the partition, and from the duties of the pigeon-hole [where bets were received], to stretch his legs, and hold turf converse. The betting office is the speculator's divinity.³⁷

Unlike private clubs like Tattersalls, where individuals wagered amongst themselves and kept their own books, in these new establishments the house accepted cash bets from anyone. In these betting houses the owner was "ready to bet with all comers." Individuals risked money in the hope that a successful wager on an event would lead to a larger payout.³⁸ This new type of betting, based on the combination of horse racing and ready-money wagering with a bookmaker, became extremely popular among all classes during the next seventy years.³⁹ Reformers in London, led by Sir Peter Laurie, the Lord Mayor, vowed to suppress the betting houses by

³⁶ Ashton, 210; L. H. Curzon claimed that perhaps 700 lists were in existence at the time, mostly in pubs, and that "the chief centre of list betting was Long Acre," A Mirror of the Turf, 230-232.

³⁷ "Betting Offices," Chambers's Edinburgh Journal, n.s., no. 447, 24 July 1852, 57.

³⁸ Hansard, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 129 (1853), col. 88.

³⁹ Clapson, Flutter, 22.

petitioning parliament to close these havens of ready-money betting.⁴⁰ The metropolis contained one hundred to one hundred-fifty of these houses and other towns also were affected by these establishments in 1853.⁴¹ While these houses attracted bettors of all social classes the police returns from Manchester showed that most customers caught by the authorities were workers, many from the textile industry.⁴²

The themes concerning the dangers of gambling among the lower classes from the 1844 Select Committees' evidence dominated later discussions about gambling and society. In 1844, the Commissioner of the City of London police force had argued that "when gambling pervades the great masses of society, it is a great social evil" and "the moral and social inconveniences" were more devastating for the working class than for the rich when they lost money.⁴³ Property was also at stake: young gamblers, "particularly inexperienced clerks," lost more gambling than they could afford and with access to their employers' money, pilfer it, leading to further "dishonesty and crime."⁴⁴ When he introduced the Betting Houses Bill in 1853, the Attorney General, Sir Alexander Cockburn, repeated a theme that had run through the

⁴⁰ The Times, 19 June 1852, 5. I have been unable to uncover the name of this group. Ashton, 209-210, also notes this meeting of reformers.

⁴¹ Hansard, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 129, (1853), col. 88.

⁴² Clapson, Flutter, 23.

⁴³ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 74, q. 856; p. 75, q. 859.

⁴⁴ Commons on Gaming, PP 1844, p. 162, qq. 2486-2487.

1844 Select Committee testimony about the dangers of gambling among the lower classes. He argued that

the mischief arising from the existence of these betting shops was perfectly notorious. Servants, apprentices, and workmen, induced by the temptation of receiving a large sum for a small one, took their few shillings to these places, and the effect of their losing was to tempt them to go on spending their money, in the hope of retrieving their losses, and for this purpose it not unfrequently happened that they were driven into robbing their masters and employers.⁴⁵

The bill suppressing betting houses passed both houses and after 1853 cash betting on horse racing was legal only inside of racing enclosures and in some private clubs. Betting on credit remained legal after 1853 and enabled bettors with the monetary means to place wagers without interference from the authorities. Betting clubs sprang up throughout England for those with the money and status to set up credit accounts.⁴⁶ Credit betting was also available with bookmakers, in person, by post, or by telegram. Supporters believed credit betting was more honest than ready-money betting and protected the lower classes. Since the working classes could not readily bet on credit -- it required a "substantial income and respectable address"⁴⁷ -- many believed that working-class bettors would be likely victims of swindlers who took their bets and never paid out winnings. After all, it was easy for a bookmaker to cheat bettors, thanks to the 1845 Act which made betting debts unenforceable by law.

⁴⁵ Hansard, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 129, (1853), col. 88.

⁴⁶ Vamplew, The Turf, 207; Clapson, Flutter, 27.

⁴⁷ Clapson, Flutter, 27.

While public forms of gambling became illegal, they did not disappear as working-class betting moved to the street and to new illicit betting shops in various towns. Street bookmaking soon became a common feature of working-class culture. It was difficult for the authorities to uproot it when much of the public would not cooperate with them. Recent research has suggested that the 1853 Act had little effect on working-class betting. Illegal list houses and outlawed betting clubs along with street betting became an even stronger part of working-class culture during the 1860s and 1870s.⁴⁸ Even with the continued betting in shops wagering on horses also moved to the street. Sporting journalist R. P. Watson recalled that as a youth around 1860 he had walked to school amid the street betting. "From early morning until the day was far advanced the street was crowded with men who wagered upon the result of every race, just as if St. Thomas's-street were a racecourse."⁴⁹ In 1869 "social explorer" James Greenwood maintained that working-class gambling was growing and cited as evidence the increase in newspapers "specially devoted to matters 'sportive'."⁵⁰ Among these penny papers were the Sporting Life and the Sportsman, which provided bettors with racing information. Without the publication of sporting news in these penny papers, Thomas Wright would not have been able to write that "the lovers of sport" among the working class "are posted up in the dates of

⁴⁸ Clapson, Flutter, 24; Chinn, 96; Vamplew, The Turf, 205.

⁴⁹ Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper, 19 April 1914, 17.

⁵⁰ James Greenwood, The Seven Curses of London (London: S. Rivers, 1869. Reprint, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 241.

and the latest betting, upon all important sporting matters, and discuss the probable results of ‘coming events’ as learnedly and vaguely as any of the professional sporting prophets.”⁵¹

Even within this legal framework, gambling remained an immensely popular and widespread activity due to the lack of enforcement during the first half of the nineteenth century. With Britain’s transformation into an urban, industrial society, however, perceptions and attitudes about gambling took on new meanings. Although gamblers sought to make money, many variables existed between the wager and the outcome of the activity wagered upon. In games involving cards or dice one of the variables was chance, when “the past does not affect the future,”⁵² while the variables for sporting events included the past form of the performers. Past performance, however, did not guarantee similar results in the future.

Most gamblers realized the activity was a losing proposition. Furthermore, many did not possess the amounts of money required to attain the ever-elusive big payday. Instead, gambling provided a temporary escape from constant daily toil and also the hope of a little extra money. A bet involved little physical effort whether it took place on a lottery, on a cockfight, on a horse race, or in a card game. For the poor, gambling offered a temporal displacement from the reality of their everyday

⁵¹ Some Habits, 121.

⁵² Norwood Young, “Betting,” Badminton Magazine 3 (1897): 709.

existence as they attempted, for a moment, to “control their fate.”⁵³ Mayhew, observing the London poor in the 1850s, insightfully acknowledged this role of gambling and other amusements:

It is folly to fancy that the mind, spent with the irksomeness of compelled labour, and depressed, perhaps, with the struggle to live by that labour after all, will not, when the work is over, seek out some place where at least it can forget its troubles or fatigues in the temporary pleasure begotten by some mental or physical stimulant.⁵⁴

Sixty years later, even The Times, which long deplored the commercialized state of sport and the betting associated with it, recognized this lure of gambling and argued that “we have to speculate because there are so few certainties in life.”⁵⁵

Another attraction of gambling was the economic independence it offered. It was not economic independence derived from the winning of large amounts of money, but the freedom of working outside the British economic system. As Robert Roberts has described it, “betting on horses was about the only way, other than theft, that the worker knew of to get money without earning it.”⁵⁶ This something for nothing character of gambling was a major point of criticism seized upon by anti-

⁵³ Vamplew, The Turf, 215.

⁵⁴ Mayhew, 1:42.

⁵⁵ The Times, 13 July 1912, 9.

⁵⁶ The Classic Slum (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 130.

gamblers. One critic argued that “the prospect of gain without exertion” was the core attraction of gambling.⁵⁷

A gambler had a better opportunity of controlling his or her fate when betting on horse races because the results of a race were not dependent purely on chance, as contemporaries acknowledged.⁵⁸ A myriad of elements could determine the winner, including, unlike a game of pure chance like roulette, the past. Other conditions also could affect the result including the distance of the race, the weather, and the physical state of the horses and jockeys.⁵⁹ There is a skill to taking all of these variables into consideration and many serious bettors utilized rational criteria when making a wager. This rational form of betting was an intellectual pursuit open to all, especially with the proliferation of penny sporting papers and their racing information, and its further spread into the daily penny press.⁶⁰

Men were not the only gamblers as this pursuit was practiced throughout all of the community. Women and children gambled and horse racing was the most popular activity on which to stake a bet. Some women bet with bookmakers who went door

⁵⁷ W. J. K., “Betting and Gambling,” Westminster Review 140 (1895): 142.

⁵⁸ Newspaper Owner and Manager, 15 February 1899, 18.

⁵⁹ Young, 712-713.

⁶⁰ See McKibbin, 119-124; Vamplew, The Turf, 215; D. M. Downes, B. P. Davies, M. E. David, and P. Stone, Gambling, Work and Leisure: A Study Across Three Areas (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), 130.

to door while children played pitch-and-toss.⁶¹ Compared to men, women usually bet less often and for smaller sums, probably because the household budget left little extra for such diversions.⁶² In presenting his Betting Bill to the House of Lords in 1903, Lord Davey argued that betting was widespread among both men and women. Bookmakers went “from door to door of the workmen’s houses, and persuade, incite, and induce the women to make bets with them.”⁶³ In Manchester, women bettors consulted the Sporting Chronicle just like the men.⁶⁴ The Select Committee on Betting Duty of 1923 agreed with its witnesses that increasing numbers of women mill workers and domestic servants were betting. Housewives bet with neighborhood bookmakers who went door to door between 9 and 11 a.m., “canvassing the homes of the artisan classes.” Children also carried messages for bettors, tipsters, and bookies, and also placed bets for workers.⁶⁵ This was not a new, post-war phenomenon: one concerned observer had noted thirty years earlier that “it has now become common to

⁶¹ Lady Florence Bell, At the Works: A Study of a Manufacturing Town (London: E. Arnold, 1907; Reprint, Newton Abbot Devon: David and Charles, 1969), 254-262.

⁶² Mark Clapson, “Playing the System: The World of Organised Street Betting in Manchester, Salford and Bolton, c. 1880 to 1939,” in Workers’ World: Cultures and Communities in Manchester and Salford, 1880-1939, eds. Andrew Davies and Steven Fielding (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 164.

⁶³ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 4th ser., vol. 122 (1903), cols. 869-870.

⁶⁴ Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Betting Duty (hereafter Betting Duty), PP, 1923 (139), vol. 5, p. 393, q. 6763.

⁶⁵ Betting Duty, PP, 1923, pp. xv, pp. 64-65, Q. 1314-1321, p. 92, Q. 1798-99, p. 298, Q. 5121-5129; Bell, 262; V. W. Garratt, A Man in the Street (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1939), 4-5.

see women both staking money and making a living as betting agents, and children doing the same.”⁶⁶

It was not long until betting agents discovered that the 1853 Act did not apply to Scotland and many of them moved north. Parliament extended the law to Scotland in 1874 along with outlawing betting advertisements in newspapers and betting circulars. These advertisements had a prominent place in the Sporting Life and the Sportsman, according to George Anderson, the MP for Glasgow who introduced the bill.

Perhaps the most respectable sporting papers in this country are The Field and Land and Water. These are papers that encourage horse-racing, but neither of them will admit one single betting advertisement, not even a tipster's advertisement. I have letters from The Times, The Daily Telegraph, The Daily News, The Standard, The Hour, The Echo, and The Globe, all stating that they had made it an absolute rule to refuse insertion to every betting advertisement, some of them adding they had come to this decision, notwithstanding the fact that they were offered double their scale prices for them.⁶⁷

It was difficult to enforce, however, and circulars remained in circulation.⁶⁸ A few newspapers banned the advertisements of tipsters, but many, especially the sporting press, continued to publish tipsters' appeals.

⁶⁶ The Times, 27 October 1890, 13. Also see Clapson, Flutter, 46-48, on women and betting.

⁶⁷ Hansards, Commons, 3rd series, vol. 218 (1874), cols. 597-599.

⁶⁸ Dixon, 168-169.

Most working class bettors turned their attention to street bookmakers, who had a greater incentive for honesty, since they were part of the community. Postal bookmakers could make their own odds or simply not make payouts to winners. Street bookmakers based their payouts on the starting price odds of horses determined by the sporting press. Bettors consulted these odds in the Sporting Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Chronicle, each of which employed individuals who worked in the betting rings at racecourses and calculated the starting prices for publication.⁶⁹

Racecourses and sporting grounds were the only other places ready-cash betting was allowed.⁷⁰ Because meetings lasted only a few days at each course this limited the opportunity for regular legal betting. Betting of this type continued with only occasional interference from the authorities until the 1890s, when the National Anti-Gambling League (NAGL) sought to suppress on-course betting by applying the 1853 and 1874 acts to this activity. The NAGL was formed in 1890 to combat the growth of gambling and its membership grew to include such Labour and Liberal luminaries as J. Ramsey MacDonald, J. A. Hobson, and B. Seebohm Rowntree.

⁶⁹ Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Betting (hereafter Betting), PP, 1901 (370), vol. 5, q. 119, p. 12, q. 119; Report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Betting (hereafter Betting), PP, 1902 (389), vol. 5, p. 128, qq. 2763-2770.

⁷⁰ I am indebted to the work of David Dixon upon which much of the following is based.

Rowntree was active in the York branch of the NAGL, whose headquarters also was located in York.⁷¹

On-course betting was the primary target of the NAGL in the 1890s and anti-gambling attitudes similar to those of the 1840s and 1850s motivated its campaign.⁷² Even with or, perhaps, in spite of the sporting press there was concern about scandal on the Turf due to the ever-present risk of corruption by the manipulation of odds, horses, trainers, jockeys, or any combination of the above. Not surprisingly, the press came under fire early on during the NAGL's campaign. As the NAGL viewed the situation in an early meeting, "a terrible responsibility rested on the newspapers which devoted columns to records of horse racing, and thus held out a direct incentive to bet."⁷³

Aristocrats and other individuals with public status and power continued to participate actively in horse racing and the NAGL saw the Turf as the hotbed of upper-class gambling. Lord Rosebery won the Derby twice in the 1890s while he was Prime Minister and the Prince of Wales kept a successful stable between 1886 and 1910, and had a reputation as a notorious gambler.⁷⁴ The NAGL believed that

⁷¹ Asa Briggs, Social Thought and Social Action: A Study of the Work of Seebohm Rowntree, 1871-1954 (London: Longmans, 1961; Reprint, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1974), 78-79.

⁷² John Hawke, "Our Principles and Programme," New Review 10 (1894): 705-717.

⁷³ The Times, 16 June 1890, 6.

⁷⁴ Philip Magnus, Edward the Seventh (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1964), 253-254.

the superior classes were corrupting society; their habits of gambling led the working class to believe gambling was acceptable. (Witnesses before the Select Committee on Gaming in 1844 had, of course, made the same argument.⁷⁵) Without the example of their social superiors gambling, it would be easier to reduce working-class gambling by means of education.⁷⁶

Racecourse bookmakers came under increasing scrutiny during the 1870s and after as the authorities began to interpret the 1853 Act in a different way. As David Dixon has stated, “the crucial issue became the interpretation of ‘place’, which the 1853 Act did not define.” Bookmakers at racecourses became subject to prosecution.⁷⁷ The NAGL took up its own campaign in the 1890s by privately prosecuting bookmakers and course managers for allowing bookmaking. In addition, it unsuccessfully tried to pressure the Government to suppress on-course betting. When the NAGL was successful in the judicial prosecution of Richard Dunn in 1897, it seemed it had achieved its objective. With betting at a racecourse judged as illegal, it was logical to assume that betting was illegal everywhere.⁷⁸

Only four months after the *Hawke v. Dunn* decision the Court of Appeals overruled the decision in *Powell v. Kempton Park* by determining that the racing

⁷⁵ See above, pages 117-119.

⁷⁶ Dixon, 86-87.

⁷⁷ Dixon, 91.

⁷⁸ Dixon, 93-94.

enclosure was not a “place,” in the way the 1853 Act had defined it. The clerk at Kempton Park racecourse, in collusion with the racecourse company’s directors, had sued the company for providing a betting ring for bookmakers in violation of the 1853 Act. The House of Lords agreed with the Court of Appeal’s decision and the Lord Chancellor clarified that since bookmakers and not the owners of the course took bets, the 1853 Act did not apply.⁷⁹ Betting with bookmakers at a racecourse was declared legal and horse racing could continue. The NAGL had failed in its campaign against betting at the racecourse, but the publicity the campaign received brought to light the pervasiveness of gambling as a social practice.

The actions of the NAGL gave rise to a sporting lobby which sought to protect the gambling interests of bookmakers and the sporting press. In 1894, James Lowther, a Conservative member of Parliament and a member of the Jockey Club, helped to found the Sporting League with William Allison, a journalist with the Sportsman. The executive of the Sporting League included most of the stewards of the Jockey Club, as well as Lord Durham, Lord Coventry, Lord Hawke, the Duke of Richmond and Gordon, and Lord Lonsdale.⁸⁰ A northern branch of the Sporting League began to identify itself as the “National,” until the two groups came together in opposition to the NAGL with the assistance of the Sporting Life, which was no doubt fearful of possible anti-gambling legislation and its effects on the newspaper’s

⁷⁹ Itzkowitz, 18; Dixon, 100.

⁸⁰ William Allison, Memories of Men and Horses (London: Grant Richards, 1922), 214-215, and “My Kingdom for a Horse!” Yorkshire, Rugby, Balliol, the Bar, Bloodstock and Journalistic Recollections (London: Grant Richards, 1919), 344.

circulation.⁸¹ This fear was articulated in the Sporting Life by “Old Blue,” who argued before the 1906 election that “British sportsmen of every persuasion are face to face with a national danger.”⁸² The united organization was active on the political front and endorsed candidates in the Sporting Life.⁸³

The NAGL’s campaign against gambling shed light on a widespread social practice. On the local level the NAGL sought the enactment of municipal laws to suppress gambling. Even with increased powers the perception that betting remained a problem eventually led to a Bill introduced by the Bishop of Hereford in 1901 to give more power to the police and the courts to discourage street betting, and which outlawed the publication of gambling information.⁸⁴ A Select Committee of the House of Lords was formed to investigate the state of gambling and the laws that governed it. The committee concluded that gambling by the working class was the crux of the gambling problem in Britain. Not only did the working class have access to bookmakers, who inhabited virtually every neighborhood, but it also had access to racing information published in the press. The Committee noted that the increase in betting was apparent in “the great increase of newspapers devoted entirely to sporting

⁸¹ National Sporting League Journal (hereafter NSLJ) new series (June 1924): 11.

⁸² Sporting Life, 3 January 1906, 5.

⁸³ NSLJ, 10 (September 1911): 3. See the questions used to screen Parliamentary candidates in Allison, “Mv Kingdom,” 345.

⁸⁴ Dixon, 114-115.

matters, and to the publication of articles upon racing news, and of sporting tips or prophecies.”⁸⁵

Beginning in 1903, Lord Davey, a Liberal member of the Select Committee on Betting, began introducing successive anti-betting bills in the House of Lords. Because of opposition to the inclusion of betting on sporting grounds in the first Bill, it was defeated. Lord Davey’s Bill also sought to outlaw any “intelligence” which facilitated betting amongst the public. Lord Durham, the chair of the Select Committee, argued in the House of Lords that its Report was not a document which had received the unanimous consent of the committee; some members had advocated the regulation of gambling by the state.⁸⁶ He opposed Lord Davey’s Bill because it was “the offspring of a body of faddists,” the NAGL, and he maintained that there was no public urgency to suppress gambling.⁸⁷ Further problems with drafting acceptable legislation delayed the betting ban until 1906.⁸⁸ There was no action on the bill in the House of Commons in 1903 and while the bill received three readings in the House of Lords in 1904, it received only one reading in the Commons. Many Conservatives, including the Houses of Convocation deputation in the Lords, had

⁸⁵ Betting, PP, 1902, p. v.

⁸⁶ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 4th ser., vol. 122 (1903), cols. 883-884, 901.

⁸⁷ Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 4th ser., vol. 122 (1903), col. 891.

⁸⁸ See Dixon, 135-147, for a discussion of the Street Betting Bills, 1903-1906.

favored anti-gambling legislation but the legislation was not adopted until 1906 after the Liberals had won the election. The Liberals' strong Nonconformist contingent combined with their leadership, including Prime Minister Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Home Secretary Herbert Gladstone, and Chancellor of the Exchequer Herbert Asquith, together with sympathetic Conservatives, led to the passage of the Street Betting Act. The 1906 "Act for the Suppression of Betting in Streets and other Public Places" sought to consolidate the numerous municipal bylaws concerning betting and check its growth by enacting heavier punishments.⁸⁹

One problem with prohibiting street betting was foretold in 1904 by John Garrett Leigh who observed that

something is being done in the direction of making the lot of the bookmaker more difficult, but even so the existence of what we may call amateur bookmakers will afford the opportunity for speculation for many a day to come. The "commission agent," who takes bets, after a due deposit, by post or by telegraph, is but a small factor in these [working-class] districts; but the fellow-worker who makes a little "book," until he is bitten by some untoward catastrophe, is the phenomenon which has the chiefest dangers to the community, and it is a legislative problem how he can be interfered with while the liberty of the subject is sacred. It is one thing to banish the slouchers around the doors of iron-works; it is quite another thing to restrict the operations of the man who slyly takes bets and continues to work at his lathe or his engine.⁹⁰

Since working-class bettors were the most frequent customers of street bookmakers this paternalistic legislation clearly was directed at them and it proved

⁸⁹ Betting Duty, PP, 1923, p. vii.

⁹⁰ John Garrett Leigh, "What do the Masses Read?" Economic Review 14 (1904): 177.

ineffective. Working-class bettors continued to bet with bookmakers. As David Dixon has explained in his history of gambling legislation, “the Act was perceived to be directed against working-class betting, not just against bookmakers. Consequently, they could generally rely on the support and protection of working-class communities: this was to render it largely unenforceable.”⁹¹

After the successful passage of the Street Betting Act the NAGL turned to suppressing advertisements for betting in newspapers. The NAGL maintained that betting continued to be a problem after 1906 because of the press. Clearly, between reader competitions, which it sponsored in steadily increasing numbers, and the publication of betting information the press promoted gambling.⁹² The NAGL followed up the Street Betting Act by seeking to outlaw bookmakers’ advertisements, the publication of betting odds, and competitions with prizes of over £5. All of these items generated income for newspapers either through the advertising revenue, or their ability to increase circulation. While the sporting press originally had benefited from the inclusion of betting news during the 1860s and 1870s, the halfpenny evening press, realizing the potential increase in circulation betting news might generate, began to publish it on a greater scale. “A LANCASHIRE NEWSPAPER PROPRIETOR” explained in a letter to The Times that “many editors would exclude betting intelligence tomorrow if they could do so without transferring

⁹¹ Dixon, 144.

⁹² The Times, 22 December 1906, 10.

their employer's property to competitors."⁹³ Without the Press and the information it disseminated, according to the NAGL, "betting on horse racing would be followed on a comparatively small scale, and Press competitions would not exist."⁹⁴ Social and moral improvement could not be achieved without the prohibition of these activities by the Press.

The problem was the opposition that the anti-betting news legislation faced. Popular newspapers printed betting news because it attracted readers. By 1902 some evening papers had begun to put out smaller four page late morning, noon, and early afternoon editions whose primary subject was racing.⁹⁵ Betting news had become a necessary part of a newspaper's daily fare as cheap newspapers with low advertising rates looked to large circulations to sustain themselves. The anti-gambling Nonconformist managing partner of the Manchester Evening News, Robert Allen, conceded in his testimony before the Select Committee on Betting that his paper depended on even the reduced betting news it offered to readers.⁹⁶ Allen claimed that a newspaper could not exist without the publication of starting prices: "I think we ourselves have gone as far as it is possible for any newspaper to go, we do not publish tipsters' advertisements: we do not publish tips. Of course, we have suffered

⁹³ The Times, 18 November 1892, 15.

⁹⁴ The Times, 21 February 1907, 7.

⁹⁵ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 79, qq. 1674-1675; p. 80, qq. 1698-1700; Roberts, 130.

⁹⁶ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 78, q. 1672; p. 79, qq. 1683-1685.

considerably in the past - in fact, we are suffering now - in loss of circulation and so on by that attitude."⁹⁷ He distinguished between tips, which were not news but inducements to bet, and starting prices, which were news because they were the result of a past event.⁹⁸ Although Allen wanted to end the publication of starting prices and "This Day's Betting," which contained the odds for future races, he explained that his paper would not survive if other papers still published such information.⁹⁹ Commercial considerations were much more powerful than the moral concerns of the NAGL and its allies. While the Select Committee found that the advertisements of tipsters in newspapers were "highly objectionable" and recommended their prohibition, it also claimed that the inclusion of starting price odds "greatly facilitates betting upon Horse Races," and it did not condemn them.¹⁰⁰ Even before the passage of the Street Betting Act of 1906 the innovations of the press had shaped reader demand to such an extent that an industry journal asked

what evening newspaper of any standing would think of only giving the bare results? The readers demand not only all the runners, description of the race, with full betting news, but they also want items of gossip from the course, Tattersall's sale prices for the horses brought under the hammer, result of morning gallop, etc. . . In fact, should one evening paper debar its readers from such full reports, a competitor is quickly on the scene.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 76, q. 1620.

⁹⁸ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 76, q. 1621; p. 77, q. 1632.

⁹⁹ Betting, PP, 1902, p. 78, q. 1672; p. 79, qq. 1683-1685.

¹⁰⁰ Betting, PP, 1902, pp. v-vi.

¹⁰¹ Master Printer and Newspaper Owner, 1 April 1905, 7.

Only a few newspapers, taking a moral stand, decided not to publish betting news. For a short time during the 1870s, three Manchester morning papers arranged to ban betting news from their pages. While two of the papers' bans lasted only a short time, the Manchester Guardian, with its Liberal middle class circulation base, was able to continue the ban.¹⁰² The London evening paper, the Echo, which J. Passmore Edwards bought in 1875, was another Liberal organ which did not publish betting news. When the Cadburys, a Quaker family of chocolate manufacturers from York, acquired the Daily News in 1899, its betting news came to an end.

In 1910, the Cadbury Trust and the Rowntrees, another Quaker family of chocolate manufacturers, acquired the Star and the Morning Leader, newspapers with ample sporting news and the home to the tipster, "Captain Coe." The new proprietors, however, did not abandon their publication of betting news and became targets of much public criticism from another Liberal Quaker chocolate manufacturer, former Lord Justice Sir Edward Fry and from the conservative publication, the Spectator. According to the Spectator, this was a case of 'organised hypocrisy' by the Cadbury and Rowntree families: "Either by owning shares in it directly or by holding shares in the Daily News Company - that anti-betting paper, astonishing as it may seem, is one of the chief proprietors of the Star - they are responsible for a paper whose business raison d'être is the publication of betting tips and betting news."¹⁰³

¹⁰² Betting, PP, 1902, p. 77, qq. 1633-1634.

¹⁰³ Spectator, 25 March 1911, 431.

The Spectator also advocated an act to prohibit the press from publishing betting news, betting tips, and betting advertisements.¹⁰⁴

In reply to these rebukes, “the Friends Against Whom Sir Edward Fry’s Criticism Have Been Directed” sought to justify their position as anti-gambling advocates who published betting news:

In connection with this accusation of doing evil that good may come, let it be remembered that we did not introduce betting news into the papers - and there is all the difference in the world between deliberately creating an evil and accepting for the time being one that already exists, with the earnest purpose of lessening it in the future.

We have endeavoured to do something to save, for the cause of international peace, social reform, and human progress, the papers with which we have become connected, but we are not satisfied to regard as final the present position of these papers in reference to the publication of betting news.¹⁰⁵

For the Rowntrees and Cadburys, the press remained a crucial organ of authority and persuasion among the public.¹⁰⁶ As they argued, their papers, even with their betting news, provided an antidote to the policies of “materialism” and “militarism” practiced by much of the daily press.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Spectator, 22 April 1911, 585-586. For the ongoing discussion of the topic also see the following issues, 1 April 1911; 22 April 1911; 13 May 1911; 14 October 1911; 21 October 1911; 28 October 1911; 4 November 1911; and 11 November 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Spectator, 11 November 1911, 812.

¹⁰⁶ Alan J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 215.

¹⁰⁷ Spectator, 11 November 1911, 811.

While various Bills dealing with the prohibition of betting news were introduced in Parliament before 1914, these attempts could never muster enough support to pass. Some went too far in the eyes of opponents and some, which prohibited advertisements and circulars, did not go far enough for anti-gambling proponents. The Liberal Government refused to support any anti-gambling legislation which took too much time away from its own legislative agenda.¹⁰⁸

Since the 1880s, as part of the New Journalism, newspapers had developed prize competitions as a method of increasing circulation. Football coupon betting, which had originated in the football press, was especially worrisome to the anti-gambling group. The Times disclosed that the NAGL believed that football betting “was never so prevalent as at present, and it was estimated that in Liverpool alone last season 250,000 football betting coupons were issued by bookmakers every week, and that £140,000 were returned with money stakes.”¹⁰⁹

Football betting was an outgrowth of the prize competitions started by the popular periodicals Tit-bits, Answers, and Pearson's Weekly. These penny publications concentrated on the miscellaneous items popular in many daily newspapers and used competitions to boost their circulations. As Robert Roberts recalled, “they found the right formula, too, offering just those innumerable bits of

¹⁰⁸ Dixon, 158-161. See Peter Clarke, “The Edwardians and the Constitution,” in Edwardian England, ed. Donald Read (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 40-55, on the political difficulties of the period.

¹⁰⁹ The Times, 29 June 1907, 17.

inconsequential fact that simple readers and the newly literate love.”¹¹⁰ George Newnes began publication of the pioneering Tit-bits in Manchester in 1881 and by 1883 the paper had launched a competition whose prize was an £800 house at Dulwich.¹¹¹ The proprietors of both Answers and Pearson's Weekly, Alfred Harmsworth and Cyril Pearson, had launched their careers in journalism working for Newnes at Tit-bits.

Beginning in the late 1880s the sporting press began offering prizes to readers who predicted the correct results in certain football matches. Competitions which offered interested readers the chance for a big payout by predicting the results of certain matches in exchange for a small payment had their origins in the football press of the North and Midlands.¹¹² Football betting increased with the establishment of the Football League and its regular schedule of games in 1888. With his purchase of the London Evening News, Alfred Harmsworth brought his reader competitions to the London daily newspaper market. In his attempt to boost the circulation of his new paper, Harmsworth initiated competitions which he had successfully used in Answers. Beginning with the 1894-95 football season the Football Evening News, a special weekly edition, offered readers a chance to win

A CRISP NEW FIVER

¹¹⁰ Roberts, 130.

¹¹¹ Dictionary of National Biography, Supplement 1901-1911, vol. 3:9.

¹¹² Tony Mason, Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915, (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1980), 181-182.

in its new competition.¹¹³ By 1898 the competition had become more difficult and its prize larger: it offered “FIFTY POUNDS to the reader who on ONE of the Coupons printed below gives the results and the actual number of goals scored by the respective Association clubs in each of the four matches played next Saturday to which this competition is confined.” The coupon provided the competitor with thirteen chances to win the £50 prize: the first coupon a reader filled out and sent in was free, but any others cost ½d. each. If no one chose the correct goals in the four games the next closest contestant received £20 as a consolation.¹¹⁴ The paper marketed these weekly giveaways as competitions which tested reader’s knowledge and ability as the following description of a contest illustrates: “TEN CRISP FIVE POUND NOTES FOR EXERCISING SKILL . . . A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF FOOTBALL WILL ENABLE YOU TO PICK UP THE GOLD.” The next season the prize increased to £100 and the paper suggested that “If You Study Football ‘Form’ You May Win this Big Prize.”¹¹⁵ At the end of the football season, when cricket replaced football as the primary subject of the sporting press, cricket competitions took over for the football contests.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Football Evening News, 22 September 1894, 4.

¹¹⁴ Football Evening News, 19 March 1898, 4.

¹¹⁵ Football Evening News, 10 September 1898, 4.

¹¹⁶ For other examples see the Athletic News, 6 January 1896, 1, for football and 20 July 1896, 1, for cricket.

The Evening News's competitions not only attracted readers but provided the newspaper with an unforeseen source of revenue. Up to £200 of penny stamps per week arrived from contestants to cover entries in addition to their first free entry. Alfred Harmsworth's brother, Harold, who dealt with the paper's finances, only agreed to the competitions because the penny stamps easily covered its expenses.¹¹⁷ The NAGL helped to end this particular lucrative practice in 1901, when the courts decided that any payment other than the price of the newspaper was a bet in violation of the 1853 Betting Houses Act.¹¹⁸

The NAGL and others were critical of this "method of buying circulation" and sought to end such competitions promoted by the press.¹¹⁹ Bookmakers also took advantage of this new creation by offering fixed-odds betting well before the implementation of the pools. Bettors obtained coupons which listed matches and could then forecast the outcomes at the odds specified on the coupon.¹²⁰ The NAGL was active in the campaign to end the competitions by prosecuting newspapers and pressuring the authorities to do the same. This was an expensive and time-consuming

¹¹⁷ Kennedy Jones, 132-133; Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe (London: Cassell, 1959), 175.

¹¹⁸ Mason, Association Football, 182.

¹¹⁹ The phrase comes from Herbert Tracey, The British Press (London: Europa, 1929), 40. Robert Roberts, 130, makes the same point about the mass circulation periodicals: "Their vast increases in circulation, however, did not come through literary content: they were based on the introduction of spectacular competitions which offered readers dazzling cash prizes or pensions for life."

¹²⁰ Mason, Association Football, 181-185.

process, however, and by 1907 the NAGL looked to legislation to end competitions.¹²¹ The state of the law was unclear, as Sir John Walton, the Attorney General, admitted in 1907.¹²² A 1908 Joint Select Committee on Lotteries recommended the prohibition of competitions which charged an entry fee.¹²³ Problems similar to those which plagued the banning of betting inducements afflicted legislation concerning newspaper competitions. Competitions were popular with the public as they proliferated among mass circulation newspapers from the 1890s on. The House of Commons discussed legislation concerning the prohibition of newspaper competitions and advertised competitions numerous times between 1909 and 1914. Bills were introduced banning “betting inducements,” or advertisements for betting and tipster’s businesses between 1912 and 1914. In 1913 and 1914 Ready Money Football Betting Bills, which sought to prohibit the publication of bookmakers’ football coupons in newspapers, also were introduced in the House of Commons. The difficult political climate ensured the defeat of these bills, although a prize competitions bill and the Ready Money Football Betting Bill both received two readings before the war shifted concern to “emergency business.”¹²⁴

¹²¹ Dixon, 162.

¹²² Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 4th ser., vol. 176 (1907), col. 904.

¹²³ Report from the Joint Select Committee on Lotteries and Indecent Advertisements, PP 1908 (275), vol. 9, p. iv.

¹²⁴ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 66 (1914), col. 386.

Both Ready Money Football Betting Bills had the support of the Football Association (FA), which collaborated with the Parliamentary member Hayes Fisher to develop the legislation. While the FA had been active in attempting to prohibit betting on football from 1892, it sought legislation to outlaw that “peculiarly pernicious form of betting,” coupon betting beginning in 1913.¹²⁵ Opposition came from the NAGL, which sought a more universal ban targeting more than one sport. Similar legislation did not pass until 1920, and even this was a small hindrance to bettors and bookmakers as the continued growth of football betting illustrates.¹²⁶

Newspapers were critical to the culture of gambling in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. The proliferation of sports coverage after mid-century provided bettors with the information they needed to make an informed bet. In the pages of the sporting press, bettors found racing entries and training information about horses from which they calculated form and the other variables which might affect a horse's chances of winning. The latest race results and starting price odds became staples of the evening press during the 1880s and supported the growth of ready-money off-course bookmaking. Bookmakers based their payouts on the starting prices printed in the Sporting Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Chronicle. The publication of starting prices gave a sense of legitimacy and honesty to the odds offered by

¹²⁵ Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 64 (1914), col. 2316.

¹²⁶ Dixon, 162-166; Nicholas Fishwick, English Football and Society, 1910-1950 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 117-133.

bookmakers.¹²⁷ Starting prices were so vital to off-course betting that the 1902 Select Committee on Betting was “not prepared to recommend the prohibition” of the publication of starting price odds.¹²⁸

Likewise, betting news provided a recognized boost to circulation which almost no newspaper could afford to exclude from its columns. By 1913, the Circulation Manager asserted that “as a rule, flat-racing is responsible for an increase of from twelve to twenty per cent. over the average sales without racing” for evening newspapers. While betting news did not impact the sales of morning papers as much as the evenings - it increased circulation “from three to five per cent” throughout Britain - racing coverage was “responsible for nice increases,” when it was “well done” and reflected reader demand.¹²⁹ This demand for “sporting intelligence” and its commercial influence meant that even newspaper proprietors who condemned gambling found it necessary to publish betting news.

Even with legislation outlawing certain types of betting, the activity remained a popular one among Britons. Its popularity had not diminished following the passage of the 1906 Street Betting Act, as the 1923 Select Committee on Betting Duty acknowledged with its recommendation that Parliament should impose a tax on

¹²⁷ “A Tout,” “Touts and Touting,” in The Racing World and Its Inhabitants, ed. Alfred E. T. Watson (London: Macmillan, 1904), 244.

¹²⁸ Betting, PP, 1902, p. vi.

¹²⁹ Circulation Manager, March 1913, 5.

betting.¹³⁰ Although it took almost another forty years before Parliament passed the Licensed Betting Offices Act in 1961, newspapers continued to publish betting news and an assertive British public continued to bet, regardless of official policy.

¹³⁰ Betting Duty, PP, 1923, p. xv.

CHAPTER 4

FOOTBALL NEWS: SOCCER AND THE PRESS

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century football captured the attention of the public as it developed into the most popular game to play and watch in Britain. Both association football, also known as soccer, and rugby football, also known as rugger, were not merely games Britons played, but games they watched and read about in newspapers. The 1880s witnessed the rise of football in its commercialized form, drawing crowds of paying spectators to club grounds as well as clubs paying players to participate for their side. It was also during the 1880s that soccer surpassed rugby as the football choice among most Britons, with one journal claiming that soccer clubs outnumbered rugby clubs five to one.¹ Twenty years later this disparity had increased to fifteen to one, and soccer had even displaced cricket as “the national game of England.”²

At the center of the emergence of football as a significant part of the leisure culture of Britain was the press. Newspapers were essential to the creation of both forms of modern football by publicizing, promoting, and criticizing the game in their columns. Saturday night special editions of evening newspapers which concentrated on football news appeared first in the North and Midlands where professional soccer

¹ Athletic News, 25 August 1885, 1.

² Alan R. Haig-Brown, “Rugby or Association for Public Schools?” Badminton Magazine 23 (1906): 547.

also first became popular.³ Stimulated by the success of the Football League, formed in 1888, the professional game spread southwards and evening papers in London also began publishing Saturday night specials.

It is impossible to consider football without examining newspapers and their football coverage and also to ponder the rise in newspapers' circulation without football. Football news sold newspapers. Evening and morning newspapers published information about football because proprietors and journalists realized that football, along with other sporting news, increased sales. Newspapers, however, were not just the recorders of these events and developments; they also promoted the game by giving it publicity. Football and the press developed a "symbiotic relationship," in which each depended on the other for commercial success.⁴ Newspapers were essential to the nationalizing and internationalizing of the game, even in the midst of the local cultures in which soccer continued to thrive.⁵ Many people experienced the game in newspaper columns such as the "En Passant" columns of the Athletic News or the "Football Gossip" columns of the London Evening News. By August 1914, the Circulation Manager, a newspaper industry journal, observed that "football has been growing in popular favour all over the country, and particularly in the south, for the

³ On the rise of commercial leisure in these parts, see Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

⁴ Mason, Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915 (hereafter AF), (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), 187.

⁵ Dave Russell, Football and the English: A Social History of Association Football in England, 1863-1995 (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1997), 36.

past fifteen years. It has now reached such a height of public popularity, stimulated unquestionably by the Press, that it threatens to become a craze so great as to be beyond the wildest dreams of a few years ago.”⁶ Although the “craze” the Circulation Manager dreamed of was interrupted by war, the years following World War One further intensified the relationship between football and the press.

Modern soccer, as played today throughout the world, has its origins in the formation of the Football Association (FA) in 1863. The founding members of the FA had learned the game on the playing fields of Rugby, Harrow, and Eton. Prior to the reform of the game certain locales played folk football matches according to a variety of rules, some more organized than others.⁷ Like the folk football which had preceded it, the public school version of football was a violent game until reforms resulted in less savage forms of the game. Students and staff at the seven leading public schools collaborated to codify the rules of football between 1845 and 1862. These reforms were part of the larger effort to create rational recreational activities and improve popular leisure in British society.⁸

The new educational ideal of “athleticism,” with its center in the public schools, asserted that organized games were essential to the construction of character

⁶ Circulation Manager, August 1914, 11.

⁷ John Goulstone, “The Working Class Origins of Modern Football,” International Journal of the History of Sport 17 (2000): 135-143.

⁸ For the historical literature concerning the movement for rational recreation see Bailey.

in students.⁹ Physical exercise was a key component of the games ethic, but games also imparted moral lessons, like sportsmanship. The elements of sportsmanship consisted of vigorous, physical competition for one's team within the confines of the rules governing the game. Players built character by learning that "pluck, dash, and resolution are all essentials to successful play," as the Saturday Review explained.¹⁰ Love of the game and the qualities which the game instilled were what mattered, not the outcome of the contest. A player's reward was the character to persevere in the face of life's difficulties using the "pluck, dash, and resolution" he had learned on the playing field.

During the 1850s, public school graduates around Britain began forming football clubs and playing matches according to their schools' rules. Since each school had its own rules which the clubs followed, matches were difficult to schedule between clubs with different rules. There was a need, which was also strongly felt at Oxford and Cambridge, to integrate the various rules of the public schools so boys could play together or against each other.¹¹ The sporting press played a vital role in

⁹ The classic work dealing with this subject is J. A. Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Also see Walter E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 201-206, and Stefan Collini, Public Moralists: Public Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain, 1850-1930 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 113-118.

¹⁰ "Football Accidents," Saturday Review, 10 December 1892, 682.

¹¹ Timothy J. L. Chandler, "Morality, Nationalism and Health: Rugby Football's Three Faces of Manliness at Oxbridge and the Public Schools 1830-1880,"

the creation of the FA, as athletes formed voluntary associations to promote and govern their sports.

Discussion about the rules of football were ongoing when John D. Cartwright authored a series of ten articles in the Field, a weekly “Country Gentleman’s Newspaper” founded in 1853 and devoted to showcasing rural life, including field sports and ball games. The series explored the evolution of football at the public schools and argued that the game needed a single set of rules.¹² During the same week Cartwright’s first article appeared, representatives from a group of clubs met at Freemason’s Tavern, Great Queen Street, London, and founded the FA. In his history of the FA, Bryon Butler credits a letter from E. C. Morley of Barnes Football Club to Bell’s Life as the catalyst for this first meeting.¹³ The various club representatives further agreed that the next meeting time should be published in Bell’s Life, as well as in the Field and in the Sporting Life, in order to reach as many interested

in Studies in Sports History, eds. Steve Bailey and Wray Vamplew (Leicester: De Montefort University, 1997), 34.

¹² See the Field, 24, 31 October, 7, 14, 21, 28 November 5, 12, 19, 26 December 1863. For the history of the paper, see R. N. Rose, The Field, 1853-1953 (London: Michael Joseph, 1953).

¹³ Bryon Butler, The Official History of the Football Association (London: Queen Anne, 1991), p. x; Alfred Davis, “The Evolution of Association Football,” British Sports and Sportsmen, vol. 5, Cricket and Football, (London, The Sportsman: 1917), 222.

footballers as possible.¹⁴ Later FA meetings were sometimes held at the office of the Sportsman after the paper's launch in 1865.¹⁵

In the Field Cartwright advocated fashioning rules to form a new game to free football from the parochial squabbling arising from the different forms of the game favored by each school. He believed football should have one set of rules, like cricket.¹⁶ With such a game in place, "the public, and especially the football playing public, would look with interest for the reports of matches managed upon one universal and understandable system."¹⁷ Of course, the press was the medium which could deliver these reports. The major problems exposed by Cartwright in his series were the differences over running with the ball, offside, and hacking (kicking opponents on the shins).¹⁸ By November 7, 1863, almost twenty clubs had signed up with the FA, and the honorary secretary, E. C. Morley, appealed for more members in

¹⁴ Football Association (FA), The History of the Football Association (London: Naldrett Press, 1953), 19-21.

¹⁵ FA, 80.

¹⁶ See the Field, 24 October 1863, 413-414; 31 October 1863, 438-439; and 7 November 1863, 451.

¹⁷ Field, 7 November 1863, 451.

¹⁸ Timothy J. L. Chandler, "The Structuring of Manliness and the Development of Rugby Football at the Public Schools and Oxbridge, 1830-1880," Making Men: Rugby and Masculine Identity, eds. John Nauright and Timothy J. L. Chandler (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 20-21, discusses these concerns and the "divide" over centralizing football rules.

a letter to the editor of the Field.¹⁹ This momentum for a single set of football rules resulted in the adoption of a uniform code of play for the kicking game during the first half of December 1863.

The future of the new code did not look promising in its early years, as membership in the FA had dropped to ten clubs and the public schools had refused to compromise on their own rules.²⁰ In one letter to Bell's Life, a writer, who had not attended public schools, claimed that the association had failed in its mission to bring together the players of disparate rules.²¹ During the next decade or so soccer slowly grew in popularity. Without an organization similar to the FA for the handling versions of the game, some football clubs played in games according to a variety of rules. In a letter to the editor of Bell's Life promoting one of the first international matches between Scotland and England in 1870, Charles W. Alcock, the honorary secretary of the FA, was adamant that "the rules of the Football Association will be strictly adhered to on the occasion."²² It seems that with the different versions of football that could be played at the time, the rules governing a match could not be taken for granted. The struggle between "local" rules reflected the lack of

¹⁹ Field, 7 November 1863, 452.

²⁰ R. G. Graham, "The Early History of the Football Association," Badminton Magazine 8 (1899): 78-79.

²¹ Bell's Life, 29 October 1864, 10.

²² Bell's Life, 12 November 1870, 11.

centralization in Victorian government at this time as myriad local government regulations competed with each other as well.²³

The sporting press was crucial to the development of football during the 1870s. At this time, according to Bell's Life, the popularity of the kicking game paled beside that of the handling game. The paper was a staunch supporter of the Rugby game and claimed that even though it lacked a standard code, "if a universal set of laws had to be framed the Association fraternity would be so vastly outnumbered that they must go to the wall forth with."²⁴ Bell's Life continued its cultivation of the Rugby game by reporting on the formative meetings of the Rugby Football Union (RFU) during 1871 and by approving the RFU's rules.²⁵ Match reports in Bell's Life featured and promoted the Rugby game. The correspondent for the international Rugby match between Scotland and England in 1871 described it as "undoubtedly the most interesting and important ever yet played," completely ignoring the significance of the international Association match played the previous November which had provided the impetus to stage a similar Rugby match.²⁶ After the Association match five members of Scottish clubs, many of which did not play the Association game, challenged English footballers to a twenty-a-side match in a

²³ K. Theodore Hoppen, The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 104-108.

²⁴ Bell's Life, 17 December 1870, 6; also see 7 January 1871, 6.

²⁵ For example, see Bell's Life, 28 January 1871. For Bell's approval of the new rules, see 12 August 1871, 6.

²⁶ Bell's Life, 1 April 1871, 9.

letter to Bell's Life.²⁷ As the champion of Rugby, Bell's Life culminated its promotion of the game with a review of the 1870-71 season. Beneath the heading "THE PAST FOOTBALL SEASON," Bell's Life proclaimed that "never before have so large a number of matches been played, never has so much interest been evinced in the doings of the leading clubs: never has a match of such importance as that between England and Scotland been chronicled in the annals of our winter game." These comments ignored the Association code as did its preview of the 1871-1872 season: for Bell's Life the only game of football was the rugby version.²⁸ It appears that the social bifurcation of football, with rugby for the "classes" and soccer for the "masses," already was underway.

Those players who advocated a ball handling game and were unwilling to adopt the Association rules instead formed the Rugby Football Union in 1871. The split between the Association and the Rugby variants of football had become clear in 1863 with the foundation of the Football Association and its embrace of the kicking game. Until 1871, teams played rugby football according to the home team's local rules. About twenty clubs played Rugby in and around London during the 1860s and the game also became popular in the North with clubs forming in Hull, Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Manchester, and Liverpool.

Some sporting enthusiasts founded their own publications to promote the game. Probably the first periodical exclusively devoted to football was The Goal:

²⁷ Bell's Life, 10 December 1870, 4.

²⁸ Bell's Life, 22 April 1871, 6; 12 August 1871, 6.

The Chronicle of Football, published by E. M. Fraser in London.²⁹ Issued each Saturday from November 22, 1873, until its last issue of April 25, 1874, The Goal offered short news summaries of game results and a forum for players to discuss the state of their sport. It was a rudimentary journal and relied upon the club secretaries to send in schedules for the "List of Engagements" and match reports which might range from one to a dozen sentences. The Goal also envisioned itself as a go-between for clubs as it explained in its "Notices to Correspondents." Its "FOOTBALL NOTICES" was open to announcements from Club Secretaries, and it hoped that it would be "frequently used for the arrangement of matches between Clubs upon their off-days. Such a medium of communication as this has long been needed, and we hope it will be fully taken advantage of."³⁰ Both readers and management had wanted The Goal to play a significant role in the growth of the game. One correspondent hoped "that through your valuable Football Chronicle some reform may be effected," and throughout its short existence, the paper published an on-going debate about the style and rules of the rugby football game which dominated its pages.³¹ In its last number the editor explained that, "a year ago we advocated the necessity of issuing a newspaper where in all matches and doings of football might be

²⁹ J. A. H. Catton, editor of the Athletic News, claimed that "'The Goal' was surely the first of football papers." Wickets and Goals (London: Chapman and Hall, 1926), 165.

³⁰ The Goal, 25 April 1874, 1.

³¹ The Goal, 6 December 1873, 1-2.

recorded, and we were then told that such a proposition would not receive support, but our strong conviction was a journal devoted entirely to Football would be welcome to all lovers of the game, and the result has fully justified our anticipations.”³² Unfortunately this rosy view of the journal’s success was not matched by gains on its balance sheet and this was its final issue.

A new element of competition came to soccer in 1871 when the FA introduced a knockout cup tournament for its member clubs. C. W. Alcock, a founding member of the Wanderers Football Club in 1864 who was elected to the FA committee in 1866 and became the honorary secretary of the FA in 1870, suggested the competition as a variation on the competition staged at Harrow, the public school he attended.³³ Clubs now had something to play for other than honor. The Scottish Football Association (SFA), which was formed in 1873, copied the FA’s cup competition in 1874, and the idea spread to Wales and Ireland; local and regional soccer and rugby cups soon followed. As Alcock surveyed the football landscape in 1890-1891 he argued that

the establishment of the Football Association Cup in 1871 not only stimulated the public taste for football at a time when the game was by no means fairly established, but may fairly be said to have given the signal for an advance which has brought football in the short space of eighteen years to a front place among British outdoor sports, to a pitch of popularity which can only be challenged by its older brother cricket.³⁴

³² The Goal, 25 April 1874, 1.

³³ Mason, AF, 16.

³⁴ C. W. Alcock, “Association Football,” English Illustrated Magazine 8 (1890-1891): 285.

A Daily Mail writer came to the same conclusion in 1908: the competition created by the tournament quality of the Football League and the FA Cup drew people to the game. "It is a common mistake to say that the people are tired of football after eight months. They would be tired of it in three months if there were no League or Cup 'motive.' They would not be tired of it in twelve months if the tournamental interest could be maintained all the year round."³⁵

Controversy followed both forms of football throughout the period. As the organized game grew in popularity, especially in Greater London, Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire, Staffordshire, Birmingham, and the Eastern Midlands from the 1870s on, an increasing majority of players were workers. Playing for pay increased among clubs as the number of regional knock-out cup tournaments based upon the FA Cup competition grew during the late 1870s.³⁶ Clubs brought players from outside their region or, more significantly, from Scotland to make their teams more competitive on the field and draw larger crowds. Historians are unsure about exactly when the first players received money to play soccer, but by the early 1880s the press voiced plenty of suspicions concerning the practice. Teams of working-class players displaced the "old boy" teams as the best in Britain during the 1880s.³⁷

³⁵ Daily Mail, 11 April 1908, 9.

³⁶ Mason, AF, 69-71.

³⁷ See Mason, AF, 21-47.

Toward the end of the 1880s “Lancashire was all ablaze with the successes of some of its clubs in the Football Association Cup,” according to one soccer authority, “and the battles between the London, Sheffield, Midland, and Lancashire clubs were becoming acute.”³⁸ An important symbol of this transformation within the game came in 1883 when a team of working men, Blackburn Olympic, defeated the Old Etonians in the FA Cup. By this time many of the best players were being paid to play for the most competitive teams and this generated controversy about the nature of the game.

Competition had brought the professional player into a game ruled by paternalistic amateurs who had been unable to stop payments in excess of approved expenses and compensation for lost wages. The 1885 acceptance of professionalism by the FA placed the most successful clubs in a position to capitalize on their new prominence in the sports world. Following the suggestion of William McGregor, an immigrant Scottish draper and a director of the Aston Villa club from Birmingham, teams from the Midlands and the North formed the Football League in 1888. The League was an extension of the F.A. Cup competition, without the elimination quality, between a select group of clubs who played each other on a home and home basis, in hopes of garnering the most wins among their League peers and drawing large gates to their matches. The select group who joined Aston Villa to form the League included Blackburn Rovers, Bolton Wanderers, Preston North End, West Bromwich Albion, Accrington, Burnley, Everton, Wolverhampton Wanderers, Derby

³⁸ W. Pickford, A Few Recollections of Sport (Bournemouth: Bournemouth Guardian, 1939), 12-13.

County, Notts County, and Stoke. With its schedule of regular matches between opponents the League flourished, and by 1914 consisted of two divisions of twenty clubs each. Clubs in southern England formed the Southern League in 1894 with one division of nine teams and a lower division of seven teams.³⁹ In answer to the many critics of professionalism in soccer, C. W. Alcock explained that the professional player “would have had to be recognized at some period or another, and that in any case his recognition was not only a mere matter of time, but that there was no just cause for the belief that it would be detrimental to the game.”⁴⁰ Alcock, who also was the secretary of the Surrey County Cricket Club, sought to foster the type of professionalism which existed in cricket, where amateurs and professionals played side by side in the county elevens.⁴¹ This pragmatic and open view of the game ensured that amateurs such as Alcock and the Etonian, Lord Kinnaird, who was FA President, continued to govern soccer at all levels.

Although it failed to match the increasing prominence of soccer, rugby also grew in popularity during this period as the Union grew from 31 clubs in 1872 to 481 in 1893.⁴² Not surprisingly, it also grew in diversity with many workers in Yorkshire

³⁹ Mason, AF, 64-68.

⁴⁰ Alcock, 285.

⁴¹ Alfred Gibson and William Pickford, Association Football and the Men Who Made It, vol. 1 (London: Caxton, 1906), 78. For more on the position of professional cricketers, see the chapter on cricket below.

⁴² John Arlott, ed., The Oxford Companion to Sports and Games, (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 886.

and Lancashire becoming participants and spectators. The growth of the game was “phenomenal” in Yorkshire and Lancashire, where the vast majority of participants who played the Rugby game were workers.⁴³ These northern clubs had different sporting attitudes to those of the more socially homogeneous southern clubs: working-class clubs stressed competition and success on the field.⁴⁴ With success came community pride and larger gates. Competition in rugby was also keen as knockout cups developed in Yorkshire (1877), Northumberland (1880), Durham (1880), and Cumberland (1882). Teams from the south, with their “old boy” membership, never embraced these competitions. Just as in soccer, civic pride played a crucial role in the attention crowds, players, and directors paid to these competitions.⁴⁵ These cups and their popularity with crowds meant that teams competed off the field as well, for the most talented players. Northern clubs compensated working-class players in order to build the best team possible. Allegations of professionalism became rife and threatened the sporting values of the RFU, which, with its powerful amateur leaders, prohibited the payment of players. These leaders did not want to lose control over the game to the masses. As the News of the World explained, “what we have to consider . . . is the probable effect of

⁴³ Tony Collins, Rugby’s Great Split (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 71, and see 16-111, for the social and economic development of rugby up to 1893 from which much of the following is drawn.

⁴⁴ James W. Martens, “Rugby, Class, Amateurism and Manliness: the Case of Rugby in Northern England, 1871-1895,” Making Men, 36; Collins, 34-37.

⁴⁵ Martens, 32 and 40-41.

change on the generality of players, and no one . . . can deny that it would tend to convert what is at present a form of recreation into something very much akin to a trade.”⁴⁶

While the RFU banned payments to players some Lancashire and Yorkshire officials supported broken-time payments, compensation for players missing work, and sought to change the RFU regulations. Any type of remuneration was payment for play, and merely a first step on the treacherous path to professionalism and a takeover of the sport by the working class, according to one journalist. “Once admit the practice, and you can never prevent its extending to the point of paying a man what he thinks his services are worth.”⁴⁷ The RFU rejected the practice of paying players by writing it into the organization’s bylaws, and in 1895 top northern clubs formed the Northern Union. In effect, RFU officials, many of whom were public school old boys, had barred workers from playing for top-notch teams because they lacked the leisure time to practice and travel to away games.⁴⁸ The Northern Union, while allowing broken-time payments to players, remained wedded to the idea of amateurism by requiring players to have employment outside of the game. Where the

⁴⁶ News of the World, 1 October 1893, 6.

⁴⁷ Football Evening News, 17 November 1894, 1.

⁴⁸ Richard Holt, Sport and the British (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 105.

soccer authorities had accepted control over professionalism and the game remained accessible to all players, rugby was split along class and regional lines.⁴⁹

“What a power football has become!” Anyone comparing the London newspapers of 1912 with those of a quarter century earlier would have to agree with the exclamation of “Veritas” in his review of the London Saturday evening football editions.⁵⁰ Just as the proprietors of newspapers had realized that the drawing power of horse racing results and starting prices could boost an evening paper’s sales, they also saw the potential for football scores and reports to do the same on Saturday evenings. In its first issue of the 1894-1895 season, the football edition of the London Evening News, the Football Evening News, explained that “football has gained a hold on the masses which even cricket does not possess.”⁵¹ Halfpenny football editions like these enabled most of the British population to experience a Saturday of football without paying the sixpence to attend a match. These papers first appeared in the North and the Midlands, the hotbeds of what various writers labeled “football fever” and “football mania,” and in only a few years London readers

⁴⁹ See Alcock, 285 for an illustration of a more democratic view of soccer participation. For a thorough exploration of the rugby schism see Collins.

⁵⁰ Newspaper Owner, 26 October 1912, 1.

⁵¹ Football Evening News, 1 September 1894, 2.

found them on their newsstands after six o'clock every Saturday night, September to April.⁵²

During the late 1880s, football took its place in the popular pantheon of British sports next to racing and cricket. The "key decade" for the press and its handling of sporting news, according to Tony Mason, was the 1890s, when the space devoted to sports coverage increased and no paper could afford to ignore it.⁵³ In the hotbeds of soccer the evening papers began producing Saturday night specials whose sole purpose was to provide eager followers of football with news as soon as possible after the close of play each Saturday. Even London, which lacked a professional club and had no league of its own in 1889, had a Saturday night special, the Football Evening News, and a few years later, the Football Star. Various factors account for this development, chief among them, as far as soccer was concerned, was the acceptance of professional players in 1885 and the creation of the professional Football League in 1888. Certainly as significant as these developments, which added to the popular appeal of soccer, was the publicity the press furnished for the game.

⁵² Charles Edwardes, "The New Football Mania," Nineteenth Century 32 (1892): 622-631; Ernest Ensor, "The Football Madness," Contemporary Review 74 (1899): 751-760; H. F. Abell, "The Football Fever," Macmillan's Magazine 89 (1904): 276-282.

⁵³ Tony Mason, "Sporting News, 1860-1914," in The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth Century to Nineteenth Centuries, eds. Michael Harris and Alan Lee (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986): 174-177.

The first newspaper to take successful advantage of the economic opportunity both versions of football offered was not a Saturday night special, but a weekly, the Athletic News, first published in 1875 for 2d. Its growth and success illustrates the increasing significance of the game in the North.⁵⁴ As the second Manchester-based sporting paper in Edward Hulton's embryonic publishing empire, this "Weekly Journal of Amateur Sports" quickly became popular in the Northern counties by covering football in the winter, and cricket, athletics and cycling in the summer. Most other sporting journals, including the sibling of the Athletic News, the Sporting Chronicle, concentrated on horse racing news. As the games grew more popular in the North and throughout Britain, the weekly journal became "the footballers' paper."⁵⁵ "In our opinion," the Athletic News explained, "the world of sport is sufficiently important to require journalistic representation similar in character to that which has been provided for the greater world without." Most newspapers which offered sporting news merely reported the results of events in a sentence or two in 1875. The Athletic News went beyond the mere results, because

people now a-days are not content with bald reports of events: they want to know the why and wherefore, and expect the newspapers to ascertain for them those particulars which they have neither time nor opportunity to hunt up for themselves. It is this feature which more than any other has earned for the Press the title of the great Educator, and we have regarded it as our duty, not merely to keep our readers au courant with events as they transpire, but of gratifying their legitimate

⁵⁴ Tony Mason, "Football, Sport of the North?" in Sport and Identity in the North of England, eds. Jeff Hill and Jack Williams (Keele: Keele University Press, 1996), 42-43.

⁵⁵ Gibson and Pickford, 2:24. Emphasis in the original.

curiosity upon matters past, present, or to come, in the most efficacious manner that presented itself.⁵⁶

From its debut until 1895, the editor of the Athletic News was Thomas Robert Sutton, whose brother was Manchester's chief librarian. Sutton had played rugby football, as well as helping to found the Manchester Rangers association football club.⁵⁷ The journal's personal connection to the association game continued when John James Bentley succeeded Sutton.⁵⁸ Born in 1860, Bentley's father was a grocer and church organist in Turton, "a tiny little village outside Bolton," where he began playing the association game in 1873 on the Turton club pitch behind the terraced cottages where he lived.⁵⁹ Eventually he became captain, secretary, and treasurer of the Turton club in the midst of soccer's rise in Lancashire. By 1880 Bentley began working with his brother William in Bolton for the London-North and North-Western Railway as a clerk and became a successful player for Bolton Association while earning Lancashire county caps alongside Tom Sutton. During the 1880s Bentley moved to Bolton and became an accountant and collector of income tax after clerking

⁵⁶ Athletic News, 24 June 1876, 4.

⁵⁷ Mason, AF, 189; Alex M. Thompson, Here I Lie (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1937), 43.

⁵⁸ Much of the following is based upon Thorpe Arnold, "The President of the Football League: A Talk With Mr. J. J. Bentley," Windsor Magazine 15 (1902): 665-670; Mason, AF, 191; and Simon Inglis, League Football and the Men Who Made It (London: Willow Books, 1988), 34-37.

⁵⁹ T. Arnold, 665.

for the Bolton School Board. With a prosperous business Bentley ended his playing days and became secretary of Bolton Wanderers in 1885.

Along with his business and soccer duties, Bentley had also tried his hand at journalism, writing match reports for various newspapers as the “Free Critic” each weekend. He began his journalism career in 1877 and, unbeknownst to his teammates, even reported on Turton’s games while he played for the club. His journalistic proficiency led to regular contributions to Bolton’s Football Field and Sports Telegram from 1884 on, and in 1886 he abandoned Bolton for Manchester and the Athletic News.⁶⁰ Together with the editor, Tom Sutton, the new assistant editor and 26 year-old soccer veteran helped to build what they rightly called “the leading football organ in England.”⁶¹

The Athletic News had switched from Saturday to Wednesday publication during the early 1880s and when Bentley joined the staff its circulation stood around 10,000. Sutton and his new assistant editor used the techniques of popular journalism to transform the paper as well as lowering its cost to a penny in 1887 and shifting to Monday appearances in 1888 to give readers timely accounts of the Saturday football matches. A typical winter issue began with “En Passant,” which consisted of brief paragraph length news items, observations, and opinions dealing with football and “Scotch Farrago,” a similar feature concerning Scotland. Pages two and three carried rugby and soccer match reports while editorials concerning leading sporting topics

⁶⁰ In 1886 the Bolton paper became the Cricket and Football Field and Sports Telegram; see 6 March 1886.

⁶¹ Athletic News, 2 September 1889, 1.

appeared on page four. The paper also contained "Our Scotch Letter" by Jonathan Oldbuck and "Notes" covering the top football regions in Britain, including London, the Midlands, and Sheffield. Other sports were not ignored as evidenced by columns covering "Athletics in the South," "Cross-Country Notes," English cricketers in Australia, and cycling. These latter sports dominated the paper when the football season was over. A decade later the paper sported other characteristic features of popular journalism in its columns. Illustrations played a prominent role in the form of front page sporting cartoons, illustrated portraits of leading athletes and sportsmen, and small illustrations accompanying major match reports. By 1896, the Athletic News claimed a circulation of 150,000 copies per week and after the turn of the century, it also incorporated photography into its news presentation.⁶²

As the assistant editor, Bentley became the top writer on the staff, writing football and cricket match reports under the pen name, the "Free Critic." His duties increased when he took over the editorial chair at Sutton's death. Under his direction the Athletic News was an unofficial League organ, committed to the professional game which dominated its coverage.⁶³ His journalistic style during his days with the Athletic News and later in his reports for the daily press was interesting, lively, candid, and certainly understated by today's standards. "He may be said to have been one of the first football journalists to revolutionise the style in which matches were

⁶² Athletic News, 8 June 1896, 1.

⁶³ The Athletic News was a major primary source for the studies of association football by Mason and Steven Tischler, Footballers and Businessmen (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981).

reported, introducing a chatty tone to relieve the bald narrative so usual in the eighties, and so dull and uninteresting.”⁶⁴ For example, the following excerpt is from Bentley’s report of the 1896 F.A. Cup Final in which Sheffield Wednesday defeated Wolverhampton for its first cup victory. After a quick score by Sheffield, Bentley described the action as follows:

The equaliser came very soon, for the ball was passed across the goal mouth, and little Black dashed up close on the line, and with

A BIT OF THE COOLEST WORK

I have ever seen, drew the ball over his head, and through it went at the corner. It was exceedingly clever, although to many people it seemed simple to see the Sheffield folk all packed in the goal with Black entirely unmolested, and getting the ball over their heads, but to my mind it was one of the best bits of an eventful afternoon’s football.

Subsequent to his description of the events on the field, Bentley completed his match report with “A FEW REMARKS THEREON,” a critical analysis of the day’s play by both clubs and some individual players from each side.⁶⁵

Meanwhile Bentley remained active in football circles, becoming a Lancashire F.A. committee member in 1886 and joining the F.A. Council two years later. He also was a committee member of the Football League beginning in 1888, as well as a respected League referee and he replaced William McGregor as President of the Football League in 1894, his tenure lasting until 1910. Even after leaving the Athletic News at the turn of the century, he continued in journalism by contributing to such

⁶⁴ Gibson and Pickford, 3:150-151.

⁶⁵ Athletic News, 20 April 1896, 5.

publications as The Umpire, C. B. Fry's Magazine, The Royal Windsor Magazine, the Daily Express, and the Daily Mail.

From 1895 to 1900, between his editorship and his presidency, Bentley "was probably the most powerful man English football has ever known."⁶⁶ Considering his active role in the leading football organizations in Lancashire and England it is not surprising that the Athletic News was a staunch supporter of professionalism. He explained his view of professionalism in sports in a 1902 magazine interview:

Pure amateurism in every sport I hold to be the higher state; but, unfortunately, in football it is impossible. Amateurism can only exist in sports which are followed exclusively by the wealthier classes, such as hunting and shooting, for example, where those who indulge in them pay all their expenses out of their own pocket. But this is impossible in any popular sport like cricket and football, which are the games of rich and poor alike. I have always been an advocate for professionalism in football, because I am convinced that open professionalism is better than bogus amateurism. And in clubs whose members are drawn mainly from the working classes, only one or the other of these alternatives is possible.⁶⁷

The popularity and expansion of football in the North and Midlands led the local press in these hotbeds of football to begin covering the game. With most matches occurring on Saturday afternoons, evening papers were the first to exploit football news to create an innovative periodical, the Saturday evening football special. The first special editions, which originated in the 1880s, began by providing up-to-the-minute match results and summaries. Unfortunately, there is no complete catalog of these papers and copies of some titles may not even exist, which Tony

⁶⁶ Inglis, 34.

⁶⁷ T. Arnold, 668-669.

Mason acknowledged twenty years ago in his history of the first fifty years of association football.⁶⁸ While utilizing the football press, especially the Athletic News, as an essential source for his study of the game, Mason was able to provide only a glimpse into the history of this periodical genre. The major newspaper chains in existence today either lack the records which might shed light on the relationships between journalists, newspaper management, players, and club management, or have rejected requests to examine their archives. I have limited the scope of my research to the London press and how it influenced and interacted with soccer in the metropolis.

Very little research has focused on the development of professional soccer in London.⁶⁹ London, however, was the home of the FA as well as the home of many of the self-appointed guardians of amateur sport, among whom N. L. Jackson was, perhaps, the most vociferous. The eventual conquest of London and its press by professionalism was not greeted kindly in some quarters. The football press enabled soccer to capture the attention of Londoners by publishing accounts covering the entire soccer universe, from local amateur matches to the Southern League matches to the distant matches of the First and Second Division of the Football League.⁷⁰ By 1906, the London area had no less than 2000 football clubs and at least 50,000

⁶⁸ Mason, AF, 191-192.

⁶⁹ An exception is Charles Korr, West Ham United: The Making of a Football Club (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1986).

⁷⁰ Gibson and Pickford, 2:25.

individuals played each week. The twelve or so outstanding clubs in London drew between 5,000 and 20,000 spectators, and sometimes up to 30,000, to their matches.⁷¹

The story of the Saturday night special edition, however, begins in Birmingham where Saturday Night debuted on 30 September 1882.⁷² As it maintained "SATURDAY NIGHT was the first journal ever established with the object of furnishing REPORTS -not merely results - of amateur athletic events in the evening of the very day on which they occur."⁷³ For a halfpenny followers of football received four pages of results on sporting matches occurring in Britain as well as some general news, local gossip, and serials. It aimed to offer readers light, amusing fare and news of the local clubs, Aston Villa and West Bromwich Albion. An 8 p.m. second edition began publication in November and, according to the paper, only the Birmingham dailies, the Post and the Mail, had a larger sale. In February 1883, Saturday Night claimed its circulation was 15,200 copies, an increase of 3,200 from only three weeks before.⁷⁴

Another successful football special was the Bolton Football Field and Sports Telegram, published beginning in 1884 by the Tillotson's, who also produced the

⁷¹ Gibson and Pickford, 3:33.

⁷² Tony Mason, AF, 192.

⁷³ Saturday Night, 20 January 1883, 2.

⁷⁴ Saturday Night, 27 January 1883, 2, and 17 February 1883, 2.

Bolton Evening News. This was a physically small weekly, only 10 inches high by 8 inches wide, and like other provincial football specials, it concentrated on the local scene.⁷⁵ Other cities in which football specials appeared during the 1880s include Blackburn (1883), Wolverhampton (1884), Sheffield (1886), Derby (1888), and London (1889), and virtually every city of any significant size had one by 1914. The football specials listed by Tony Mason from his consultation of the annual Willings Press Guide between 1890 and 1910 number 34.⁷⁶ The British Library Newspaper Library catalog lists an additional nine publications which seem to be football specials. The 1920 edition of the Newspaper Press Directory and Advertisers' Guide contains three more football titles: Sporting News & Football Leader (Swansea, est. 1910), Football Argus (Newport, no date), Football Echo (Liverpool, n.d.).⁷⁷

The development of southern football differed from that of the North and the Midlands. The old boy clubs of the metropolis dominated the game in its first decades, helping to create the FA and repeatedly winning the FA Cup until 1883. Teams reaching the final tie played at the Oval, home of the Surrey Cricket Club, whose secretary was C. W. Alcock. Trepidation about possible damage to the Oval prompted the FA to switch locations in 1893 to Fallowfield, Manchester, and in 1894, to Everton's ground in Liverpool. Even with the popularity of the game in the North,

⁷⁵ In 1886 it became the Cricket and Football Field and Sports Telegram.

⁷⁶ Mason, AF, 193; Mason, "Sporting News," 177-178.

⁷⁷ Newspaper Press Directory and Advertisers' Guide (London: C. Mitchell and Co., 1920).

the final tie returned to London in 1895 and its new home, the Crystal Palace.⁷⁸ The 1890s saw the birth of professional clubs in the south, although in many areas, especially London, fierce opponents of professionalism controlled the local FAs. Munitions workers at the Royal Arsenal factory in Woolwich formed the Arsenal club in 1886 which the London FA, headed by N. L. Jackson, expelled from its organization in 1891 because of its professionalism. The lack of professional teams in the south hindered Arsenal's attempts to form a Southern League and in 1893, "the pioneers of professionalism in the South" joined the Second Division of the Football League.⁷⁹

The popularity of football and the press' role in promoting the game did not escape contemporary observers. Saturdays in Britain were "consecrated to football," according to Charles Edwardes writing in 1892. North of Birmingham, from September to April, not only did supporters attend matches on Saturday afternoons, but they devoted their evenings to "football symposia." They read the special editions of local newspapers which offered column after column of match results and gossip.⁸⁰ H. H. Almond, the headmaster at Loretto school, noted the popularity of

⁷⁸ Sir Derek Birley, Land of Sport and Glory: Sport and British Society, 1887-1910 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 40-41.

⁷⁹ Gibson and Pickford, 1:105.

⁸⁰ "The New Football Mania," Nineteenth Century 32 (1892): 622.

football in Scotland with a simple count [260] of the number of match results reported in a single issue of the Scottish Field.⁸¹

The celebrated amateur athlete and journalist, C. B. Fry, argued in 1895 that football was the game of the people.⁸² Football, in both its rugby and association forms had spread throughout Britain with thousands of clubs catering to amateur and professional players. Football's simple rules, low cost equipment, and smaller playing field insured much easier access to it for the working class than to cricket or to horse racing. Fry could have expanded his comments about the game's accessibility to include not only players, but spectators and readers of Saturday night football specials. A journalist writing in 1905, commented that

the football season is near at hand, and everyone connected with journalism is well aware of the great hold it has upon the general public. The Scottish, Southern, and the First and Second Leagues of Association football often claim an attendance of nearly half a million people on a Saturday afternoon, while the Rugby code, minor leagues and junior football each claim thousands of followers.

Many newspapers have recognised that the publication of football guides in their districts is profitable, and also a good advertisement for their journals.⁸³

By offering information to interested readers in these guides, papers marketed themselves as sport conscious journals. The Hulton empire was the most football conscious of the publishing companies. According to figures from the Circulation

⁸¹ "Football as a Moral Agent, Nineteenth Century 34 (1893): 899-911.

⁸² "Football," Badminton Magazine 1 (1895): 484.

⁸³ R. K., "Some Notes on Newspaper Production - XXI," Newspaper Owner, 26 August 1905, 16-17.

Manager, the three Hulton football guides (the Umpire Football Annual, the Evening Chronicle Football Guide, and the Athletic News Football Annual) sold 400,000 copies in 1914.⁸⁴

Evening papers sold Saturday night football editions and many morning papers devoted at least a page to match reports by the turn of the century. One critic argued that football news occupied too much space in newspaper columns because newspapers fed the population's interest in match results. As he explained: "during the football season the Birmingham newsboys scour the town with 'special editions,' calling out, 'Aston Villa half-time.'" Betting on matches prompted the introduction of half-time editions which illustrated "not so much genuine keenness for sport, as anxiety for the issue of the match."⁸⁵ In 1912, a writer suggested that an important football match result could increase circulation, "under normal circumstances," fifteen percent.⁸⁶ One journalist, who was critical of football news with its columns of scores and match results each Saturday, could not help but acknowledge its positive effect on circulation.⁸⁷

By the 1910s football news had become such an essential element of most newspapers' all-around news coverage that the press trade publications trumpeted its

⁸⁴ Circulation Manager, August 1914, 17.

⁸⁵ Robert J. Sturdee, "The Ethics of Football," Westminster Review 59 (1903): 183.

⁸⁶ Circulation Manager, December 1912, 5.

⁸⁷ Newspaper World, 2 May 1914, 2.

importance. Even in the top London dailies of 1911, as measured in column inches from the January 11 issues of the Daily Mail, The Times, and the Daily Chronicle, sport had garnered a large portion of column space. In the Daily Mail and the Daily Chronicle sporting news captured more column inches than all of the other sections except for financial and market news. Sport was not as prominent in The Times as in the other two papers but it did warrant enough attention to place third behind the financial and market news, and the home news.⁸⁸ The Circulation Manager advocated that newspapers include quality football news in their columns because “the interest in the game during the past ten years has grown to such an extent that it might be said that it is the exception to find anyone, no matter to what class of society he belongs, who does not take some sort of interest either in the Association or Rugby game.”⁸⁹

As early as the late 1880s some newspapers began hiring sports editors, creating separate staffs for sporting news, in order to cater to the increased public interest in football and other sports. The Star was a pioneer in this regard, enlisting the services of a sports editor from its beginning in 1888.⁹⁰ Its sister paper, the

⁸⁸ Newspaper Owner, 18 March 1911, 3. In this measurement of The Times I did not include the Engineering Supplement which occupied pages 13-24 of the 11 January 1911 issue.

⁸⁹ “The Football Season,” Circulation Manager, September 1913, 5.

⁹⁰ Star, 17 January 1888, 1.

Morning Leader, also employed a separate editor for sports.⁹¹ Although evidence of other newspapers adopting this division of journalistic labor is scant, by the turn of the century some saw its utility. From its inception in 1900, the Daily Express' staff included a sports editor, L. E. Mongiardino.⁹² The chronology of the creation of editors of sporting news remains difficult to pin down because newspapers failed to document such changes. It is probable that newspapers with more respectable readership and smaller papers were like the Manchester Guardian, where a sub-editor continued to be responsible for sports at the turn of the century. It was not until well after the First World War that an editor of sport took over the responsibility for sporting news from a sub-editor.⁹³

In newspapers like The Times and the Manchester Guardian disdain for the professional game may have retarded the development of sports coverage. The Times disregarded professional soccer, often only printing each Monday a meager summary of Saturday's Football League action along with match results and the League table.⁹⁴ At the Manchester Guardian, which served football-crazed Lancashire, the

⁹¹ One of these editors was Alfred Gibson, whose pseudonym was "Rover." He also edited the Football Star and co-authored with W. Pickford, Association Football and the Men Who Made It, 4 vols.

⁹² Newspaper Owner and Modern Printer, 9 May 1900, 22. A. Dick Luckman became sports editor a few years later; A. Dick Luckman, Sharps. Flats. Gamblers and Racehorses (London: Grant Richards, 1914), 185.

⁹³ H. D. Nichols, "The Sports Page," C.P. Scott 1846-1932: The Making of the "Manchester Guardian" (London: Frederick Muller, 1946), 153.

⁹⁴ For example, see The Times, 18 October 1897. Also see below.

sport did not gain a foothold as a regular feature until the 1890s, when, on Mondays, the paper published “The Football Field.” In the 1880s the Monday Manchester Guardian included a few columns of reports of local rugby and some soccer matches. A decade later, the coverage had increased with more reports and notes on rugby and football, including tables.⁹⁵ In his discussion of “The Sports Page,” H. D. Nichols described the origins of football coverage at many morning newspapers: “when football began to get into print no one should have been responsible for ordering it. It came in well ahead of any plans for its reception . . .” Even with the development of “The Football Field,” reports on the major local matches were most likely the product of staff journalists “who were better regarded for their more solid activities during the rest of the week.” In fact, it was not until long after 1914 that the Guardian hired a sports editor.⁹⁶

To gather news about football matches, journalists needed access to football grounds and a vantage point from which to view the action on the field. Clubs accommodated journalists in separate enclosures which often had other amenities to aid a reporter in transmitting his copy. Before 1900 these aids might include telegraph facilities and, later, telephones, technologies which enabled papers to go to press ten minutes after a referee had whistled the end of the last important match of

⁹⁵ For example, see the Manchester Guardian, 1 April 1895, 7.

⁹⁶ Nichols, 153-154.

the day.⁹⁷ Telegraph offices in major towns employed extra staff when matches were scheduled on Saturdays.⁹⁸ Evening newspapers also had telephone lines installed at local grounds and, by 1905, were likely the preferred method of dispatching match reports for most newspapers.⁹⁹ In London, telephone lines ran from the major grounds to the news offices of the Football Evening News and the Football Star, at a cost of about £200 per year. By this time the telegraph had become obsolete for reporting on local football.¹⁰⁰

When a reconstructed stand was designed for Hampden Park in Glasgow, the largest football ground in Britain, it called for facilities for 102 journalists, including a telegraph room. The Newspaper World complained that soccer grounds in England failed to offer similar accommodations to the press for the dispatching of news. Newspapers had been a key element in the rising popularity of the professional game. Quality press facilities were necessary because “descriptive reporting of football matches as the play proceeds is difficult enough in all conscience without the anxieties of dispatching of wires, etc., and the least that the Football Association can

⁹⁷ Percy Rudd, “Where Would the Popular Sports Be Without the Press?” The Press, 1898-1948, ed. Newspaper World (London: Newspaper World, 1948), 85.

⁹⁸ Almond, 901.

⁹⁹ Newspaper Owner, 8 April 1905, 5 and 26 October 1912, 1; Newspaper World, 29 November 1913, 2; Rudd, 85.

¹⁰⁰ Gibson and Pickford, 2:26.

do for the Press is to see that wherever important matches are played under their jurisdiction a telegraph room is reserved for one of their best friends - the Press.”¹⁰¹

While technology could aid the speed with which newspapers published sporting news, it could also spark conflict. In 1899 the Athletic News reported on the preliminary discussions about installing a telephone in the Sunderland Football Club house for journalists to phone in their match reports. The circulation rivalry between the football editions of the evening newspapers and their reporters, however, ended the idea. Two reporters representing the ‘pink’ and ‘prim’ editions, quarreled over the telephone at the end of a match against Sheffield Wednesday and “battered each other with such an energy and science that would not have disgraced Sullivan and Kilrain.”¹⁰²

At the Football Evening News and the Football Star a staff manned the phones on Saturday afternoons, each clerk with responsibility for receiving match reports to be sent to the typesetter. Reports and scores from throughout the country also arrived from the news agencies via tape machines. The offices began receiving results immediately after the conclusion of the matches at about 4:30 p.m. and usually all the important results had arrived by 4:50 p.m. After printing, “runners” delivered the issues to newsagents and trains for transport to more distant destinations. The speed of distribution was important to the success of London evening newspapers. In

¹⁰¹ Newspaper World, 29 November 1913, 2.

¹⁰² Athletic News, 22 July 1889, 1.

the provinces, people traveled to the city centers on Saturday evenings, while in London, football specials had to find their readers in the suburbs.¹⁰³

Like other cultural productions, newspapers were vital instruments in the creation of the meanings of sports. People could experience sport in a variety of ways: by playing, by spectating, or by reading. Many, if not most, followers of football experienced the game in print, by reading a newspaper. Although his study of the association game concentrates on a later period, the words of Nicholas Fishwick are instructive here: “many people unable or unwilling to watch their team every week - particularly boys - nevertheless turned with alacrity to the football pages of the newspaper.”¹⁰⁴ Newspapers were essential to the football experience. With the creation of leagues readers’ concern for rival league members’ performances and its effect on the league tables accompanied their concern for the outcome of their favorite team’s match.

By 1914 soccer had become a “mass proletarian cult,” as Eric Hobsbawm has argued. The “institutional and ritual characteristics” which became emblematic of the sport were in place by the late 1880s, including: “professionalism, the League, the Cup, with its annual pilgrimage of faithful for demonstrations of proletarian triumph in the capital, the regular attendance at the Saturday match, the ‘supporters’ and the culture, the ritual rivalry, normally between moieties of an industrial city or

¹⁰³ Gibson and Pickford, 2:24-29.

¹⁰⁴ English Football and Society, 1910-1950 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 94.

conurbation (Manchester City and United, Nottingham County and Forest, Liverpool and Everton)."¹⁰⁵ The one critical "characteristic" Hobsbawm failed to mention was the "Saturday night special." These special editions of newspapers provided male workers, and others interested in the game, whether supporters or not, with football news from throughout England and Scotland. The language of football, which was both local and national in nature, was "a point of common reference for all," and might have been very different without the press including sporting news as a feature. Facilitated by information in the press male workers from England and Scotland could discuss each Saturday's matches and the star players of the game.¹⁰⁶ Workers read match reports and results in Saturday football editions, their football reference and the medium for the language of soccer, which helped to nationalize the game.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, however, this national language of soccer did not translate into any sense of "British" identity for the nations or classes of Britain. Scotland, England,

¹⁰⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-Producing Traditions, 1870-1914," in The Invention of Tradition, eds. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 288.

¹⁰⁶ Hobsbawm, 288-289; R. J. Holt, "Football and the Urban Way of Life in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 76-77.

¹⁰⁷ Dave Russell, "'Sporadic and Curious': The Emergence of Rugby and Soccer Zones in Yorkshire and Lancashire, c. 1860-1914," International Journal of the History of Sport 5 (1988): 199, has noted the importance of newspapers in the spread of soccer.

and Wales had separate national organizations and national teams while professionalism split the game's followers along class lines.¹⁰⁸

While football news sold newspapers, newspapers also sold football, in both its amateur and professional forms. The press was also keenly interested in debates surrounding football and its interest helped to shape these debates. Professionalism was the debate from which all other arguments about football arose, and it continued well into the twentieth century, long after the FA's approval of professional participation on teams in 1885. Although a newspaper may have been anti-professional, by publishing the league tables on its pages, it certainly gave the professional game legitimacy.

Concern over players being paid for their football prowess increased substantially as the teams from the North and Midlands began to challenge amateur teams. In the FA Cup competition, Darwen had advanced deep into the tournament in 1879, while in 1882, Blackburn Rovers played in the Final Tie. The following year Blackburn Olympic, whose players were working men, defeated the Old Etonians to win the cup. This was the first time a working-class team had defeated an amateur team of sporting gentlemen in such a high visibility match. It was a symbolic transition at the highest level of the game from a sport played by gentlemen amateurs to one played by working-class professionals for pay.

¹⁰⁸ On the national division, in the context of British integration and diversity, see Keith Robbins, Nineteenth-Century Britain: Integration and Diversity (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 162-169.

When winning on the basis of “class” could no longer be assured for teams of amateur gentlemen, the moral imperative of the game became paramount. The amateur versus professional debate had its origins in the public school ethos of “playing the game.” Good sportsmanship was the cornerstone of the games taught at the public schools, and later at grammar schools which, it was assumed, the masses had not assimilated.¹⁰⁹ Individualism within the team game, symbolized by brilliant dribbling past defenders for a goal, was tempered by the teamwork necessary to succeed on the field and off. The game was played for its own sake, not for victory, or clubs, or money. Winners were modest in victory and losers gracious in defeat. Rules governed the game and true sportsmen never disregarded them or used trickery for the sake of victory. Tough physical play within these rules provided students with the courage, fortitude, and physical stamina to face life’s many challenges. The journal Football explained the virtues of the game, arguing that

self-abnegation is one of the attributes essential to success in football. No sport is more calculated to develop the better qualities of a boy or a man. It promotes a healthy love of the action, which is sure to be of use in every-day life. It sinks the individual entirely in the welfare of the side. Further, it is one of the best schools for moral training in which a boy can be educated. No football player can be considered as wanting in personal courage; the very essence of the sport is endurance and disregard of pain.

In a word, and we say it without the slightest idea of exaggeration, a good football player must necessarily be possessed of all the manly virtues; he cannot, to succeed, be guilty of meanness, cowardice, or selfishness in thought or action. . . . The very virtues required to produce success on the football field are calculated to make a man an honest member of society, an earnest thinker and zealous worker.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ N. L. Jackson, Association Football (London: George Newnes, 1899), 48.

¹¹⁰ Football, 4 October 1882, 8.

Players became productive members of society by “playing the game,” according to the public school games ethic. It is not surprising that Football would champion such a view considering that its two editors were C. W. Alcock, who attended Harrow and served as the honorary secretary of the FA, and N. L. Jackson, an assistant secretary to Alcock at the FA and a vociferous critic of professionalism in sport.¹¹¹

Interestingly enough, the journal only lasted one season as Alcock gave up on the venture to concentrate on his new journal, Cricket, which debuted in 1883. Jackson took over control of Football, significantly renaming the periodical, Pastime.

As the debate over professionalism occurred at FA meetings behind closed doors its proponents and opponents also battled in the burgeoning popular press. Football complained that professionalism was unknown during the formative years of the game. “To belong to a football club was as good a guarantee that the member was an amateur as any that could be produced.” Charging admission to matches helped to spark clubs to attract better players. At first, gate-money matches helped provide for better facilities for players and spectators, as well as raising money for charities. Eventually, the quest for larger gates resulted in clubs importing players and paying for big dinners, expenses, and in some cases, wages.¹¹²

¹¹¹ See Jackson, Association Football, 150-155; N. L. Jackson, Sporting Days and Sporting Ways (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1932); N. L. Jackson, “Professionalism and Sport,” Fortnightly Review 67 (1900), 154-161.

¹¹² Football, 25 October 1882, 56.

Although the FA voted to accept professionalism in 1885, it was only after thirty-six clubs had threatened to form a separate British Football Association following the FA's disqualification of Preston North End from the FA Cup in January 1884.¹¹³ One of the first Saturday night football journals, the Football Field, published in 1884-1885 a series of short, sympathetic portraits of working-class players who had changed teams in order to improve their employment situation. The paper, however, criticized players who changed clubs simply on the basis of increased salaries.¹¹⁴

Among newspapers, the Athletic News was the most vocal in its support for professionalism. In theory football was an amateur sport, but the Athletic News claimed that "in practice, nearly a hundred players are paid for taking part in the game on behalf of certain clubs."¹¹⁵ Players received secret money because the practice of pay for play was illegal in the FA. Supporters of professionalism wanted an end to the "abuse" in which players were paid much more than could be explained away by expenses.¹¹⁶ The paper claimed that

if football players are to be paid, it is every way more desirable that it should be done openly, and not in the secret underhand manner which has been the case up to the present time. On the question of fully

¹¹³ Mason, AF, 81, lists the thirty-six teams.

¹¹⁴ Robert W. Lewis, "The Genesis of Professional Football: Bolton-Blackburn-Darwen, the Centre of Innovation," International Journal of the History of Sport 14 (1997): 33-39.

¹¹⁵ Athletic News, 13 January 1885, 4.

¹¹⁶ Athletic News, 27 January 1885, 4.

recognising the professional there can be no compromise whatever. There is nothing acceptable which stops short of the right to pay men in the light of day the same as the professional cricketer.¹¹⁷

Even while the Athletic News defended professionalism and sought its acceptance by the FA, the journal did publish anti-professional articles. A Scottish correspondent condemned professionalism because it had pulled Scottish players to England with wages. In the process many Scottish clubs had been decimated by the drain of talent and English clubs and the English game prospered. “The professors who have initiated the Lancashire clubs into the mysteries of the Scotch style of play have done their work well. Lancashire football has permeated all England. So much the better for England, but so much the worse for Scotland and the morality of the game - at least so we think in the Northern Kingdom.”¹¹⁸

The approval of professionalism by the FA, however, did not mean that the debate was over in society at large. Many gentlemen in the FA had decided that professionalism controlled by the amateurs of the FA, who would look after the best interests of the game, was the best course for the future of soccer.¹¹⁹ Without “old sportsmen” governing it in 1885, “professionalism would probably have run wild and

¹¹⁷ Athletic News, 7 April 1885, 4.

¹¹⁸ Athletic News, 13 January 1885, 6.

¹¹⁹ Mason, AF, 74-81.

covered itself in disgrace,” as it had in the intervening years, according to N. L. Jackson.¹²⁰

In London, and in England south of Birmingham, amateur soccer largely held sway. One historian has suggested that the South lacked the local civic rivalries which characterized the relations between Northern towns which prompted clubs to induce footballers to play for them by paying wages.¹²¹ Among newspapers in the South of England the bastion of amateurism was The Times. Rather than openly condemn professionalism in its columns, The Times illustrated its support for the amateur game by all but ignoring the professional game. On Saturdays the paper failed to list the fixtures between professional clubs and on Mondays it merely recorded the results of these fixtures and provided an updated League table.¹²² In its spring retrospective of the past football season the paper reviewed the significant matches of the season. These included both the Association and Rugby International contests, as well as North versus South and University competitions. The only professional clubs mentioned in the reports were the two who made the FA Cup Final each year.¹²³ When the paper did report on professional soccer, it chronicled the game's problems, as a column from 1893 illustrates. The Times correspondent claimed that professionalism had caused a “pecuniary crisis” because the cash nexus

¹²⁰ N. L. Jackson, Association Football, 140.

¹²¹ Lewis, 41.

¹²² For example, see The Times, 9 March 1901, 14 and 11 March 1901, 11.

¹²³ For example, see The Times, 14 April 1887, 3, 9, and 7 May 1888, 4.

was the basis of the relationship between a professional club and its players. When clubs secured the services of players whose lack of success on the field translated into less support and gate-money from supporters, they often ended up with a deficit. As a result, according to the correspondent, “the tens of thousands of spectators who assemble week after week at the league contests know little about the canker that is menacing their darling pastime. It is possible, just possible, that in a few months the whole edifice of professionalism, even in Association football, will be shaken to its foundation.”¹²⁴

The Times also chronicled the many meetings of the Rugby Union (RU) in connection with the “professional question” during 1894. The RU’s fear of working-class participation and the professionalism, which Tony Collins has illustrated was synonymous with the working class in the North, resulted in the resolutions outlawing broken-time payments for working-class players who missed work because of a club match. Between 1886 and 1893 the Union effectively banned professionalism and twenty-two of the leading clubs from Yorkshire and Lancashire quit the Union in response. They formed the Northern Rugby Football Union (NRU) in 1895 to pursue competitive football played by men who were compensated for the time and money they lost by taking time off from work to play the game.¹²⁵ Between 1 October and 31 December 1894, The Times published at least fifteen reports dealing with the RU’s handling of the subject. These reports mostly consisted of the press releases

¹²⁴ The Times, 25 September 1893, 5.

¹²⁵ Collins, 56-153.

handed out by the union following the numerous meetings and lacked any analysis.¹²⁶ The Athletic News earlier had argued that professionalism had improved the quality of soccer by teaching the game to people who otherwise would not have had adequate instruction. The old school boy teams had learned to play during their school days, but even these teams often fell to the superiority of professional teams from the North and the Midlands during the 1880s. Many Londoners in the amateur ranks opposed individuals seeking to play for money; individuals who otherwise would be unable to play due to time and financial considerations. The Athletic News suggested that “some of the leading lights appear to resent working men not only playing, but playing better than themselves.”¹²⁷ As the professional game became more popular there was an increasing emphasis by some on the moral imperative of sportsmanship, fair play, and amateurism.

None of the professional teams of the new Football League made their home south of Birmingham and a Southern team did not join the League until Arsenal's entry into the League's new Second division in 1893. A professional Southern League, created along lines similar to the Football League, made its debut in 1894 with a First Division of nine teams and a Second Division of seven teams. When the Football League began play in 1888, London newspapers like the Star provided limited coverage of the action on and off the field. The League ensured games with

¹²⁶ For example, see The Times, 11 December 1894, 6 and 15 December 1894, 10. Also see Palmer's Index to "The Times" Newspaper (1 October – 31 December 1894), 83.

¹²⁷ Athletic News, 23 December 1889, 1.

regularly scheduled opponents which supporters and papers could count on for the provision of local sporting news. Each Saturday provided a drama played out on pitches across Britain which counted for more than just one day's win or loss. There was also the battle in the league tables as clubs competed against their on-the-field challengers and their adversaries in the standings. The premier amateur teams in London, the Corinthians, the Old Carthusians, and the Caledonians, among others, received weekly attention.¹²⁸ Even with its limited coverage of the professional game in its non-football editions, the Star did not seem averse to the moneyed element in the game, as long as all professional clubs observed the rules set up for them by the FA. It implicitly questioned the two-year English residency rule for registered professionals from other countries, which included Scotland. Many imported players, or 'shamateurs,' as they were known, registered as amateurs, but still received remuneration of some sort. As the Star explained, "the question of professionalism is once more to the front, and it is not unlikely to cause as much trouble in the righteous bosoms of our legislators in Holborn viaduct in its new phase as it did in its older manifestation."¹²⁹ Even as late as 1894, the lack of professional soccer in London and, therefore, the significance of the amateur game was apparent in a London journalist's assessment of a match between the Football League side, Aston Villa and the Corinthians, the premier amateur club in England. The Football

¹²⁸ For example, see "Football Gossip," Star, page 4 of the following issues, 28 September, 5, 12, 19, 26 October, and 14 December 1888.

¹²⁹ Star, 21 December 1888, 4.

Evening News correspondent described the contest as “the most important played in the London district this season.”¹³⁰ Professional soccer, however, was not ignored altogether; in fact, it had already begun its conquest of London together with its newspapers. “Football Gossip” occupied the front page of the Football Evening News and began with two columns of news “All About the League.”¹³¹

Newspapers contributed to the continuing tension between the sporting values of the amateur game and the characteristics of the professional game by publishing information about the professional teams while simultaneously promoting the virtues of the amateur game. A Times correspondent reflecting upon the changes in the Association game, explained that

professionalism has done much to deprive it of some of its splendidly honest robustness. The ‘science’ of the game is supposed to have improved; but the great lovers of football of other days still think that the long sweeping passes, the hard kicking, the pace, and the sterling sportsmanship of the times when the Old Etonians and Old Carthusians were the leaders were much more attractive than the arts generated by professionalism.¹³²

Even papers which approved of professional football in word and in deed, remained wedded to the public school ethos of sport. As the Football Evening News explained, “The professional has his place in the economy of athletic sport - and a very

¹³⁰ Football Evening News, 13 January 1894, 3.

¹³¹ Football Evening News, 13 January 1894, 1.

¹³² The Times, 29 April 1901, 7.

important one it is - but it is by no means the first position.”¹³³ Amateurism occupied the first position in British/English soccer, especially in the metropolis. Many of the FA councilors, the policy makers of soccer, were public school graduates who sought to control the development of professionalism in the game. At the local level, in London at least, the London Football Association encouraged the amateur game and restricted its membership to amateur clubs. In 1891, the London FA had expelled Woolwich Arsenal for declaring itself a professional club. As the following excerpt illustrates, the Football Evening News approved of and promoted this state of affairs in the London soccer scene:

It is because the London Football Association endeavours with all its strength to induce the boys and young men of our closely packed city to “play the game” that it deserves all the encouragement which the public voice can give it. The best side of amateurism is represented in the London Association, which embraces within its membership such clubs as Old Carthusians, Old Westminster, Old St. Mark’s, Old Malvernians, Old Foresters and Casuals. These latter organisations represent the scholarly youth of the country. A strong leaven of such an element in any athletic body is certain to have most improving results. London is at heart amateur - at least so far as football is concerned. Long may it remain so. As we have said, the professional has his useful and necessary place, but after all the finest precept in connection with any athletic exercise is practice.¹³⁴

In other words, scholars knew best, and what the scholars of the London FA knew was best was the amateurism they had learned at school and which they lorded over the professional game.

¹³³ Football Evening News, 8 September 1900, 2.

¹³⁴ Football Evening News, 8 September 1900, 2.

As football gained a growing following, the press chronicled its growth, first, in the specialist sporting press, such as Bell's Life, the Sporting Life, and the Athletic News, and, beginning in the 1880s, the Saturday night special football editions of evening newspapers. Perhaps the most significant Saturday night special in the metropolis was the London Football Evening News, which the Evening News began publishing in 1889. The London Evening News began its existence on 26 July 1881, as an unassuming halfpenny Liberal paper founded by Martin Fradd, editor of the Torquay Evening News. Six columns covered its four blue pages. Its one column of sporting news dealt with racing results, betting news, and, eventually, tips. Six months later, financial difficulties forced Fradd to sell the Evening News to a syndicate of the Conservative Party. Even Conservative deep pockets could not keep the Evening News from constant financial difficulty until its purchase by Alfred Harmsworth in 1894.

Long before Harmsworth began his foray into the daily newspaper business, the Evening News had been an innovator in the sphere of sporting news. As early as 1882, the front page had offered its readers a regular column, "SPORTS OF THE WEEK."¹³⁵ The column written by "Merlin," appeared each Monday and recapped the week in sports by commenting on the wide variety of contests from the preceding week. Peppered with gossip, a typical article might include information concerning athletics, racing, and cricket,¹³⁶ or soccer, cricket, and billiards.¹³⁷ During Frank

¹³⁵ See, for example, Evening News, 21 January 1882.

¹³⁶ Evening News, 2 July 1888, 1.

Harris' tenure as editor at the Evening News he began publishing the starting prices from the Sporting Life and the Sportsman.¹³⁸ In the late 1880s, the Evening News also included a "Sporting Items" column which listed important announcements relating to sport. This was in addition to the writing of "Hermit," the tipster and racing writer, and his fellow ratiocinator, "B. Bee." Editors at the Evening News either did not have faith in the predictive talents of their two turf prophets, or they sought to give their readers as much racing information as they could possibly print by also including picks printed in the Sportsman and the Sporting Life.

The Evening News and the Evening Post merged in 1889 to create the Evening News & Post, a paper which sought to appeal to a larger audience. It announced that the interests of its target audience, "the labourer, the ratepayer, and the citizen at large, will be boldly upheld against economic and parochial abuses. . . [and] the poor will always have a friend, and charity an ever-ready ally." Furthermore, this merged paper promised that "all national sports will be liberally chronicled in its columns."¹³⁹ A look at the 29 March 1890 issue reveals the increasing importance of sporting news. "BRITISH SPORTS" in large, bold block letters headed each of the four columns of sport which followed the three columns of advertisements on page one. The columns included: "ANGLING - News and Gossip for the Disciples of Izaak Walton;" "CRICKET - Opening of the Season - Lady

¹³⁷ Evening News, 14 January 1889, 1.

¹³⁸ Frank Harris, My Life and Loves, ed. John F. Gallagher (New York: Grove Press, 1925), 417.

¹³⁹ Evening News, 13 May 1889, 2.

Cricketers - What the Clubs Are Doing;" "ATHLETICS - Inter-club Competitions and their Uses - Miscellaneous Sports and Pastimes;" "SWIMMING - A New Association - The Coming of Age of the A. S. A.;" "ROWING - Modifications at Henley Regatta - Amongst the Up-River Clubs." The sports coverage did not end on the front page. The paper also published racing, football, gymnastics, aquatics, billiards, and cycling news.

In 1889 the Evening News introduced its own football edition, the Football Evening News. This new genre of the evening paper in London appealed to readers by promoting southern football, as the following excerpt illustrates:

it is satisfactory to note the ever-increasing interest that non-players take in football. Thousands view the more interesting matches Saturday after Saturday, and find an afternoon's amusement in watching twenty-two or thirty players engaged in leatherhunting, and while we did not forget the players themselves, we have endeavoured to cater for our non-playing friends also.

By addressing players and supporters the new edition hoped to see "Southern football more nearly on par with the game in the North."¹⁴⁰

The Evening News's staff of reporters and the services of the press agencies could not fulfill all the news needs of the football edition. In order to create as complete a chronicle of southern football as possible the Evening News advised teams to send in their results by telegram before 5:00 pm for the edition which hit the streets at 7:00 pm. It also offered a material incentive for clubs to get their results to the paper via the 6d. wire. The first Association club and the first Rugby club to

¹⁴⁰ Football Evening News, 12 April 1890, 2.

report their results each received a football.¹⁴¹ Not only did this self-reporting aid the paper in its collection of the news, but it gave the clubs inexpensive publicity. Clubs were responsible for informing the paper about their fixtures in advance of the game, as well as where, when, and against whom they would play. The paper urged club secretaries to notify the paper early so that their matches would be listed under “To-morrow’s Football” on the front page in the Friday Evening News, often right next to the “ATHLETIC NOTES,” which included the essential “flat-racing fixtures” for Saturday.¹⁴² What made this simple act of communication even more important, according to the paper, was that the Saturday editions of the morning dailies used the Evening News fixture list to print their own lists on Saturday mornings. Grounds could be filled only if supporters and other curious spectators knew where and when teams played matches. After Arsenal had failed to inform the Evening News about its match with Accrington in early January 1894, the Football Evening News suggested that “if the Arsenal wishes to attract a gate the expenditure of a few pence on postcards to be sent to the Press is one of the best and cheapest ways to secure it.”¹⁴³ As an incentive for junior clubs to send in their results the Evening News held a competition offering £1 each to “the twenty clubs which shall send us their results most promptly and punctually.” The paper also attempted to thwart its competition

¹⁴¹ Football Evening News, 11 October 1889, 4.

¹⁴² See, for example, Football Evening News, 1 January 1894, 1.

¹⁴³ Football Evening News, 13 January 1894, 1.

by not accepting telegrams duplicated and sent to other evening papers.¹⁴⁴ At the end of 1894, the paper noted with gratitude the “cooperation of club secretaries without which our task to make this the football authority of the South would have been of no avail.”¹⁴⁵

The other Saturday night special published in London during the 1890s was the Football Star. Its parent paper, the Star, which became a London leader in circulation, began its conquest of the evening market as a proponent of socialism. Although this editorial stance lasted only until 1891, the Star always found it prudent to offer the masses sporting news. The presentation of the news in the pages of the Star was innovative and designed to catch the attention of possible readers in the streets and hold that attention with its politics. Short leading articles appeared on page one and the continuous column after column of small print found in most papers of the day was broken by crossheads. Headlines sometimes spanned two columns and later secondary headlines and crossheads utilized lower case letters for the first time in the British press.¹⁴⁶ According to John Goodbody, the Star was the first evening newspaper in London to offer readers a weekly football half-column.¹⁴⁷ The paper competed with the Football Evening News by publishing a Saturday night

¹⁴⁴ Football Evening News, 6 January 1894, 4.

¹⁴⁵ Football Evening News, 21 April 1894, 2.

¹⁴⁶ See John Goodbody, “The Star: Its Role in the Rise of the New Journalism,” in Papers for the Millions, ed. Joel H. Wiener (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 151.

¹⁴⁷ Goodbody, 149.

Football Star edition printed on pink paper. Unfortunately, the football editions no longer exist on microfilm or in bound copies and it is unclear when the Football Star began publication.¹⁴⁸ Along with the results and reports of Saturday's matches, the Football Star featured a column on refereeing by W. Pickford, who co-authored Association Football and the Men Who Made It (1906), with Alfred Gibson, editor of the Football Star and the Star's sister newspaper, the Morning Leader. Pickford authored, for the Bournemouth Guardian, what was, perhaps, the first weekly column of regional football notes published in any newspaper southwest of London. His column, which began appearing in 1883, was instrumental in organizing a football association and cup competition in the region. He promoted the formation of the South Hants and Dorset Football Association in 1884. Subsequently, a Hampshire FA was started in 1887, of which Pickford served as honorary secretary until 1919.¹⁴⁹

For a football edition, success rested on local football competition on which it could report; and the more competitive the better. The majority of the reports in the Football Evening News dealt with local amateur soccer and rugby clubs and did not provide the football public with top-rate competition provided by matches between professional clubs. Representatives from twelve London clubs had attempted to organize a Southern version of the Football League in 1892. It seems the fear of

¹⁴⁸ The British Library Newspaper Library does not hold any of these editions and Associated Newspapers Ltd., the company that took over the Star in 1960, maintains it does not have copies of these editions either.

¹⁴⁹ Pickford, 24-25.

expulsion from the London FA ensured the venture's failure.¹⁵⁰ The Football Evening News was optimistic about the development of more professional teams in Southern England, especially in London, calling it "A BRIGHT PROSPECT."¹⁵¹ In this instance the Football Evening News was responding to one of the periodic attacks against the professional game made by the leading periodicals.¹⁵² Without enough excellent amateur players, the public had to turn to the professionals, who were "now almost the sole exponents of first-class football." The London market needed more professional clubs because "there exists an extraordinarily widespread liking for the spectacle of really high-class football." The columns on page one and the page two leaders suggested that an expansion of professional soccer in the South would occur soon. It even speculated that "several leading clubs at present sailing under false colours will openly declare themselves next season."¹⁵³ Perhaps now Southern soccer could transform itself into a consistent rival to Northern and Midlands soccer.

As part of this project the Football Evening News promoted the creation of a Southern League of professional soccer teams. Both soccer and the press would, it maintained, benefit from such a development. Southern football editions would have local competition to feature along with the numerous Southern amateur leagues and

¹⁵⁰ Lionel Francis, Seventy Five Years of Southern League Football (London: Pelham Books, 1969), 20-21.

¹⁵¹ Football Evening News, 6 January 1894, 2.

¹⁵² Creston, "Football," Fortnightly Review 55 (1894): 25-38.

¹⁵³ Football Evening News, 6 January 1894, 2.

the Northern and Midland-heavy Football League. For the Football Evening News such a venture could happen none too soon as part of an attempt to strengthen soccer in the South. It looked to professional clubs like Luton, to which the Midland League had offered a place in 1894, as the nucleus for such a scheme. The Football Evening News “hoped that Luton will not give a decisive answer at present [to the Midland League], because the Bedfordians will be wanted to strengthen the Southern League.”¹⁵⁴

On 12 January 1894, representatives from various Southern teams met and agreed to form a league. Unfortunately, the early records of the Southern League were lost during World War II, and it is not clear why 1894 offered a more favorable atmosphere than two years earlier.¹⁵⁵ Even after a successful first meeting, the creation of such a league was not guaranteed, and the Football Evening News attempted to rally support within the soccer community for the idea. “The club or clubs that stand in the way of a strong Southern league will be doing an injustice to football at large.”¹⁵⁶ The Football Evening News had chronicled the growth of the game in London while also encouraging its development. London had “lagged a long way behind the men of the North in the promotion of the game.” A second meeting formalized the structure of the new Southern League, which was comprised of two

¹⁵⁴ Football Evening News, 6 January 1894, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Francis, 21.

¹⁵⁶ Football Evening News, 13 January 1894, 1.

divisions.¹⁵⁷ As the new league's most avid booster, the Football Evening News argued that

the League system, the most potent producer of earnestness in football - for the reason that it affords an incentive to strive for excellence which no other form of competition supplies - is taking root in the metropolis, and the establishment of the Southern Football League is now an accomplished fact which will leave its mark upon the game before the season is much older.¹⁵⁸

With the help of the press soccer was making progress as a spectator sport as it captured more and more adherents and new clubs were formed.

By 1898, although no Southern teams had won the FA Cup in fifteen years or were members of the elite First Division of the Football League, the Football Evening News was optimistic about future prospects for Southern soccer. The editor of the Saturday night edition, "Referee," claimed near the start of the season that "as an unbiased spectator I am bound to confess that football in the South continues to make rapid strides, and the time is not now very far distant when the proud North and the Midlands will have to confess that the clubs of the South are no longer to be sneered at as inferior to those on the other side of the Trent."¹⁵⁹ London was overcoming its inferiority complex with the growth of professional soccer teams like Woolwich Arsenal and, later, Watford, and Thames Ironworks (which became West Ham

¹⁵⁷ Francis, 22.

¹⁵⁸ Football Evening News, 1 September 1894, 2.

¹⁵⁹ Football Evening News, 10 September 1898, 2.

United), among others.¹⁶⁰ Two years later the new editor of the Football Evening News, "J. M. D.," offered a much different view of Southern "Socker." The overall level and commitment to soccer in the South was nowhere near that of the Midlands and the North of England:

The truth has been artfully dodged, and the public has been asked to believe that the day of the triumph of the Southern clubs has dawned - that, in point of fact, Southern football is at last about to take that position of supreme power which it ought to have occupied years ago. All statements of this sort constitute so much romance. So far as Southern professional football is concerned it was never in such a bad way. Luton indulged in the folly of an attempt to enter the charmed circle of the First Division of the Football League through the portals which the second Division provides. They paid dearly for their temerity; so much so, that they start the season with very much depleted funds, if they are not actually in debt.¹⁶¹

The best professional football teams were members of the Football League, whose season-long tournament crowned as champion the club with the best intra-league record. A Southern team might perform well in the FA Cup, but, as the example above illustrated, in 1900 none had the resources to compete in the premier league in England.

Another team chasing after Football League glory was Woolwich Arsenal. According to J. M. D., Arsenal had neglected the Southern League by pursuing the giants of soccer in the North. The competition and rivalries were important but the larger gates and reduced expenses which resulted from all-Southern matches were vital to the success of professional soccer among clubs like Arsenal, Tottenham,

¹⁶⁰ See Korr, pp. 1-16, for the early history of West Ham United.

¹⁶¹ Football Evening News, 8 September 1900, 1.

Millwall, Reading, and Southampton. Southern soccer also lacked an adequate system for procuring and nurturing young talent. "Anything in the shape of local talent is openly laughed at."¹⁶² Instead, teams imported expensive players who failed to achieve success on the field. The only southern teams which recruited and developed local players were Millwall, West Ham United, and Arsenal. Fulham, Chelsea, and Queen's Park Rangers ignored the metropolitan area before 1915.¹⁶³ Talent did exist in the South, however, if the "League Lore" column of the Football Evening News is any indication with its chronicle of players from Southern clubs lost to the First Division of the Football League.¹⁶⁴

When Tottenham Hotspur reached the Cup Final in 1901 it was the first professional London team to do so. Many journalists were critical of the importation of players from outside their locality to play for soccer clubs, but they enjoyed their local clubs' successes. As "Geraint" of the Referee proclaimed "if importation is legal - as it is, worse luck - my desire is that we may import better than others."¹⁶⁵ Like other newspapers in the South, the Referee welcomed the rebirth of soccer in the region; "What a lot of good a win for a Southern Club would do in the football world! The pendulum has been swinging and swinging, and suggested time's revenges

¹⁶² Football Evening News, 8 September 1900, 1.

¹⁶³ Colm Kerrigan, "London Schoolboys and Professional Football, 1899-1915," International Journal of the History of Sport 11 (1994): 287-297.

¹⁶⁴ Football Evening News, 8 September 1900, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Referee, 21 April 1901, 1.

coming nearer and nearer. We, the South, have been within reasonable distance but not 'got' for I don't know how long. Our day must come. When, is the question."¹⁶⁶ By 1903, according to the Daily Chronicle, Southern football was finally on par with the North in the eyes of Southerners. It argued that the 1903 Cup Final would be an unappealing match and spectators from London would be sparse: "People in London believe that Derby County and Bury are not capable of serving up appreciably better football than can be seen anyday at Tottenham or Millwall, and their interest began to wane when the last of the Southern representatives were thrown out."¹⁶⁷

By 1914 football, especially soccer, had conquered Britain in collaboration with the press. According to a journalist, "as far as we have gone this has been the most successful time football has ever experienced; there are more clubs, the number of its disciples are increasing every day, and it is rapidly achieving world-wide notoriety."¹⁶⁸ Although this judgment about the state of football had appeared in an 1874 issue of Bell's Life it aptly described the condition of the game forty years later. During the 1880s, the North had emerged as the hotbed of professional soccer with the help of the evening press; and London and the south soon followed. Professional soccer dominated the news that hundreds of thousands of fans eagerly read each Saturday as evening newspapers published their football editions. The press was

¹⁶⁶ Referee, 14 April 1901, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Daily Chronicle, 18 April 1903, 9.

¹⁶⁸ Bell's Life in London, 3 January 1874, 9.

instrumental to the football experience, helping to create a national game on the local level by offering football news with community appeal and by reporting on games throughout the country.

CHAPTER 5

CRICKET NEWS: CRICKET AND THE PRESS

‘CRICKET extry! Latest scores up to close of play!’

The hot-faced, husky-voiced newsboy, with a bulky bundle of pink papers under his left arm, distributes his sheets at lightening speed, taking money and giving change with the dexterity of a juggler. A clamorous crowd of men and lads, all feverishly anxious to ascertain how their favourite teams have fared, hustle him and bustle him on every side. As each gets his paper he opens it, turns to the third page, and walks slowly off, reading.¹

Such was the late spring and summer evening scene in London and other cities throughout England from the late 1880s on, as followers of cricket bought their cricket editions of the evening newspaper. By the late 19th century cricket had become the quintessential English sport: an institution which embodied the myths, realities, and contradictions of the nation. Like football and horse racing, cricket underwent a striking surge in popularity during the 1880s as popular contests drew attendances in excess of 10,000. During this “great cricket explosion,” as one historian has characterized it, cricket clubs were formed in nearly every community, the classifications in county cricket emerged, international competitions began between teams from England and teams from Australia, Canada, and the United States, and professional cricket leagues developed in northern England.² The press was critical to these developments as it promoted and publicized the game from the

¹ Edwin Pugh, “Cricket London,” Living London, ed. George R. Sims, vol. 2 (London: Cassell and Co., 1902), 145.

² Keith A. P. Sandiford, Cricket and the Victorians (Aldershot, Hants: Scolar Press, 1994), 53-79.

1860s on. Although football had superseded cricket as, perhaps, the most popular spectator sport in England by the 1880s, cricket remained popular - “a popularity assiduously fostered by the press” - and it continued to embody both the virtues and contradictions of English civilization well into the twentieth century.³ Over the course of the Victorian and Edwardian eras cricket developed along very different lines in terms of organization, competition, and social structure, than its winter counterpart, soccer.

During the 18th century cricket emerged as an important sport under the patronage of publicans, priests, squires, and, most significantly, Frederick Louis, the Prince of Wales and the son of George II. The latter established a relationship between cricket and the crown, which George IV and his brothers the Dukes of York and Clarence continued. While the crown supported cricket, one of the main factors in its prominence was the pub, which sponsored teams and promoted matches.⁴ By the end of the 18th century clubs had been established in communities throughout Britain. Of these, the most significant was the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), founded in 1787 by and for the social elite, and it soon took over governance of the game. Its committee became the recognized executives regulating the game. During these and subsequent years the game on the field retained a remarkable continuity. The tools of the game had taken their current form by 1845, and although the MCC

³ Sir Home Gordon, “The Coming Cricket Season,” Badminton Magazine 30 (1910): 390.

⁴ On the legacy of pre-Victorian cricket, see Sandiford, 19-33, on which much of the following is based.

revised the rules of cricket periodically, they continue to remain similar to those of 1744, the first year of codification. Rather than transform cricket the Victorians altered the field of play, creating manicured grounds to ensure more consistent playing conditions. As the game became more organized at the county level during the last quarter of the 19th century, with the help of the sporting press, clubs enclosed their grounds to profit from their play. By 1870 an unofficial county championship had arisen as well as periodic international matches between English elevens and sides from the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Cricket was a game played by the gentry and members of the working class, and many of the clubs even employed cricketers. Professional cricketers were an important element of cricket held over from the 18th century, who not only played the game but earned a living from cricket in a variety of ways. Before the arrival of touring teams in the 1840s some gentlemen employed professionals for their talents as groundskeepers, coaches, trainers, and players. Their activities included playing in matches, providing lessons, preparing and maintaining cricket grounds, and bowling in the practice nets as other cricketers practiced their batting. These early cricket professionals came from a variety of jobs with flexible working hours like framework knitting, handloom weaving, apprenticeships in the skilled trades, and domestic service. When their cricket playing days ended some players continued their association with the game as school coaches, sports outfitters, and groundskeepers, while others, like many ex-athletes, became publicans. Before the advent of the professional touring teams of the 1840s and the rise of the amateur ideology of the

last half of the 19th century, professional cricketers had attained a “respectable” status.⁵

The creation of the professional All England Eleven which toured the country beginning in 1846 led to an era of professional touring teams which continued until the 1880s. At the dawn of the touring era the county clubs were not the center of cricket in England. The cricket tours exposed a greater number of people to the game and “revolutionised the public’s awareness and perception of cricket.”⁶ Cricket’s popularity was on the rise. County clubs, however, slowly began to call on professionals to play for their counties. The demise of the touring era gave way to the establishment of cricket based on local clubs as they sprang up in communities throughout England where the middle class flocked to the game (from the 1870s).⁷ Cricket also became an important game at public schools, where the middle class sent their children to learn the values of an Imperial power.

Sport was a vital part of a student’s individual education. How did advocates of cricket view the game? A classic Victorian example which illustrates the importance of the public school and the training it provided to students on the field of

⁵ W. F. Mandle, “The Professional Cricketer in England in the Nineteenth Century,” Labour History 23 (November 1972): 7-8, 10; W. F. Mandle, “Games People Played: Cricket and Football in England and Victoria in the Late Nineteenth Century,” Historical Studies 15 (April 1973): 528-529.

⁶ Ric Sissons, The Players. A Social History of the Professional Cricketer (London: Kingswood Press, 1988), 9.

⁷ Sandiford, 53-79. See John Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 1870-1914 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 95-124, on the growth of other sporting clubs.

play is the novel Tom Brown's School-Days. In the novel the schoolboys imbue cricket with a reverent quality, claiming it was "a noble game," "an institution," and "the birthright of British boys old and young."⁸ As with football, the ideology of "athleticism" helped to sustain the popularity of cricket. The muscular Christianity at the heart of this ideology argued that cricket was "a pastime healthy alike for mind and muscle," and that it promoted the strength, vitality, and courage necessary for a virtuous society.⁹ Thirty years after the publication of Tom Brown's School-Days, the journal Cricket listed the following "manly virtues" that were essential to playing the game: "Courage, Endurance, Modesty, Self-confidence, Abstinence, Good-temper, Thoroughness." If these were not sufficient to demonstrate the attributes cricket helped to develop, many more could be added.¹⁰ While individual prowess was necessary to success in cricket an individual was only one member of a team striving for victory. Selflessness was a crucial objective in the curriculum at the public schools and cricket helped to teach that lesson. As the master at Rugby school explained: "it [cricket] merges the individual in the eleven; he doesn't play that he may win, but that his side may."¹¹ In another representative description F. G. Alfalo argued that "the grand lesson of sport, more particularly indeed of games, is the

⁸ Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's School-Days (first published 1857; Reprint, Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1993), 313.

⁹ Sporting Life, 21 December 1867, 4.

¹⁰ Cricket, 25 November 1886, 466.

¹¹ Hughes, p. 313.

subordination of self for the good of the side. The cricket field is not the House of Commons, wherein every individual makes a party unto himself. If it were, there would be no cricket.”¹²

The obsession with individual batting and bowling statistics, however, contrasted with this expressed attitude. None of the periodicals which promoted the team game and reported on cricket matches ignored the statistics of the game. They actively sought to collect and publish the statistics of outstanding individuals, as well as disseminating the individual numbers of club participants.¹³ Club secretaries supplied the bowling and batting averages published in the press. Bell's Life required that the batting averages be arranged under the following headings: matches, innings, times not out, runs, most in an innings, most in a match, least in a match, average per innings, and over. The press had similar requirements for bowling averages.¹⁴

Given the emphasis on games throughout the Victorian and Edwardian periods it was not surprising that numerous commentators on cricket argued that the public schools and universities played the best and, perhaps, the purest cricket

¹² “The Sportsman,” Fortnightly Review 80 (1907): 166-167.

¹³ For example, see the Sporting Life issues of 16, 30 October, 2, 6, 9, 13, 16, 20, 27 November, 4, 7, 11 December 1867. Cricket also included batting and bowling averages: see 16 September 1886, 414, and 23 September 1886, pp. 440-441.

¹⁴ Bell's Life, 17 September 1870, p. 7.

matches.¹⁵ Even when professional football had become a sport of enormous popularity beginning in the 1880s, amateur sport continued to attract a following. While first class cricket was played by professionals and amateurs, the amateurs were the more celebrated of the players and the amateur game was the ideal form. During the 1880s the significance of the Eton v. Harrow match to “fashionable circles” resulted in a leading article in The Times, which the newspaper usually reserved for prominent political, economic, and social matters.¹⁶ Newspapers viewed the participants in these matches as the epitome of amateur cricketers, playing for their side’s glory and not money. In 1894, the Evening News argued that “at present the ‘Varsity cricketer, like a ‘Varsity oarsman, is a bit of a national hero. His doings are chronicled exhaustively in the newspapers, his name is familiar to every spokesman in the land, and on every cricket field he would be a notable figure to be whispered about and pointed out.”¹⁷ The press encouraged this variety of amateur cricket; before and after 1914, both the “quality” and the “popular” newspapers’ coverage of the matches between the universities and the Eton-Harrow match were on par with that of Test Matches between England and its colonial foes.¹⁸

¹⁵ “Art.” [Courteney Boyle], “Cricket,” Quarterly Review 158 (October 1884): 485.

¹⁶ The Times, 16 July 1883, 9.

¹⁷ Evening News, 4 July 1894, 2.

¹⁸ Marcus Williams, Double Century: 200 Years of Cricket in The Times (London: Willow, 1985), 90; E. W. Swanton, Back Page Cricket: A Century of Newspaper Coverage, ed. George Plumptre (London: Queen Anne Press, 1987), 24.

At the center of the boom in cricket was the county cricket club and between 1840 and 1870 the number of county clubs grew from 15 to 34.¹⁹ England's urban centers housed the powers in county cricket whose grounds became familiar to followers of cricket. Manchester's Old Trafford was home to Lancashire, Leeds' Headingley housed Yorkshire, Warwickshire operated from Birmingham's Edgbaston, Nottinghamshire played at Nottingham's Trent Bridge, and The Oval in London was the headquarters of Surrey. Most clubs began their existence with the help of a few patrons, usually from the landed gentry, except for Lancashire and Yorkshire which depended upon gate money and industrial manufacturers for their survival.²⁰ By the 1890s the most successful of the county clubs relied on not only the support of aristocratic and middle class members, but on the thousands of spectators who flocked to watch county matches. Lord Harris, the president of the Kent County Cricket Club, explained that "the splendidly appointed grounds which are to be found in or near every large town are supported by the sixpences of the people. Ten years ago most county cricket clubs eked out an uncertain subsistence on the generosity of one or two patrons; now the more wide-spread interest in the game gives them a more than sufficient income."²¹

The press chronicled the contests between major county clubs as they became a source of fascination for Victorian readers from the beginning of the 1870s. The

¹⁹ Mandle, "Pro Cricketer," p. 2.

²⁰ Mandle, "Games," p. 514.

²¹ "Cricket," Contemporary Review 48 (1885): 123.

world reported in the columns of the press included the field of sport. Cricket news had become a staple of a newspaper's overall coverage by 1885, whether it was a sporting paper or a general interest paper. Prior to 1885 cricket news usually consisted of short, descriptive summaries of important matches and, perhaps, the scores of less significant encounters. Readers who sought more extensive accounts of play looked to papers which specialized in sporting news, like Bell's Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Life. Because of cricket's growing popularity and its significance as a social and cultural institution, as early as 1875, The Times had begun publishing a sporadic feature article on cricket to accompany its concise reports on matches.²² If a follower of cricket could not play or watch cricket then he could read about it, because

the next best thing to playing cricket is to see it played; and next after that, at a long interval, doubtless, but still not without a strong clash of excitement, comes the hurried glance in the morning at the scores of the day before. What new surprises have they in store for us? To whatever pitch of dullness the rest of the morning's news may descend, in the cricket intelligence we are tolerably sure to find some 'century,' some wonderful bowling, some unexpected result, some exciting finish.²³

A key periodical in the popularization of cricket, as it was with other sports, was Bell's Life.²⁴ Even prior to the "great cricket explosion," Bell's Life gave

²² M. Williams, vii-viii.

²³ The Times, 16 July 1883, 9.

²⁴ See Chapter 2.

readers weekly reports concerning the game. In 1844, V. G. Dowling asserted that in his twenty years as editor of Bell's Life, cricket had reached a new stage in its prominence:

I attribute the Extension of the Game of Cricket very much to the Paper of which I am the Editor. Having been the Editor Twenty Years. I can recollect when the Game of Cricket was not so popular as it is at the present Moment: but the Moment the Cricketers found themselves the Object of Attention almost every Village had its Cricket Green. The Record of their Prowess in Print created a Desire still more to extend their Exertions and their Fame.

Bell's Life provided a forum to spread the exploits and virtues of the game as the journal received reports of cricket matches from around the world.²⁵

Sporting newspapers like Bell's Life and the Sportsman encouraged the culture of communication among cricket clubs. The press accomplished this by publishing information about cricket clubs and their upcoming seasons. A Bell's Life cricket supplement in 1870 included a wealth of information: addresses of secretaries, where professionals were playing, and club schedules.²⁶ Sporting papers also furnished lists of fixtures for a variety of clubs, including the Royal Military Academy and the City of London College which did not draw the public following of the county clubs. The scores of matches and their accompanying batting and bowling results also appeared in these papers.²⁷

²⁵ Select Committee of the House of Lords on the Laws Respecting Gaming, Parliamentary Papers, 1844 (25), vol. 6, p. 89, Q. 234.

²⁶ Bell's Life, 11 May 1870, 1.

²⁷ Sportsman, 25 August 1870, 4.

Statistics provided much of the fodder for cricket discussions and the sporting papers made sure to include plenty of numbers along with the news text. As one observer of the cricket scene recounted, “every line has its earnest and conscientious reader, and when the final match of the year comes, greedy minds give themselves up to that most astoundingly recondite lore, the ‘averages.’”²⁸ By 1870, the sporting press catered to the power of the century in the cricket imagination as the Sportsman published a review of “SCORERS OF 100 RUNS AND UPWARDS.”²⁹ At the conclusion of the county cricket season complete statistics for each club appeared, including match results, and individual batting and bowling averages. The Sportsman listed in alphabetical order each counties’ statistics as a series in 1874.³⁰ Along with the match scores and the runs per inning published in the sporting papers, tables also measured the success of bowlers. The Sportsman printed a sample format for club secretaries to follow when they sent their match results and their cricketers’ batting and bowling averages to the paper.³¹ While much of the focus among the public was on county cricket the Sportsman also published results and individual averages for local clubs like the Bolton Club and Ravenscourt Park Club.³² Although no fees

²⁸ “Some Cricket Thoughts,” Sporting Mirror 9 (1885): 212-213.

²⁹ Sportsman, 29 September 1870, 4.

³⁰ See Sportsman, 3 October 1874, 3; 10 October 1874, 3; 29 October 1874, 4. For another example, see Sportsman, 6 September 1883, 4.

³¹ For example, see Sportsman, 29 September 1870, 4.

³² Sportsman, 6 October 1870, 4; 11 October 1870, 3.

appeared in the columns of the Sportsman, surely the paper charged one for this service utilizing the clubs' thirst for recognition to increase their profits and to help promote club cricket.

A few resourceful journalists, recognizing the increasing popularity of the sport among the public and the growing appetite of newspapers for cricket news, formed the Cricket Reporting Agency in 1880. The brothers Charles, Sydney, and E. S. Pardon and some other journalists created a specialized news agency, familiarly known as Pardons, which concentrated on cricket news and later included football and racing. The Pardons were the sons of journalist, editor, and publisher George Pardon, who authored a number of books on sports and pastimes. Charles, who had written on cricket for Bell's Life, left his job as senior sub-editor at the Press Association (PA) in 1880 to establish his cricket service. Three years later the PA appointed him sporting editor, but Pardons continued to supply the PA's sporting news until 1901 when a PA staff member became sporting editor and the Association assumed control over all of its own racing news. Pardons, however, continued to furnish the PA with cricket and football news until 1965 when it merged with the PA.³³ Along with his duties at Pardons, Charles also began editing the Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack in 1887, which Sydney took over when his brother died in 1890. Sydney also served as the cricket reporter for The Times, wrote on racing, and

³³ It is unclear why Pardon did not create a sporting division within the PA, according to George Scott, Reporter Anonymous: The Story of the Press Association (London: Hutchinson, 1968), 122-123, 261.

like other sporting journalists of the era who fancied the stage wrote articles on music and drama for the paper.³⁴

Later press agencies offered distinctive cricket articles written by distinguished journalists and athletes for distribution to interested newspapers. The following was an advertisement for the services of the National Press Agency, Ltd:

We are beginning a splendid series of Cricket Specials on May 25th. The articles will be published in the following order:-

TITLE.				AUTHOR.
The Humors of Cricket	-	-	-	F. Frankfurt Moore.
W. G. Grace, the Doyen of Cricket	-	-	-	A. Gibson.
The Century's Cricket	-	-	-	A. J. Gaston.
Village Cricket	-	-	-	Alfred Shaw.
Bowlers and Bowling	-	-	-	A. E. Trott.
The Romance of Cricket	-	-	-	E. V. Lucas.
From the Spectator's Standpoint	-	-	-	H. W. Massingham.
How to Teach Cricket	-	-	-	A. G. Maclaren.

We issue an Illustrated Cricket Column weekly during the season.³⁵

The first successful journal dealing exclusively with the sport was Cricket, a publishing venture by the multitalented C. W. Alcock. As football first began its national development in the 1860s, Alcock worked as an athletics sub-editor with the Sportsman. He began writing on football while with the Sportsman, as well as contributing to the Field, and in 1867 he became honorary secretary of the newly formed Football Association (FA). In addition to these journalistic duties he also began the Football Annual in 1868 and edited Lillywhite's Cricketers' Annual

³⁴ John Arlott, "Histories," Barclays World of Cricket, 3rd ed. (London: Willow Books, 1986), 626; Benny Green, ed., The Wisden Papers, 1888-1946 (London: Stanley Paul, 1989), 1, 109; Dennis Griffiths, ed., The Encyclopedia of the British Press (London: Macmillan, 1992), 454.

³⁵ The Newspaper Owner and Modern Printer, 9 May 1900, 17.

between 1872-1900. During the summer his cricket journalism appeared in the Sportsman, for whom he was working when, with the support of Surrey County Cricket Club member V. E. Walker, he was appointed secretary of the Surrey County club in 1872 at a salary of £250 a year, a position which he held until his death in 1907. As Surrey secretary he developed the Oval in Kennington, the home of the Surrey CCC, into a staging ground for a variety of sporting events. The Oval hosted the earliest FA Cup Finals, rugby and soccer international matches, as well as other events ranging from lacrosse to athletics to cycling. At the same time he continued his lifelong involvement with the FA, eventually attaining the post of vice-president. Along with his sporting duties and journalism Alcock also found time to serve as Justice of the Peace for the borough of Richmond and the county of Surrey.³⁶

Alcock began Cricket the summer prior to the appearance of another periodical he edited, Football, which he later sold to N. L. Jackson, who changed its title to Pastime. Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game made its debut on Wednesday, May 10, 1882, selling out at 2d. a copy.³⁷ The new periodical filled a need for a paper devoted to the sport, which long had been lacking. As Alcock claimed in the first issue, "it was in response to the expressed wish of the secretaries

³⁶ Benny Green, ed., The Wisden Book of Obituaries: Obituaries from Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 1892-1985 (London: Queen Anne Press, 1986), 6; W. A. Bettesworth, Chats on the Cricket Field (London: Merrit and Hatcher, 1910), 6, 18; N. L. Jackson, Association Football (London: George Newnes, 1899), 144-145; D. A. Robinson, "Sport in Surrey," British Society of Sport History Bulletin 3 (January 1985), 13; and personal correspondence with Keith Booth, who is completing a biography of Alcock.

³⁷ Cricket, 17 May 1882, 20.

of a large number of the principal clubs that the conception of CRICKET was first due.”³⁸ During the season the journal was true to its name publishing the results of not only county cricket, but the outcomes of numerous local cricket clubs each week. The periodical promoted itself as worthy of perusal in its second issue by maintaining “that we can fairly claim to be representative requires no other evidence than the already large number of our subscribers, amongst whom we are proud to own most of the leading cricketers of the day.”³⁹ No doubt Alcock’s connections in the cricketing community, as well as his reputation as a pioneering sportsman, helped to ensure the success of his venture.

Newspapers provided a variety of cricket news to satiate the hunger of readers for the latest, most interesting information. The sporting papers furnished the most extensive reports and comments about the previous day’s play while many morning newspapers also supplied extended coverage. The evening papers offered readers the latest match results and statistics, often up to the close of play. By the 1890s, in the Evening News, “CRICKET CHRONICLES” appeared on page one, with summaries of the day’s play by the metropolitan counties, the MCC, and the ‘Varsities. Often a table of the first-class standings and the batting and bowling averages accompanied the summaries.⁴⁰ Important matches received more prominent attention from the

³⁸ Cricket, 10 May 1882, 6.

³⁹ Cricket, 17 May 1882, 20.

⁴⁰ For example, see Evening News, 28 May 1894, 1.

editors, with larger headlines and longer reports, whether the match was a county match or a test match from Australia. Regular coverage of cricket in the “LATE CRICKET EDITION” consisted of summaries of the important matches played that day and the runs scored by each batsman.⁴¹

Cricket had grown along with its coverage in the press, spreading across the Empire as it had across the pages of the newspaper. In 1898 an English cricket team journeyed to Australia for matches against the colonists. In order to cover the matches the Evening News made extensive preparations designed to give London readers the results as soon as possible. As it explained,

our promise to our readers that THE EVENING NEWS would be the first paper to give the news from the field of play was redeemed to-day. The Second Edition of THE EVENING NEWS was the first and only paper to give the scores at close of play. This we are able to do, thanks to the special and expensive arrangement made by us with Dalziel's Agency, whose message with the close of play reached us over a quarter of an hour ahead of any other source.⁴²

The layout of reports about the England-Australia test match in the Evening News betrays the difficulties in collecting information and reporting on cricket from the antipodes. The coverage began with a summary of the day's play, including a bit of commentary on the contest. A narrative of the play, recounting the batting prowess of the teams, followed the summary. Also included were statistics - the batting scores for each cricketer, a bowling analysis showing wickets taken and runs surrendered by each bowler, and the “FALL OF WICKETS,” recounting the cumulative runs per

⁴¹ Evening News, 2 July 1901, 3.

⁴² Evening News, 1 January 1898, 3.

wicket taken. The reports ended with short items detailing the exploits of individual players and other points of play.⁴³

Journalists sent much of this information, including lunchtime scores, the close of an innings, the close of play, or the conclusion of a match at preferential urgent rates of from 9s. to 10s. 6d. per word. Such a high price cleared the transmission lines of any other information to send the messages as soon as possible. Regular press rates meant that news arrived in Britain ten hours to one day after their transmission, too late for the evening papers. The messages sent were composed according to a complex code - the code used by the Central News included about 70,000 words - to preclude competitors from stealing reports. Reports dispatched at commercial rates could cost upwards of £500; prior to 1900, one source maintained that the Evening News spent £1,400 for reports on a solitary match.⁴⁴

Newspapers offered readers the most up-to-date coverage possible because “there are very few newspaper readers who do not turn to the cricket column first when the morning journal comes; who do not buy a halfpenny evening paper to find out how many runs W.G. [W. G. Grace] or Bobby Abel has made.”⁴⁵ During the late spring and summer months the press capitalized on cricket news to draw readers to its

⁴³ For example, see Evening News, 3 January 1898, 3; 4 January 1898, 3; 5 January 1898, 3.

⁴⁴ Newspaper Owner and Modern Printer, 29 January 1902, 14.

⁴⁵ Prince Ranjitsinhji, “Cricket and the Victorian Era,” Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine 162 (July 1897): 11.

columns, although cricket results did not increase circulation like football results.⁴⁶ By 1913, the editions prepared by the evening papers included lunch scores versions, close of play versions, and special editions when important or stimulating matches had taken place.⁴⁷ Sunday papers also actively promoted their coverage of sport. On the front page, just below its masthead, the News of the World boasted in bold letters that "NO OTHER NEWSPAPER GIVES SO MUCH CRICKET AND SPORT."⁴⁸ Sometimes cricket was even front page news such as during the 1896 Australian tour of England when the English professionals chosen to play at the Oval sought increased compensation for the match.⁴⁹

How did cricket develop into such a sporting commodity? The press's connection to county cricket created the preeminent form of the game among the cricket-going public. Three developments sparked the popular boom experienced by cricket and they encompassed the tensions surrounding the game - the unparalleled career of W. G. Grace, the selection of the champion county by the press, and the growth of international cricket matches between England and Australia. With his batting performances Grace became a celebrity, a "Victorian Hero," whose familiarity

⁴⁶ Circulation Manager, April 1913, 13.

⁴⁷ Circulation Manager, May 1913, 5.

⁴⁸ News of the World, 3 May 1896, 1; 9 August 1896, 1.

⁴⁹ News of the World, 9 August 1896, 1, and see below.

equaled or exceeded that of prime ministers.⁵⁰ No individual has had more of an impact on the game before or since. C. L. R. James has explained that Grace's influence on the game was seminal because "he created the technique of the modern game and he created the arena in which it could thrive. The county clubs and the organization of cricket as a national institution followed in his wake. Of how many Englishmen in the nineteenth century could anything similar be said?"⁵¹ Grace's celebrity coincided with the creation of the championship competition between county clubs by the press. The competition provided a context which fostered a growth in the popularity of cricket as well as publicizing Grace's exploits as his Gloucestershire side battled for the county championship.

The fame of William Gilbert Grace rested upon his peerless performance on the field between 1865, when he first participated with the Gentlemen against the Players, and his retirement in 1908, at the age of sixty. At the end of 1866, when he was a mere 18, Grace, or W. G. as he was known familiarly, had already achieved multiple centuries (scoring 100 runs or more during a match), incredible feats of batting at a time when they were rare accomplishments. In 1869, he made six

⁵⁰ W. F. Mandle, "W. G. Grace as a Victorian Hero," Historical Studies 19 (April 1981): 353-368. Much of the following is based on this article.

⁵¹ C. L. R. James, Beyond a Boundary (London: Stanley Paul, 1963. Reprint, Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 174. Derek Birley, The Willow Wand: Some Cricket Myths Explored (London: Queen Anne Press, 1979), p. 59, has argued that "W. G. is the single most influential figure in the history of cricket."

centuries in first-class matches and was elected to the MCC as a member.⁵² By the next year, he had earned the title of “Cricket Champion” and a column recapping his season because “as an all-around player he has no equal. / None but himself can be his parallel.”⁵³ Newspapers documented Grace’s feats which ensured his fame among followers of cricket who fed their interest in the game with a steady diet of cricket news. In summing up his 1871 season, when he averaged 72.27 on 2,691 runs scored, Bell’s Life asserted “that Mr. W. G. Grace is fully entitled to the highest position on the scroll of cricket fame no one will deny, and as he has youth on his side, there is every probability that he will retain the proud title of England’s Champion Cricketer for many years to come.”⁵⁴ Grace fulfilled this expectation, having scored more runs (54,211 for an average of 39.45) and having attained more centuries (124) in first-class cricket at the end of his playing days than any batsman before him.⁵⁵ After his 1872 season, the judges of cricketing greatness accorded him a special place as he received his own entry, “MR. W. G. GRACE’S INNINGS PLAYED IN 1872,” in Wisden’s Cricketers’ Almanack.⁵⁶ By 1875, Grace already had scored more runs and achieved more centuries than any other cricketer before

⁵² Bernard Darwin, W. G. Grace (London: Duckworth, 1934. Reprint, London: Duckworth, 1978), 36-40.

⁵³ Sportsman, 2 November 1870, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Bell’s Life, 30 September 1871, p. 4.

⁵⁵ http://statserver.cricket.org/link_to_database/STATS/FC/BATTING/FC_BAT_MOST_RUNS.html.

⁵⁶ Wisden’s Cricketers’ Almanack (1873): 199-200.

him. He was a complete player displaying skills as bowler and batsman: and with Grace as their captain Gloucestershire was a threat to defeat any county eleven for parts of five decades. Grace also participated with the Gentlemen's Eleven against the Players in their matches from 1865 on and largely was responsible for the Gentlemen's success during the era.⁵⁷ He also led England against the Australians as the international Test Matches became a centerpiece of the cricket calendar during the 1880s. When Grace passed away in 1915, Sir Home Gordon, a noted cricket journalist, began a project to pay tribute to this incredible cricketer. With the cooperation of the Committee of the MCC, The Memorial Biography of Dr. W. G. Grace was published in 1919. Gordon wrote more than 500 letters and conducted over 100 interviews for the book, which he co-edited with Lord Hawke and Lord Harris.⁵⁸

Throughout his playing days Grace's cricketing prowess filled the columns of the press bringing recognition and interest to the game. In 1871, one paper explained that "there can be no two opinions that an immense amount of the popularity which cricket has attained is owing to the truly great and unprecedented performances of Mr. Gilbert Grace . . ."⁵⁹ Grace recognized the significance of the press to cricket by

⁵⁷ Boyle, 482-483.

⁵⁸ Lord Hawke, Lord Harris and Sir Home Gordon, The Memorial Biography of Dr. W. G. Grace (London: Constable & Company, 1919), v.

⁵⁹ Bell's Life, 30 September 1871, 4. For a similar comment, see Bell's Life, 21 September 1872, 6.

devoting a chapter to it in “W. G.’s” Little Book, in which he argued that “nothing in the world of things that interest the reading public has perhaps a bigger or more consistent public than cricket.”⁶⁰ One example illustrates Grace’s consistent prowess on the field and how the press recorded it. Against Middlesex on 30 May 1895, Grace, although far from his prime at the age of 47, needed 153 runs to reach the formidable feat of scoring 1,000 runs during the month of May. Earlier in the month Grace had achieved “a very remarkable feat,” his hundredth century, scoring one hundred runs in one hundred first-class cricket matches.⁶¹ The Daily Telegraph described the cricket on 30 May as follows: “the day’s play was remarkable for another very fine performance on the part of W. G. Grace, who has in first-class matches scored upwards of 1,000 runs, a feat which has never been accomplished by any batsman in the first month of the season.”⁶² The “very fine performance” by Grace was quite an understatement considering that during the 19th century scoring a century was quite a rare accomplishment and consistently making 1,000 runs in a season unparalleled.⁶³ Perhaps because he played cricket so well for so long, the press and the public expected Grace to eclipse even his own records.

⁶⁰ [W. G. Grace] “W. G.’s” Little Book (London: George Newnes Ltd., 1909), 62.

⁶¹ The Times, 18 May 1895, 14.

⁶² Daily Telegraph, 31 May 1895, 3.

⁶³ Mandle, “Grace,” 355.

The cricketing community arranged a testimonial for “the foremost representative of what is undoubtedly the national game,” with the Daily Telegraph leading the drive the following day, 1 June 1895. A leading article in the paper explained the appeal of such a campaign in superlatives appropriate to such long-term distinction on the field:

it is certainly quite fitting that in a season in which he has so thoroughly vindicated his claim to pre-eminence he should be the recipient of what ought to develop into a national testimonial of an imposing kind. They have taken up the idea warmly at Bristol, and the County club is prepared to head the subscriptions with a hundred-pound cheque. The response of the Marylebone Club, the recognised head of the sport, will be awaited with interest, and they are not likely to be backward in honouring a true sportsman and representative Englishman, by whose extraordinary powers so much lustre has been shed on the game of which they are the chief English exponents. We do not crown our athletes nowadays with the Olympic laurel; but we yield to no race, ancient or modern, in our admiration for thorough undeniable excellence in any game, and for this reason we cordially commend the proposed testimonial to the favourable consideration of the cricketing world.⁶⁴

The following week the paper launched “The Daily Telegraph NATIONAL SHILLING SUBSCRIPTION” with a donation of 2,000 shillings to honor “our English champion batsman.”⁶⁵ It eventually raised £5,281, including a contribution from the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and along with over £4,000 contributed by other subscribers, it secured Grace’s financial future. It is noteworthy that “the first of the Shilling Funds” organized by the Daily Telegraph benefited the cricketer who,

⁶⁴ Daily Telegraph, 1 June 1895, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Daily Telegraph, 8 June 1895, p. 6.

in tandem with the press, had brought cricket a large following among the public.⁶⁶ Even after his retirement in 1908 “the champion” remained a legend of the national game, recognized throughout the Empire.⁶⁷

Grace’s regular participation for the Gloucester CCC, beginning in the 1860s, encouraged competition between county clubs. As early as 1870, the Sporting Life had argued that “county cricket, of course, takes precedence of all other, both with regard to the interest it excites and its own importance.”⁶⁸ The reports of the matches played during the summer between the top county elevens in England were the core of cricket journalism. The sporting press defined the cricket season as the matches played between the county elevens and the MCC. The popularity of county cricket, with the formation of county clubs and their attempts to field representative elevens, had replaced “the old matches against odds” which had dominated cricket during the first half of the 19th century.⁶⁹ Matches for money, however, had not died out completely, as the report of the 1870 Sheffield versus Lascelles Hall contest for £50 a side illustrates.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Lord Burnham, Peterborough Court: The Story of the Daily Telegraph (London: Cassell, 1955), 141; J. Hall Richardson, From the City to Fleet Street (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1927), 160; Mandle, “Grace,” 355; Griffiths, 486–487.

⁶⁷ C. B. Fry, Lloyd’s Weekly News, 26 April 1908, 25.

⁶⁸ Sporting Life, 12 October 1870, 4.

⁶⁹ Bell’s Life, 21 September 1872, 6.

⁷⁰ Sportsman, 21 September 1870, 3.

The conventional view of the county cricket competition dates its beginnings from 1873. During this year a meeting of county secretaries, led by C. W. Alcock of Surrey CCC, established qualification rules for county amateurs and professionals which limited their participation to only one county per season.⁷¹ Such a policy suggests that a contest between the counties existed.⁷² Cricketers could choose to play for either the county of their birth or the county of their residence, as long as they had lived there for two years. Furthermore, they also could choose to play for the county in which their family home was located if it was an occasional residence. These regulations restricted the “mobility” of professional labor between counties while accommodating amateurs. Professionals no longer could sell their labor with the same freedom as before, just as cricket was becoming even more popular as a public amusement.⁷³

During the same year the MCC also had proposed a challenge cup competition for the county clubs, but those clubs which had agreed to the proposal all withdrew

⁷¹ Cricket, 25 October 1894, 417; Athletic News, 8 June 1925, 8; Gordon Ross, A History of Cricket (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1972), 26, cites The MCC Diary's list of champions that begins in 1873; Christopher Brookes, English Cricket: The Game and Its Players Through the Ages (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1978), 120; Sandiford, 59-60; Derek Birley, A Social History of English Cricket (London: Aurum Press, 1999), 119-120.

⁷² Rowland Bowen, “The Early County Champions,” Wisden Cricketers' Almanack (1959): 92.

⁷³ Sissons, 85-86.

except for Kent and Sussex.⁷⁴ With this collapse and no further cooperation between the counties about creating a formal championship, two decades passed before such an official championship became a reality. Due to the lack of leadership and central governance, each county committee independently set up their fixtures and the season had an unorganized flavor, without the character of regularity that followers of sport are familiar with today. The absence of organization and consistency in scheduling resulted in the press emerging as the judge of the champion county. Without a settlement among the counties and the MCC, Bell's Life determined Gloucestershire the 1873 champion county with four wins and two draws while Nottinghamshire placed second with five wins, one loss, and one draw.⁷⁵ Gloucestershire, however, was not a consensus choice among cricket annuals: one chose Nottingham, another picked Gloucestershire, and a third was not clear.

The year 1873, however, was not the first year the press selected a champion county. During the 1860s, according to Rowland Bowen, the four principal cricket annuals, Fred Lillywhite's Guide, John and James Lillywhite's Companion, James Lillywhite's Annual, and Wisden Cricketers' Almanack chose the top team in some years. This was not a consistent feature of the publications each year and in some years the annuals did not agree on the top team. In fact, it was not until 1869 that the John and James Lillywhite's Companion first made use of the designation,

⁷⁴ Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack (1874): 100. As early as 1855, there was an attempt at setting up a knockout competition, according to Christopher Martin-Jenkins, The Wisden Book of County Cricket (London: Queen Anne Press, 1981), 17.

⁷⁵ Bell's Life, 1 November 1873, 5.

“champion.”⁷⁶ In his research Bowen did not consult any of the leading sporting newspapers, but only cricket publications.

As early as 1869 Bell's Life had offered readers a “retrospect of county cricket” which listed all the matches of the respective sides. This description of the season did not include any tables ranking the participating counties.⁷⁷ The following year, however, Bell's Life listed the results of the county cricket season in a more comprehensive manner and included the MCC in its results. Each county and its matches were listed with the results and the grounds where they had competed. Bell's Life also placed the results in “tabular form” according to the number of matches a side had played. Among the county elevens, the newspaper positioned Surrey, which had participated in seventeen matches, winning four and losing thirteen, before Yorkshire, which had six wins and one draw in seven matches. Bell's Life also listed other key matches including the Gentlemen v. Players, Gentlemen of the South v. Players of the South, Gentlemen of the North v. Gentlemen of the South, North v. South, United North v. United South, as well as Eton v. Harrow, and the universities' outcome. Interestingly, there was no determination within the report about which county was champion for 1870.⁷⁸ It must have been obvious to interested followers of cricket at the time that Yorkshire was the champion with six

⁷⁶ Bowen, “The Early County Champions,” 91-98. Also see Bowen, “The Early County Champions: A Postscript,” Wisden Cricketers' Almanack (1960): 992-993.

⁷⁷ Bell's Life, 25 September 1869, 8.

⁷⁸ Bell's Life, 24 September 1870, 3.

wins, no losses, and one draw, as Bell's Life remarked the ensuing spring.⁷⁹ Months earlier, in their surveys of the preceding season Sporting Life and the Sportsman also had selected Yorkshire as the champion county.⁸⁰ So by 1870 the press consciously had begun to choose the champion county.

The Bell's Life "REVIEW OF THE SEASON" for 1871 which follows, took up more than one page of the September 30, 1871 issue of the newspaper:

Table	Won	Lost	Drawn	Total
MCC	18	8	12	38
Surrey	2	12	5	19
Yorkshire	3	3	1	7
Nottinghamshire	5	1	2	8
Middlesex	2	0	1	3
Gloucestershire	3	1	1	5
Kent	2	5	2	9
Sussex	4	1	0	5
Lancashire	3	3	0	6
Derbyshire	1	1	0	2 ⁸¹

Without any formal championship, the self-appointed electors of the champion county, the press, used unsophisticated criteria to decide the champion. The most successful of the counties was oftentimes the county with the least amount of losses against first class competition: "the aspirant to the first place among the counties must not necessarily show an unbeaten record, but must have lost fewer

⁷⁹ Bell's Life, 1 April 1871, 3.

⁸⁰ Sporting Life, 12 October 1870, 4; Sportsman, 4 November 1870, 4.

⁸¹ Bell's Life, 30 September 1871, 4.

matches than any other county.”⁸² The problem with the system was similar to the problem of cricketers’ averages. With different opponents the averages were not an equal measure of a player’s batting prowess.⁸³ Each county arranged its own matches and not every club played the same number of games. Without comparable schedules, the measurement for selecting the best county side was not equal. In 1874 Gloucestershire played only six matches compared to the twelve of Yorkshire. Gloucestershire’s four wins, one loss, and one draw was judged the better outcome over Yorkshire’s eight victories against three losses and one draw.⁸⁴ While Derbyshire had no losses, Bell’s Life placed the county last because “it must be remembered that they have only met Kent and Lancashire, both of whom sent indifferent elevens, and they have played only four county matches.”⁸⁵

This strange system rewarded clubs who played to a draw over those with more victories and, therefore, the county elevens played not to lose. In 1883 Nottinghamshire, with four wins, one loss, and seven draws, won the championship over Yorkshire which had managed nine victories, two losses, and five draws. Nottinghamshire had one win and one draw in its two matches against Yorkshire. The championship was not definitive, however, if the statements by the press about it were any measure. The Times’ qualified observation was that “Nottinghamshire is

⁸² The Times, 31 August 1886, 7.

⁸³ Bell’s Life, 3 October 1874, 6.

⁸⁴ Sporting Life, 16 September 1874, 4; Bell’s Life, 31 October 1874, 5.

⁸⁵ Bell’s Life, 31 October 1874, 5.

generally allowed to be the ‘champion county’ of the year.”⁸⁶ The Sportsman was equally as unenthusiastic with its choice: “as to the much vexed question of champion county, it is pretty well agreed that, despite the fact of Yorkshire possessing a better percentage of wins, Notts can fairly lay claim to the coveted title.”⁸⁷ The Sporting Life offered a similar, if more equivocal judgment of the champion, arguing that

various analyses have already appeared to show the relative positions of the different counties on this year’s form. In most of these the first place, is, and no doubt justly, accorded to the Nottinghamshire Eleven. They were only beaten once, and as no other county can claim such a record, there is a certain amount of reason in awarding the palm to them. At the same time it is difficult to see what superiority, except on the one ground of absolute wins Notts can possibly claim on the record of the year over Yorkshire, and, in fact, there was little, if anything, to choose between the two shires.⁸⁸

Looking back on the championship a decade later, one commentator deemed the method of choosing the champion during the 1870s and 1880s ridiculous and among other judgments “an absurd test, and occasionally most unfair. . . .” especially in 1883.⁸⁹

A similar situation arose three years later as Nottinghamshire won the title of champion by finishing the season with seven wins, seven draws and no losses. Surrey’s record of twelve victories, three defeats, and one draw left it as runner-up

⁸⁶ The Times, 6 September 1883, 4.

⁸⁷ Sportsman, 6 September 1883, 4.

⁸⁸ Sporting Life, 6 September 1883, 4.

⁸⁹ R. S. Holmes, Cricket, 25 October 1894, 419.

behind Nottinghamshire. The press justified the decision with the argument that Nottinghamshire had garnered a victory and a draw in its head-to-head competition versus Surrey.⁹⁰ The only dissent came from the World, which argued that Surrey should be champion over Notts because if draws were counted as half of a victory then Surrey led the counties. In addition, Surrey had defeated the Australian side twice while Notts could muster only two draws against the visitors. This opposing view, interestingly, was reprinted in Cricket, soon after the end of the season.⁹¹

Even with the press coverage concerning the county competition, among some authorities and followers of the game, the championship was an afterthought for many years. The objective of winning was not embraced by all of the press, even as late as 1883. While The Times noted that Nottinghamshire was the champion county of the year, its season-ending report examined the counties in alphabetical order and the accompanying table also listed the clubs in the same order. Such a report downplayed the significance of winning the championship, since the counties were not listed from first to last place.⁹² Even a distinguished record of the game like Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack did not publish a championship table for the cricket

⁹⁰ The Times, 31 August 1886, 7.

⁹¹ Cricket, 28 September 1886, 435.

⁹² The Times, 6 September 1883, 4

season until 1889, and omitted any list of cricket champions dating back to 1873, until its 1911 edition.⁹³

The Times acknowledged the dilemma of choosing the champion county when county schedules were so incongruous, arguing that “the record of county cricket of the season, so far as it has gone exhibits the inconsistencies familiar to those who attempt to draw up an order of merit among several elevens.”⁹⁴ There was no central arrangement for a regular schedule of fixtures, and thus, counties used their own discretion about who to play. As The Times later claimed, it was a “pedantic method of reckoning.”⁹⁵ Another critic believed that using the least amount of losses to decide the county competition was an unfair measure of cricketing excellence.⁹⁶

Meanwhile, county secretaries from Kent, Nottinghamshire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Hampshire, Surrey, Middlesex, Sussex, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Lancashire, Somerset, and Northamptonshire had attempted to draw up rules for county qualification by creating a cricket council in 1887. While the County Cricket Council was formed to address issues concerning county cricket, the regulation of the

⁹³ Ross, 25. Wisden's Cricketers' Almanack printed a list of champions in 1901 and 1907, but it did not include the champions of 1873 and 1874. Bowen, “The Early County Champions,” 93.

⁹⁴ The Times, 16 July 1886, 9.

⁹⁵ The Times, 30 August 1888, 7.

⁹⁶ R. S. Holmes, The County Cricket Championship 1873 to 1896. Arrowsmith's Bristol Library, vol. 72 (Bristol: Arrowsmith, n.d.), 12.

game was to remain in the hands of the committee of the MCC.⁹⁷ At its December meeting, the new council elected Lord Harris chairman and discussed some possible rules changes. Some believed that such a discussion trod upon the domain of the MCC, which the council had agreed not to do, a point noted by Captain W. E. Denison, president of the Nottingham County Club at the council's next meeting in February 1888.⁹⁸ At the same meeting the council passed a resolution supporting the prohibition of the batter obstructing the wicket with his body. Although it sanctioned the resolution eleven counties to three, with three abstentions, the body never resolved the question of its purpose: Was it formed to legislate for county cricket, or simply set up guidelines for the county championship? Nottingham argued that the MCC was the only ruling body for cricket and preferred to abstain from voting for any rules changes.⁹⁹ Because of the outstanding issue of governance over the county competition the council accomplished little of substance.

By 1889 the counties recognized as first class were Nottinghamshire, Lancashire, Surrey, Middlesex, Gloucestershire, Sussex, Kent, and Yorkshire. The championship had achieved a consistency by this time as the counties played a more equal, regularized schedule; however, it still lacked any official status since the press

⁹⁷ The Times, 13 July 1887, 12.

⁹⁸ The Times, 6 December 1887, 10; Sportsman, 6 December 1887, 3; The Times, 9 February 1888, 7.

⁹⁹ The Times, 9 February 1888, 7.

continued to choose the champion.¹⁰⁰ After Lancashire, Nottinghamshire, and Surrey ended the 1889 season in a three-way tie, the first-class counties met in private at the end of 1889 and decided to count only victories over defeats and to ignore draws in ascertaining the champion county.¹⁰¹ Now the competition had a formal scheme for determining the champion based upon victories. At a meeting of the County Cricket Council the day before, representatives of the counties also had created a committee to explore a scheme for officially classifying the counties, including those not generally considered first class, and to develop a method for promotion of the best counties.¹⁰²

The committee of the County Cricket Council met in August 1890 to arrange a system of classification for the counties which was to govern the 1891 season. The committee proposed three classes of county clubs labeled first, second, and third, with the first-class counties meeting in home and home matches with at least six other first-class counties. The committee also decided that the “order of merit” would be calculated by subtracting a county’s defeats from its victories and ignoring the drawn games. Beginning in 1892, according to the proposal, counties at the top and bottom

¹⁰⁰ For example, see the mid-summer table in the Athletic News, 8 July 1889, 1.

¹⁰¹ The Times, 11 December 1889, 11; Martin-Jenkins, 26.

¹⁰² The Times, 10 December 1889, 12; Sportsman, 10 December 1889, 3; and also see Sportsman, 9 December 1889, 3, for the agenda of the 9 December meeting.

of the classifications would meet in home and home matches to determine promotion and relegation.¹⁰³

At the annual general meeting of the County Cricket Council, with delegates from most of the counties present, the plan fell apart. Some delegates questioned the legality of the August meeting, while others claimed that formal classification by the council would discriminate against the second-class counties and force them to play “compulsory matches” with their peers to retain that classification. Rather than agreeing to a formal arrangement for classification and competition among the counties the council abandoned the meeting without considering the plan.¹⁰⁴ The break-up of the meeting rescued individual county clubs from their fear that second-class status and relegation might harm their reputation, success, and profits.¹⁰⁵

By 1894, however, Yorkshire was lobbying for a new classification system and the reappearance of the County Cricket Council, which had last met in 1890.¹⁰⁶ A Baily's Magazine article in November 1893 had sparked renewed interest in the question of the cricket championship and the classification of the counties. First-class cricket had failed to expand and include more counties during the 1880s even as cricket had become more popular among the public; “and yet each year the cricket

¹⁰³ The Times, 13 August 1890, 6.

¹⁰⁴ The Times, 9 December 1890, 7.

¹⁰⁵ J. A. Schofield, “The Development of First-Class Cricket in England: An Economic Analysis,” Journal of Industrial Economics 30 (1982): 357.

¹⁰⁶ The Times, 23 March 1894, 10.

annuals increase in bulk, and the sporting dailies enlarge their sheets, which are filled to a very great extent by reports of county matches . . .” Clubs which deserved first-class status were at a disadvantage because they did not draw larger crowds like the first-class clubs.¹⁰⁷ The debate continued in the December 1893 and January 1894 issues of Baily's with letters from prominent individuals in the cricketing community, including “F. G.” who presumably was cricket journalist Frederick Gale, as well as E. M. Grace of the Gloucestershire cricketing Graces, and R. D. Mallett, Honourary Secretary of the Durham County Cricket Club.

The captain and patron of the Yorkshire club, Lord Hawke, sought to widen the principal competition in 1894 by including Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Leicestershire, Essex, and Hampshire among the first-class counties.¹⁰⁸ Supporters of this view felt that the terms “second class” and “minor” as references for those clubs not considered first class had become a degrading description. After all, according to this argument, “the Marylebone Club do not recognize classification, and all counties are equal in their eyes.” Classification and the county championship was “all false colour and tinsel” and one critic suggested that teams who differed over the championship and the classification simply should cease playing each other.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ “Cricket. A Suggestion for the Counties,” Baily's Magazine 60 (1893): 320-321.

¹⁰⁸ The Times, 15 January 1894, 7.

¹⁰⁹ See the letter signed “F. G.,” The Times, 16 January 1894, 5. “F.G.” was in all likelihood the cricket journalist Frederick Gale. The Times, 24 March 1894, 4.

At the end of the 1894 season the classification remained under fire because of problems associated with the first-class counties playing second-class counties, who many believed were deserving of the top classification.¹¹⁰ Support for change found an ally in the MCC, which developed rules for a new championship competition for the 1895 season. The changes included increasing the first-class counties to fourteen with the inclusion of Hampshire, Essex, Leicestershire, Derbyshire, and Warwickshire, as well as setting the minimum number of matches at eight home and home encounters with other first-class counties. The MCC also developed a new policy for choosing the champion county by awarding 1 point for each victory, subtracting 1 point for each loss, and not counting unfinished matches. The champion would be the county with the most points in completed matches. Now the counties had the equivalent of cricket's official stamp of approval, the blessing of the MCC, and the championship entered a new stage in which the press was no longer the arbiter of the championship.¹¹¹ This new stage soon included Essex, Derbyshire, Hampshire, Leicestershire, Somerset, and Warwickshire which all were competing for the championship by 1896.¹¹²

At the turn of the century, while there remained some argument, the popular press recognized the magnitude of the competition in attracting a public following for

¹¹⁰ The Times, 14 September 1894, 5.

¹¹¹ Cricketer, 25 October 1894, 419; The Times, 12 December 1894, 7; Ross, 28, 34.

¹¹² Athletic News, 10 August 1896, 1.

the game.¹¹³ With the publicity and promotion of the county championship provided by the press, the battle among the counties grew increasingly popular before 1914. As the Sporting Life observed, “with the passing of the years first-class cricket has come almost entirely to mean county cricket.”¹¹⁴ The daily publication of cricket news and the promotion of the competition embodied in the county championship brought increased interest to the game.

While the county championship dominated the press coverage of cricket and attracted the public’s attention during the 1870s, another competition began to draw interest from both the press and the public in the 1880s. The international matches which pitted England against Australia became significant events on the cricket calendar during the 1880s, leading The Times to conclude in 1886 that “during recent years the fires of county cricket have somewhat paled before the interest with which the fortunes of the Australian teams are followed.”¹¹⁵ Such a fascination was multiplied in 1896 when five professional cricketers from England sought more compensation for their participation in the last test match against Australia.

Most historians of cricket have viewed the 1896 incident as an insignificant example of the inequality which affected the game at the time, and continued to plague it for another 65 years. At the time, however, a press headline screamed “THE

¹¹³ Daily Mail, 14 July 1900, 6.

¹¹⁴ Sporting Life, 2 July 1908, 7.

¹¹⁵ The Times, 31 August 1886, 7.

CRICKETERS' STRIKE.” and a journalist contended that “future historians of our national game will have difficulty in pointing out an incident equally sensational in character to that which was recorded in our columns on Saturday.”¹¹⁶ While the professional cricketers in question did not refuse to play, the episode and its coverage in the press offers an illuminating glimpse at the contradictions and hypocrisy that had long existed within cricket. Even as the press presented cricket as a national symbol which promoted mutual understanding among the classes that played the game, the reality of social relations illustrated the mythical nature of such a view.

The first overseas tours by cricket teams were run privately, as for many years were the test matches between England and Australia. International cricket began in 1859 with an English tour of Canada and continued in the 1860s with tours to Australia.¹¹⁷ Other noteworthy competitions included a tour of Britain by a team of Aborigines in 1868, an English tour of Canada in 1871-1872, and a W. G. Grace-led English expedition to Australia in 1873-1874. An all-professional team led by James Lillywhite of Sussex traveled to Australia in 1876-1877 and played a combined Victoria and New South Wales eleven at the end of the tour. This match, won by the

¹¹⁶ The headline was from the Star, 8 August 1896, 2; Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 8.

¹¹⁷ Ronald Mason, “W. G. Grace and His Times, 1865-1899,” Barclays World of Cricket, 15; Sandiford, 62.

Australians, gave birth to the expression “test” as a description of the contests between England and Australia.¹¹⁸

Before the MCC took over the test matches in 1898, and the overseas tours in 1902-1903, each club which hosted a match was responsible for selecting the eleven to play and received the profits from the match. After the MCC began its administration of these matches the first-class and minor counties received the profits distributed by the MCC. The MCC later also included the universities and the combined services in this arrangement.¹¹⁹

Cricket versus Australia proved a catalyst to popular interest the game as the semi-annual meetings became more and more competitive. Test matches gained new significance in 1882, when Australia defeated an English side. The defeat gave birth to one of the great inventions in the history of sporting lore, the “Ashes.” A few days after the Australian victory, the Sporting Times published an unassuming obituary hidden amongst the gossip in its columns that read

In Affectionate Remembrance
of
ENGLISH CRICKET,
WHICH DIED AT THE OVAL
ON
29th AUGUST, 1882,
Deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing
friends and acquaintances.
R. I. P
N.B. - The body will be cremated and the

¹¹⁸ Birley, Social History, 122-123.

¹¹⁹ Schofield, 341.

ashes taken to Australia.¹²⁰

All the meetings between Australia and England which followed this 1882 outcome became contests for possession of the “Ashes.”

These contests meant much more than just who was the greatest cricketing power; they celebrated the shared culture of the British Empire. Nationalism pervaded the literature of cricket, especially when it addressed the international tours. The touring sides exposed the colonies to the art of cricket, just as the older All-England Eleven had taken the game to the rural outposts of Britain. Proponents of competition between sides from the colonies and Britain believed it would bolster the associations between the two. Cricket had conquered Britain and now it must explore new lands as Bell's Life argued in 1872: “the missionaries of cricket must seek their heathen on foreign shores; our own pagans are all clothed (in flannels), and in their right minds.”¹²¹

Cricket became the bond uniting the Mother country and its far flung colony, Australia. This was merely the logical extension of the education cricket provided to students at home; now it would enlighten students, colonists and natives, abroad. Just as the test match had begun to capture the public imagination in England G. R. C. Harris rhetorically asked, “Can the historian ignore what cricket has done towards bringing together the mother country and her Australian colonies? We think not, and therefore we think ourselves justified in calling it a remarkable game, perhaps the

¹²⁰ Sporting Times, 2 September 1882, 5.

¹²¹ Bell's Life, 21 September 1872, 6.

most remarkable the world has ever seen.” Such a belief became the accepted view as cricket became linked to the support of the empire.¹²²

One myth in the cricket pantheon was that of the social peace the game fostered. Cricket cultivated an image of egalitarianism among participants on the field, while, off the field, the social elite of the MCC and the county clubs remained in firm control of the game. Cricket’s propagandists praised the game’s cross-class appeal, which was unlike other sports: “we play neither bowls nor quoits but with our equals. But cricket unites us all: brings to the field all professions, ages, tempers, sizes, and degrees of skill.” While some newspapers repeated such beliefs throughout the decades before 1914 they ignored the class snobbery inherent in the institutions of a game which appealed to many sections of the public. The Field explained the “advantages of cricket” and the social interaction it promoted with condescending clarity in 1863, as it argued,

there are no classes of our working population more well conducted, more temperate, more cognisant of the mutual obligations of society, than our professional cricketers. Is it not that their constant communication with men higher in the social scale than themselves teaches them to estimate the English gentleman at his proper value? without jealousy, without that feeling of unapproachable distance on the one hand, or of impertinent familiarity on the other, which distinguishes so often the uneducated in his intercourse with the higher classes.¹²³

¹²² Harris, “Cricket,” Contemporary Review 48 (1885): 122.

¹²³ Field, 17 October 1863, 381.

In this vision of the cricket world, as cricketers interacted with each other, the amateurs had a leavening effect on the roughness of the professionals and the game itself helped to reconcile the classes. Twenty years later this perspective about “incorruptible” amateurs and their effect on professionals had not changed: “it must be remembered that cricket brings them [professionals] into association with men of the best manners and, above all, of unimpeachable character, whose traditions of the game, brought from school or college, make unfairness or even sharp practice as impossible to them as cheating at cards.”¹²⁴ Social distinctions on the cricket field disappeared as all cricketers were equal during the play and such a view endured far into the twentieth century. All was not equal on the field, however, as the Gentlemen were judged superior cricketers to the Players.¹²⁵ All was not equal in the columns of The Times either, as the paper published separate amateur and professional batting and bowling averages, with the amateurs’ statistics placed above those of the professionals.¹²⁶ The paper also argued that “there is no doubt that in elevens where the majority of the players are amateurs the cricket is much more interesting than when it is the other way.”¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Saturday Review, 14 July 1883, 48.

¹²⁵ The Times, 16 July 1883, 9.

¹²⁶ The Times, 19 September 1889, 5.

¹²⁷ The Times, 24 March 1894, 4.

A chief virtue of the game was that the equality on the field seemed to alleviate the inequality off the field. In 1913, J. B. Hobbs echoed a similar sentiment concerning the ideals of the game, explaining that

I sometimes think that this spirit of cricket, this ideal of sinking rank and position to accomplish a definite purpose by united and harmonious action, is the very marrow of our race, the more so as it is so well understood that when the game is over, the part is played, and life sinks back - I had almost written 'down' - to its ordinary routine.¹²⁸

Reality, however, was not so sentimental and nowhere was this more evident than in the action taken by some of the professionals during the 1896 test matches between England and Australia.

The third test match of the Australian tour of 1896 was scheduled to begin at the Oval in London on 10 August 1896. England and Australia ended their first two meetings of 1896 with one victory apiece. A week prior to the third test match five professionals, Bobby Abel, George Lohmann, Tom Richardson, and Tom Hayward who played for Surrey and William Gunn who played for Notts, sent a letter to the Surrey CCC committee, which had chosen them to play for the English eleven in the match at the Oval. The letter read, ““ we the following players having been asked to represent England v Australia on 10 August and two following days do hereby take the liberty to ask for increased terms viz. twenty pounds. The importance of such fixture entitles us to make this demand.”” After a follow-up letter from George Lohmann to the Surrey committee, the latter rejected the “demand” of the five

¹²⁸ J. B. Hobbs, “The Compensations of Cricket,” Badminton Magazine 36 (1913): 698.

professionals. Instead it offered the four Surrey professionals £10 plus expenses and left William Gunn out of the new proposal. In a special committee meeting on 10 August, just prior to the start of the match, three of the Surrey players agreed to the terms while Lohmann sought to discuss the situation with Gunn and was left off the English roster.¹²⁹

The effort by the “strikers” to improve their compensation collapsed, according to Sissons, because the entire professional cricketing community was not united. The list of professionals invited to participate in the third test match included Bobby Peel, John Hearne, Arthur Pougher, Arthur Lilley, George Hirst, and Arthur Mold.¹³⁰ Peel and Lilley were original selections who had not signed the letter to the Surrey committee. Without the support of Peel and Lilley, and with the possible selection of the other professionals, Hearne, Pougher, Hirst, and Mold, the five “strikers” had no bargaining leverage.¹³¹

A few days after the story broke, the professionals maintained that they had “asked” the Surrey committee for the increased fee in a “request,” not the “written demand” alleged by The Times.¹³² Abel, Lohmann, Richardson, and Hayward claimed that the committee had notified them of their selection to the English eleven

¹²⁹ Sissons, 178-180. The letter is quoted in Sissons, 178.

¹³⁰ The Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 8, lists these professionals as possible selections for the English team.

¹³¹ Sissons, 180.

¹³² The Times, 8 August 1896, 11.

on August 1 and two days later the professionals sent their letter to the committee. It was not an “eleventh hour” demand since they made the request after they had been chosen, a full week before the test match at the Oval. They also had asked for more money for the earlier test match at Lord’s and their request for expenses for the match at Manchester had not been rejected.¹³³

Professional cricketers lacked job security and regular income, unless they played in matches. They generally received £5 for first-class county matches, out of which they paid their own railway fares, cab fares, and hotel expenses for up to three days. The professionals also had to maintain their own cricketing equipment and often their net income for their services was about £2. Professionals engaged by most counties received pay only for the matches in which they participated and when the cricket season ended they had to seek other employment.¹³⁴ The possible rewards for this variety of piece work performed by professional cricketers included: the esteem of playing for their county; perhaps representing their country in test matches if they were chosen to play; and, for the fortunate few, the delayed gift of a benefit match bestowed by their county club. Toward the end of their county playing careers, many professionals looked forward to a benefit match, when the cricketer received the net amount of the gate receipts, after match expenses. The beneficiary, however, had to count on fair weather and the whim of the paying multitude, as K. A. P. Sandiford has illustrated in his analysis of benefit matches. The totals from benefit

¹³³ Evening News, 12 August 1896, 3.

¹³⁴ Star, 8 August 1896; 11 August 1896, 3.

matches were “unpredictable,” “unfair,” “unreliable,” and “offered too little security” for professionals, as Sandiford has judged them.¹³⁵

Just prior to the third test match in 1896, Surrey CCC gave Lohmann, one of the Surrey professionals asking for increased payment for the test match, a benefit match. Lohmann’s part in the test match controversy elicited astonishment from some observers. The three day benefit match (30, 31 July and 1 August) between Surrey and Yorkshire had drawn an attendance of about 33,000.¹³⁶ The Chronicle had reported, however, that Lohmann’s proceeds failed to include the earnings from the stands and he was responsible for reimbursing the expenses of the team when it traveled to Yorkshire to play.¹³⁷ On the same day the benefit match began, Cricket featured Lohmann in W. A. Bettesworth’s “Chats on the Cricket Field” column.¹³⁸

Over the weekend of 8-9 August the four Surrey professionals made clear their intention to play for the England eleven if the Surrey committee still wanted them. The Surrey committee had refused the increased payment for the match, but had offered them £10 and their expenses. Even while arguing that the professionals had displayed a “lack of gratitude” toward the generous Surrey CCC, The Times believed that they should be included in the eleven because of the wet conditions.

¹³⁵ Sandiford, 88-102.

¹³⁶ Cricket, 6 August 1896, 332.

¹³⁷ Cited in the Star, 8 August 1896.

¹³⁸ Cricket, 30 July 1896, 313-314.

The soft turf meant that strong batting was required for victory and the English side needed Richardson for his bowling.¹³⁹

The Surrey committee eventually decided to include Abel, Hayward, Peel, and Richardson on the English side. Although rain marred the test match by delaying its start on the first day and softening the wicket to the detriment of the batters, it was a “memorable match.” With the lack of a “true” wicket, run-scoring was low, with England totaling 229 runs to the 163 runs of Australia. A glance at the column of runs scored revealed that most batsmen only achieved single-digit scores. By comparison, in a simultaneous county match Derbyshire had gathered 577 runs in just its first innings against Lancashire.¹⁴⁰

Even as a popular hero, the press exposed W. G. Grace’s position as a “shamateur” during the strike. In its Monday issue, the Star reported a rumor that Grace had threatened not to play that afternoon (the first day of the match) after seeing the Morning Leader that morning.¹⁴¹ Grace had read some “irresponsible statements” in that paper and his unease at the comments over amateur expenses caused considerable consternation. What had him so upset? The Morning Leader, while critical of the timing of the professionals’ action, explained the inequity of English cricket:

¹³⁹ The Times, 11 August 1896, 9; 10 August 1896, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Morning Leader, 13 August 1896, 10.

¹⁴¹ Star, 10 August 1896, 3.

Making allowance for the ill-timed protest of the dissentient cricketers, who is the greatest sinner - this professional or this (so-called) amateur? According to the strikers the amateurs, or rather those gentlemen whose names are prefixed by the respectable "Mr." on the card of the match, are receiving in the shape of expenses a considerable sum of money over and above the amount the professionals demand.¹⁴²

Rumors long had been rife that amateurs received more money in expenses than professionals received in match fees, whether for a county match or for a test match. When Lord Sheffield's squad had toured Australia it had been reported, and never denied, that as a member of the side Grace had received £2,000 plus expenses for his participation.¹⁴³ Historian W. F. Mandle has listed Grace's earnings at £3,000 plus expenses for himself, his wife, and his two children to accompany him on the Australian tour of 1891-1892. He also received between £20 and £36 per match during the 1880s and 1890s to help him pay for the substitute physician while he was playing cricket.¹⁴⁴ On top of this state of affairs was the fact that the Australians sought to "make money" from their tour of England. These statements sparked a debate in the pages of the Star about Grace's medical practice and his cricketing. Correspondents took issue with the paper's comments on Grace's expenses, arguing that he had to pay for a substitute doctor while he was out cricketing. Grace received

¹⁴² Morning Leader, 10 August 1896, 10.

¹⁴³ Star, 10 August 1896, 3; Morning Leader, 11 August 1896, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Mandle, "Grace," 360.

£10 for an ordinary county match in expenses so he could pay for his replacement while professionals received £5 a match.

The Surrey committee, however, convinced Grace to captain England in the match.¹⁴⁵ All Grace needed to do was to deny that he received more than the professionals. Later in the day the Surrey committee supported the amateur cricketers, especially Grace, by claiming in a statement to the press that the “Champion” had received only £10 per match for his expenses over his three days in London playing in the Gentlemen vs. Players matches and the England vs. Australia matches. The statement appeared in the Star, and in The Times and the Morning Leader the following day.¹⁴⁶ It seemed to the incisive journalist for the Star that the positions of Grace and the professionals were equivalent: “Why then should men like Gunn and Lohmann be called professionals, and have to keep to the professional quarters, while Dr. Grace is allowed to associate with the amateurs and rank as their premier representative?” The journalist for the Star also claimed that Grace would have been far more popular if “he played entirely for the love of the game” and did not receive any extra expenses beyond that of his travel and maintenance while he played.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ The Times, 11 August 1896, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Star, 10 August 1896, 3; The Times, 11 August 1896, 9; Morning Leader, 11 August 1896, 10.

¹⁴⁷ Star, 10 August 1896, 3.

The radical Star and its sibling, the Morning Leader, sympathized with the professionals and their attempt to collect more money for their participation in the test match. In its columns, the Star quoted an anonymous authority on county cricket, who noted the hypocrisy of the payment framework of cricket in which amateurs made more money in expenses than professionals made in wages. The professionals, according to this expert, were the cricketers whose labor helped to create the game's popularity. Not surprisingly, due to its radical political background, the Star's article also exposed other class distinctions which ruled the cricket grounds of England throughout the Victorian period and well into the 20th century. The grounds kept the masses separated from the classes with their members' pavilions and grandstands, which charged different prices for admission. Professional and amateur cricketers entered the grounds through different entrances, used exclusive dressing rooms, and traveled and ate separately. At Lord's and the Oval there were places "Where the 'Pro' is Barred," as the Star explained it in a crossheading.¹⁴⁸ The paper also offered synopses of opinions from the press, from prominent characters in the story such as Alcock and Abel, as well as opinions from the public in the form of letters from the editor. It presented "FACTS AND FIGURES UPON WHICH THE MAN IN THE STREET MAY FORM HIS OWN OPINION."¹⁴⁹

The press was unanimous in its appraisal of public opinion concerning the situation. According to the Star's journalist, on the first day of the test match, public

¹⁴⁸ See Sissons, 167-169, for further examples illustrating the differences between professionals and amateurs.

¹⁴⁹ Star, 8 August 1896.

opinion at the Oval supported the professionals “who are a hardworking, respectable body of men and are not sufficiently remunerated.” He also claimed that amateurs received in expenses five times the amount paid to professionals.¹⁵⁰ Earlier in the day, the Morning Leader claimed the professionals had the sympathy of the public as well.¹⁵¹ These radical papers were not alone in their support for the professionals’ position. Both the Daily Telegraph and the Alfred Harmsworth-owned Evening News published statements from the professionals describing their actions.¹⁵² Spectators at the Oval showed abundant appreciation for the professionals during the course of the match, as the Daily Telegraph observed. “When the stumps were drawn at 6.30 p. m. [on the second day of the match] some thousands of the visitors flocked around the professionals’ entrance to the Pavilion, and called again and again for Abel, who, in the second innings of his side, had scored 21 before being dismissed.”¹⁵³ The Evening News’s sporting columnist also hinted that popular opinion endorsed the claims of the professionals. “Milo” explained that “there is a good deal of feeling as far as the cricket question is concerned, and this is accentuated

¹⁵⁰ Star, 10 August 1896, 3.

¹⁵¹ Morning Leader, 10 August 1896, 10.

¹⁵² Daily Telegraph, 12 August 1896, 8; Evening News, 12 August 1896, 3.

¹⁵³ Daily Telegraph, 12 August 1896, 8; and also see the Daily Telegraph, 13 August 1896, 4.

by the fact of an attempt being made to keep the professionals in their places. as it is termed.”¹⁵⁴

More than one newspaper criticized the actions of the professionals, although a few believed the cricketers’ cause was just. Prior to Abel, Richardson, and Hayward agreeing to play for the original sum of money, “Tityrus,” who also edited the Athletic News, contended in the Manchester-based newspaper the Sunday Chronicle on August 9 that the professionals should have requested more money prior to the first test match, before their actions could have disrupted the series. Without these players England could not field its best eleven. At the same time, however, he condemned the appeals to patriotism invoked by some cricket partisans, asserting that “if the Mother Country wants to win, let her pay the proper price for victory.”¹⁵⁵ Two other journalists, in side-by-side columns, in the Morning Leader, had identical views that the professionals’ plea for further remuneration was ill-timed because the Australian - England rematch was “the most important match of the year.”¹⁵⁶ On the same day, the Daily Telegraph echoed this perspective in a leading article, arguing that “nothing could have been more unfortunate and ill-timed.”¹⁵⁷ Even Wisden’s Cricketers’ Almanack believed the professionals’ cause was just because the

¹⁵⁴ Evening News, 12 August 1896, 3.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in the Morning Leader, 10 August 1896, 10.

¹⁵⁶ Morning Leader, 10 August 1896, 10.

¹⁵⁷ Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 7.

popularity of the test matches was lucrative; their action, however, was inappropriate.¹⁵⁸

While public sentiment might have favored the players, there was plenty of criticism in the press at the alleged unpatriotic nature of the professionals' action. As the chosen representatives of England their behavior and its timing seemed to put their country's chances of success against Australia at risk. Some maintained that this action was lamentable and illustrated "an utter lack of patriotism."¹⁵⁹ In principle the professionals should have received more compensation, but their maneuver was wrong, leading one newspaper to call it "a species of blackmail."¹⁶⁰ The Times recognized the need to address the players' concerns over their payments, but "loyalty to the Surrey Club and patriotism for English cricket should have been a sufficient incentive to the players to have practised self-denial a while longer." [emphasis added]¹⁶¹ After all, as lovers of cricket, "we are all concerned in keeping intact the reputation of the national game," as the Daily Telegraph maintained.¹⁶² The professionals should have sacrificed their livelihood for the sake of English cricket.

¹⁵⁸ Green, Wisden Papers, 77.

¹⁵⁹ Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Sportsman, 8 August 1896, 4, 10.

¹⁶¹ The Times, 10 August 1896, 11.

¹⁶² Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 7.

which was under attack at the Oval by the Australians.¹⁶³ Besides, by representing England professionals enhanced their chances for a benefit match and later monetary gain.¹⁶⁴ Even a newspaper like the Morning Leader, which sympathized with the professionals and their goal, was relieved by the success of the English eleven. As it proudly proclaimed in a leading article, "it is all over. England stands where she did, supreme in the world of cricket."¹⁶⁵

The professionals had impugned English cricket with their job action in 1896. If this incident did not illustrate the significance of cricket twelve years later the Oval was in the headlines for an off the field incident. Suffragettes used a cricket match at the Oval to advocate their cause. While the Evening News admired their determination, it declared their action "NOT CRICKET!" in a leading article. The suffragettes, in bringing their protest about the electoral system onto the cricket field, were condemned for their colossal breach of etiquette:

Let the Suffragettes attack the lesser institutions - the residences of Ministers, the metropolitan police courts, even the House of Commons itself - but let them beware how they invade upon an English cricket field.

When the Suffragettes can stop a hot stroke and hold it, when they can hit all round the wicket, when off and leg breaks are to them simple matters of daily life, it may even be another matter.

But for the present, ladies, hands off cricket!¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ The Times, 11 August 1896, 9.

¹⁶⁴ Daily Telegraph, 10 August 1896, 7.

¹⁶⁵ Morning Leader, 13 August 1896, 6.

¹⁶⁶ Evening News, 17 July 1908, 2.

By exploiting a national symbol, the Suffragettes had accomplished at least one of their goals, they had brought plenty of attention to their cause.

With its lengthy pedigree as a national game, cricket garnered increasing space in the columns of newspapers and captured the imagination of the public during the sixty years prior to 1914. Newspapers were an essential element in the re-creation of cricket as it developed into a national game, replete with individual and team champions. In a leading article reviewing England's victory over Australia in the 1896 rubber match, the Morning Leader acclaimed the significance of cricket in English life: "if that individual so dear to journalists, the intelligent foreigner, were to glance at our newspapers just now, he must come to the conclusion that the real business of this nation is cricket. What else has occupied the attention of men during the last three days?"¹⁶⁷ The action on and off the field at the Oval in August 1896 exposed the tension within a game built upon social distinctions. The press had shaped the controversy surrounding the match and the debate over cricket's inequalities, just as it had fashioned the game itself, in print, throughout the nineteenth century.

¹⁶⁷ Morning Leader, 13 August 1896, 6.

CHAPTER 6

“THE GREATEST ATHLETIC CONTEST IN HISTORY”:¹ THE 1908 LONDON OLYMPIC GAMES AND THE PRESS

The modern Olympic Games, first celebrated in Athens in 1896, have become a showcase of a country's financial, organizational, and sporting prowess. This facet of the games was clear as early as the 1908 Olympiad held in London. In less than two years the British Olympic Council (BOC) arranged a competition for over 2,000 athletes from twenty-two countries without any government aid.² In the general histories of the Olympic Games, the standard theme of the London Games of 1908 has centered on the rivalry between the American and British teams.³ During the course of the London Games, the row in the stadium between the British and the Americans over the rules of competition filled the sports columns of the press. For the Edwardian press, as well as for the media in other participating states, particularly

¹ Daily Mail, “Olympic Games Supplement” (hereafter “OGS”), 13 July 1908.

² Arnd Krüger, “The Unfinished Symphony: a History of the Olympic Games from Coubertin to Samaranch,” in The International Politics of Sport in the 20th Century, eds. Jim Riordan and Arnd Krüger (London: E. and F.N. Spon, 1999), 8-9.

³ William O. Johnson, All That Glitters Is Not Gold: The Olympic Game (New York: Putnam, 1972), 127-130; John Kiernan and Arthur Daley, The Story of the Olympic Games 776 BC to 1972, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1973), 63-73; John Lucas, The Modern Olympic Games (South Brunswick: A. S. Barnes, 1980), 56-63; Allen Guttman, The Olympics, a History of the Modern Games (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1992), 28-32.

the United States, the games provided a national test of sporting achievement which reflected a nation's power in the world.⁴

For the purposes of the 1908 Olympics and beyond, the national team was British, inclusive of all the nations that made up the United Kingdom - England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland. While the international association and rugby football competitions among the nations of the United Kingdom led to Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England seeking to field their own teams at the Olympics, the British Olympic Association (BOA) was successful in ensuring the participation of a national British squad.⁵ Such a squad reflected the primacy of the diplomatic, military, and imperial missions of the British nation-state during the period.⁶ At the heart of this British state was England and as the newspaper evidence explored below illustrates the terms Britain and England, and British and English often were used interchangeably.⁷ The dominions, Canada, South Africa, and Australasia, on the periphery, sent their own Olympic teams.

⁴ George R. Matthews, "The Controversial Olympic Games of 1908 as Viewed by the New York Times and the Times of London," Journal of Sport History 7 (Summer 1980): 40-53.

⁵ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, "OGS."

⁶ Raphael Samuel, "Preface," to Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, vol. 1, History and Politics, ed. Raphael Samuel (New York: Routledge, 1989), xii.

⁷ Richard Holt, Sport and the British (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 262.

In the historiography of the Edwardian period the 1908 Olympic Games receive scant mention which is puzzling considering the symbolism they offered to Britain and the world. Only John Arlott's contribution on sport to a forty-year old collection of essays which surveyed the period refers to the games.⁸ If newspaper coverage is any indication these games were important to British society and their reports helped to shape the meaning of the games. The Olympic movement sought to promote cooperation and understanding by bringing diverse athletes together to compete against one another. The leader of the Olympic movement, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, designed the games to bring nations together in friendly competition, to provide interaction between diverse peoples, and to extol the differences between them.⁹ Newspaper coverage focused on this outlook prior to the 1908 Games, celebrating the "internationalism" the twenty-one nation competition encouraged.¹⁰ Such ideals and the cooperation they sought to foster were designed to counter the chauvinistic nationalism of the age, but the attempts proved futile.

⁸ John Arlott, "Sport," Edwardian England 1901-1914, ed. Simon Nowell-Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 447-487; R. C. K. Ensor, England 1870-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936); Peter Clarke, Hope and Glory: Britain 1900-1990 (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane Penguin Press, 1996).

⁹ John J. MacAloon, This Great Symbol: Pierre de Coubertin and the Origins of the Modern Olympic Games (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 188-189.

¹⁰ Evening News, 10 July 1908.

Britain's preeminent economic and military position in the world had come under pressure at the end of the nineteenth century. For some this was evidence of national decline and called for military conscription, "national efficiency," tariff reform, social reform, and society turning its back on the liberal presumptions of the Victorian age. Britain, however, still dominated the world's seas and its economy, and savored the opportunity to host this unprecedented athletic event. As the Daily Mail explained on the opening day of the competition, 13 July 1908, "it dwarfs all that has been attempted in the past, and fairly tests the physical capacities of all the civilised nations."¹¹ In the international context of the period it did not take long for questions of national superiority and, in turn, national deficiency to arise.¹²

The social and cultural framework of the Edwardian age developed during the Victorian years out of various national and international influences. Within Victorian culture during the nineteenth century, physical health had developed into something of an obsession. It manifested itself in the "games ethic" which had originated in the public schools and became such a prominent component of the Victorian cultural vocabulary, as J. A. Mangan has explained in his extensive research into the subject. Games not only provided physical fitness for boys, but taught them moral lessons and

¹¹ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 6.

¹² John Lowerson, "Sport and National Decay - The British and the Olympics before 1914," abstract in Olympic Scientific Congress 1984 Official Report: Sport

fostered character development and self-sacrifice.¹³ Such training developed “a small elite of sacrificial subalterns conditioned to accept the responsibility, if necessary, of martial martyrdom.”¹⁴ Within this conception of moral athleticism there existed two competing ideologies, muscular Christianity and Social Darwinism. Muscular Christianity was the “religious ideal,” while Social Darwinism was the “secular reality” of the public school.¹⁵ Public schools became the proving ground of the Darwinian struggle as they utilized conflict to build moral and physical strength in boys. Games were Social Darwinist tests of courage and endurance and the “games ethic” spread to schools beyond the British Isles.¹⁶

History, eds. Norbert Müller and Joachim K. Rühl (Niedernhausen: Schors-Verlag, 1985), 384.

¹³ J. A. Mangan, Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational Ideology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), and The Games Ethic and Imperialism (New York: Viking Penguin, 1986).

¹⁴ J. A. Mangan, “Duty unto Death: English Masculinity and Militarism in the Age of the New Imperialism,” in Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Europe, Sport, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 10.

¹⁵ J. A. Mangan, “Social Darwinism, and Upper-Class Education in Late Victorian and Edwardian England,” in Manliness and Morality, eds. J. A. Mangan and James Walvin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1987), 40; Mangan, Athleticism, 135-139.

¹⁶ Mangan, Games Ethic; David W. Brown, “Social Darwinism, Private Schooling and Sport in Victorian and Edwardian Canada,” in Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture at Home and Abroad, 1700-1914, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1988), 215-23.

The British led the world in economic and industrial power, governed a vast empire, and believed themselves and their civilization superior to the rest of the world. Social Darwinism served to cultivate just such an outlook. Even before Darwin had published Origin of the Species, his account of biological evolution in 1859. Herbert Spencer had maintained that an evolutionary process governed human society and Spencer developed his theory from the 1850s onward. While the element of struggle and competition between races and nations was at the core of the Social Darwinist idea for many of its followers, one did not have to be a Social Darwinist to adhere to such a belief.¹⁷ By the 1880s Social Darwinism had become “the dominant intellectual paradigm of the age” and it reinforced Britain’s vision of itself as the predominant power of the era.¹⁸ Benjamin Kidd’s Social Evolution, first published in 1893, was enormously popular and offers a view into the contemporary Social Darwinism. As Michael Howard has summarized Kidd’s ideas

the Teutonic races, and the British race in particular, thus owed their pre-eminence to having developed, over the centuries, the correct blend of social and individual qualities which best enabled them to

¹⁷ Roger C. Bannister, Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 3-8; Mike Hawkins, Social Darwinism in European and American Thought, 1860-1945 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 184.

¹⁸ Jose Harris, Private Lives. Public Spirit: Britain 1870-1914 (London: Penguin, 1994), 225-226; Gertrude Himmelfarb, Victorian Minds (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), 314-332; Bernard Semmel, Imperialism and Social Reform: English Social-Imperial Thought 1895-1914 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960), 29-52.

survive and defeat their rivals in a highly competitive environment. One need look no further for their right to rule.¹⁹

Throughout the late nineteenth century, the British viewed the world through the lens of race and measured themselves as the exemplars of racial development.²⁰

Such a view seemed a universal expression of Britain's standing in the world before 1914 with its unsurpassed empire, which Britons believed ensured their economic and military well-being. The propaganda of empire socialized the British public into this perception of cultural and biological superiority. Both nationalist and imperialist ideas bombarded British society in popular literature and the press during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. These cultural forms exploited the idea of empire and helped to shape its meaning as an evocation of what it meant to be British.²¹ In literature and the press "playing the game" became a discourse for popular imperialism and sport became a metaphor for war as games playing conquered British culture. These were not the only sources of propaganda as empire became a central

¹⁹ Michael Howard, "Empire, Race and War in pre-1914 Britain," in History and Imagination: Essays in Honor of H. R. Trevor-Roper, eds. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, Valerie Pearl, and Blair Worden (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 347.

²⁰ James Walvin, "Symbols of Moral Superiority: Slavery, Sport and the Changing World Order, 1880-1950," in Manliness and Morality, 251.

²¹ See Hugh Cunningham, "The Language of Patriotism," in Patriotism, 1:77-82, for a stimulating discussion of "Patriotism in the age of imperialism."

theme in education, photography, advertising, the theater, and the cinema.²² At the turn of the century the Daily Mail (founded in 1896) and the Daily Express (founded in 1900) chronicled the conflicts around the globe which affected the Empire as well as promoting the glory and advantages of Britain's overseas possessions.²³ On the moral front popular imperialism celebrated Britain's mission of disseminating civilization and lawful government around the world. The conflict with the Boers in Southern Africa (1899-1902) was supported in the popular press by both the Daily Mail and the Daily Express.²⁴

Such aggrandizement, however, masked a mood of apprehension that plagued British culture, as the liberal Victorian heritage of the nineteenth century clashed with the developments of a mass urban, industrial society with which it seemed incompatible. By the 1870s, a current of "social doubt" had taken hold among a

²² Robert H. MacDonald, The Language of Empire: Myths and Metaphors of Popular Imperialism, 1880-1918 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 20-25 and 30-31; Mangan, Games Ethic, 21-70. Also see John MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Public Opinion, 1880-1960 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and Patrick Brantlinger, Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

²³ In the case of the Daily Mail see Chandrika Kaul, "Popular Press and Empire: Northcliffe, India and the Daily Mail, 1896-1922," in Northcliffe's Legacy: Aspects of the British Popular Press, 1896-1996, eds. Peter Catterall, Colin Seymour-Ure, and Adrian Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 49-51.

²⁴ Zara Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 16 and 19.

diverse group of intellectuals.²⁵ While this may not have influenced social thought very deeply, other than in the case of mental degeneracy, it did affect views concerning the role of sport in society.²⁶ At least one element of this worry grew out of the disaster of the Boer War, a brutal, costly struggle which seemed to expose Britain's shortcomings. These shortcomings included the domestic pressures of a significant proportion of the British population that opposed the war and the physical inadequacy of many military volunteers. Abroad, Britain's role in the world was challenged by the growing industrial, economic, and military might of the United States and Germany.

At the turn of the century concern about Britain's global position manifested itself in articles discussing matters of sport and its role in promoting physical fitness among the population. Countries on the continent exposed their populations to "systematic physical training" while Britain had none.²⁷ Urban industrial life was the main cause of "the deterioration in the national physique" and mandatory physical

²⁵ Brantlinger, 33. For the Edwardian period see Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

²⁶ Harris, 241-245; Mathew Thomson, The Problem of Mental Deficiency: Eugenics, Democracy, and Social Policy in Britain c. 1870-1959 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); R. W. Lewis, "'Touched Pitch and Been Shockingly Defiled': Football, Class, Social Darwinism and Decadence in England, 1880-1914," in Sport in Europe: Politics, Class, Gender, ed. J. A. Mangan (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 117-143.

²⁷ Anonymous, "Are We an Athletic People?" New Review 16 (1897): 42.

exercise was the strategy to overcome this deficiency.²⁸ Such a program of exercise was important among the working class because of the increasing popularity of spectator sports. Football was the main culprit behind the spectatorism and passiveness affecting the working class. Social Darwinists and eugenicists viewed football and other working-class leisure activities as a threat to the health of the Empire.²⁹ A series of articles in the Quarterly Review “diagnosed” and explicated the “symptoms of national decay” it believed Britain was experiencing. In “Sport and Decadence,” the anonymous author asserted the Social Darwinist view that “race suicide is possible” when sport became something to watch rather than play.³⁰ A healthy and physically fit population was a gauge of national health and improved physical fitness would translate into better military recruits to defend the Empire.

The questions regarding the physical health of the population mirrored those concerning the extent of British supremacy around the world and whether its continued maintenance was possible. Anxiety peaked during the first decade of the twentieth century amid the domestic and overseas political controversies of the Boer

²⁸ George F. Shee, “The Deterioration in the National Physique,” Nineteenth Century 53 (1903): 802.

²⁹ Tony Mason, Association Football and English Society, 1863-1915. (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980), 222-250; Lewis, ““Touched Pitch.””

³⁰ Anonymous, “Sport and Decadence,” Quarterly Review 211 (1909): 486-502.

War, tariff reform, and German ambitions.³¹ The difficulty Britain faced in defeating the Boers along with the physical deficiencies of volunteers for the war fueled the doubt about a national decline. Relatively speaking, Britain's industry was declining as it had difficulty matching the growth of the United States and Germany as they became industrial juggernauts.³² Relative economic decline and the social problems of poverty many believed were responsible for the fitness deficiency called for action. For some "national efficiency" and social reform on the German model became the keywords of progress.³³ The rise of the new class of white collar professionals provided the social and political support for the efficiency campaign.³⁴ Joseph Chamberlain's solution to the problems was tariff reform, while many Liberals backed social welfare programs.³⁵ Both sides also felt that the German

³¹ Anne Summers, "Edwardian Militarism," in Patriotism, 1:236-256.

³² See E. J. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (New York: Pantheon, 1968), 144-163, for a discussion of Britain's industrial decline.

³³ Semmel, 53-82; G. R. Searle, The Quest for National Efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

³⁴ Jonathan Rose, The Edwardian Temperament, 1895-1919 (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986), Chapter 4, "The Efficiency Men;" Harold Perkin, The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880 (London: Routledge, 1989), 158-160.

³⁵ See Semmel for an exploration of social-imperial thought.

threat to the international status quo was acute enough to ratchet up military expenditure in an attempt to maintain Britain's naval dominance.³⁶

Even as it supported British imperialism after its 1896 founding the Daily Mail continually expressed concern over Britain's economic position. The Times also published a series of articles dealing with the country's industrial weaknesses.³⁷ The connection to the Liberal cause in the press was on the wane during the first decade of the 1900s. As profits became the primary objective of publishers and their revenues derived more and more from advertising newspapers had to temper their radical outlook. Irish Home Rule and imperialism also divided the Liberal press.³⁸ While regional papers had been a Liberal strength before 1900, this fragmentation and failure had weakened the Liberal dominance. These developments, however, and the financial success of the protectionist press of Alfred Harmsworth's Evening News and Daily Mail, and Pearson's Daily Express failed to derail the Liberal landslide of 1906. Their continual campaign of Tariff Reform and military readiness, in the wake of a larger campaign of nationalism was not without its effects as Radicals supported

³⁶ Michael Howard, "The Edwardian Arms Race," in Edwardian England, ed. Donald Read (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982), 145-161. On the growing rift between the two states see Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914 (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980).

³⁷ Steiner, 12.

³⁸ Alan J. Lee, The Origins of the Popular Press in England, 1855-1914 (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 159-161.

the Admiralty's naval policy and the idea of conscription made political inroads among MPs before 1914.³⁹

So British preeminence was under pressure on a variety of fronts around the world during the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁰ In just such an atmosphere, "sport offered the comforting illusion of continuing effortless superiority and the means of restoring the nation to good health and mental security," as James Walvin has argued.⁴¹ Such an attitude, however, did not remove all doubt about the physical fitness of the population. At the 1906 games in Athens the British squad placed fourth among the competing teams and "the myth was immediately established that the British were under-achieving." This fiction, crafted by Theodore Andrea Cook, Olympic athlete, member of the British Olympic Association, and journalist for the Daily Telegraph, was partially an attempt to secure Government backing for Britain's Olympic effort.⁴² The image of underachievement colored the evaluations of British performances during the next two Olympic meetings, in 1908 and 1912.

³⁹ Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, 384-385.

⁴⁰ See Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 (New York: Random House, 1987; Reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 226-232.

⁴¹ Walvin, 258.

⁴² Martin Polley, "'No Business of Ours'?: The Foreign Office and the Olympic Games," 1896-1914," International Journal of the History of Sport 13, no. 2 (1996):100.

It was against this backdrop that London hosted the Olympic Games of 1908. Newspapers viewed the London Olympic Games as the crowning achievement of Britain's historical role in the emergence of modern sport and, more significantly, as a measurement of its overall vitality in the face of international competition from Germany and the United States. Even before the games began the press feared the possible results for Britain. Would British athletes dominate the overall competition as many hoped? What level of support would the games receive from the public? Prior to the games the British public was "apathetic" in its reception of the Olympics, as will become clear below if the BOA's appeal for funds prior to the games is used as a criterion. On the opening day of the games, 13 July 1908, the Daily Mail wondered if an impending disaster was in store:

[Yet.] if through lack of general interest the British competitors are defeated, there will be no lack of lamentation; while it is well to remember that foreign representatives will go to their homes with the news that the British race is showing signs of deterioration, and the foreign Press will no doubt draw the conclusion that we are decadent alike in sporting instinct and in physical endowments.⁴³

London was not the first choice of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to host the 1908 Olympic Games. In 1904, the IOC had chosen Rome to host the 1908 games at a meeting held in London and hosted by Edward VII. The ancient monuments and heritage of Rome were meant to complement and benefit the

⁴³ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 6.

Olympic movement and the games had the support of Pope Pius X and King Victor Emanuel III. At the interim Olympic Games held in Athens in 1906, the Italian organizers of the 1908 games announced that they could not fulfill their commitment as hosts. The Italian Government could not bankroll the games and pay for planned public works projects, and the Italian Prime Minister, Giovanni Gioiotti, withheld the Government funds necessary to finance the games. This decision was made before the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 1906, which provided the Italian IOC member, Count Eugenio Brunetta d'Usseaux, with an excuse for abandoning the games.⁴⁴

The IOC turned to the British Olympic Association (BOA) for help. The BOA was formed at the House of Commons in 1905 and it elected the accomplished sportsman, W.H. Grenfell, MP, (later first Baron Desborough of Taplow) as its chairman. The leaders of the BOA were sportsmen from the ranks of the aristocracy and the middle class, some of whom held positions in government and the Church of England.⁴⁵ A council was created and the association solicited support from representatives of the various governing bodies of organized sport.⁴⁶ The IOC

⁴⁴ Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan, The 1908 Olympics: Results for all Competitors in all Events, with Commentary (Jefferson: McFarland and Co., 2000), 2-3.

⁴⁵ Polley, 98.

⁴⁶ Theodore Andrea Cook, International sport: a short history of the Olympic movement from 1896 to the present day, containing the account of a visit to Athens in 1906, and of the Olympic games of 1908 in London, together with the code of rules for twenty different forms of sport, and numerous illustrations (London: Archibald Constable, 1909), 145-146.

“invited” the BOA to host the 1908 games, and Coubertin seemed confident of a successful Olympiad.⁴⁷ As members of the original BOA recounted, the IOC had solicited Britain’s help because of its distinguished position in the sporting world.⁴⁸ The council of the BOA did not accept until the fall of 1906 with less than eighteen months to organize the London Games. A new organization arose to govern the Olympic Games, the British Olympic Council (BOC), which consisted of representatives from all the associations whose sports were on the 1908 program.⁴⁹ Any of the sporting bodies in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales that wanted representation also became part of the BOC.⁵⁰ The BOC also sought financial assistance from the government to help underwrite its commitment to the staging of the games and fielding a national team.

On the eve of the games the BOC declared that it should have raised funds for the Games prior to making any arrangements.⁵¹ Perhaps the year and a half lead

⁴⁷ Pierre de Coubertin, “Circular Letter to the IOC Members (December 1906),” in Olympism: Selected Writings, ed. Norbert Müller (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 2000), 416.

⁴⁸ Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908.

⁴⁹ See Mallon and Buchanan, 19-20, for a list of the members of the BOC.

⁵⁰ The Times, 11 July 1908, 18.

⁵¹ Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908.

time obscured the urgency facing the BOC.⁵² Thus, the BOC had to campaign for support from private citizens by publishing “appeals” in the press. Early on, however, the public was not forthcoming with funding adequate to meet the needs of the 1908 games. The two previous Olympiads in Paris (1900) and St.Louis (1904) were held in conjunction with exhibitions and 1908 was no exception. Without the arrangement with the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908 the London games might not have materialized because the BOC could not finance the Games on its own. The French Chamber of Commerce in London had initiated the planning of the exhibition at the end of 1905. Organizers added a new component to the scheduled fanfare after negotiations between the BOC and the Executive Committee of the exhibition resulted in the construction of a stadium and some supplemental buildings to house many of the Olympic events. The agreement promised the Executive Committee three-fourths of the gate money from the Olympics while the BOC received £2000 for expenses from the committee.⁵³

Construction for the Olympic stadium began on 2 August 1907, on the exhibition grounds at Shepherd’s Bush. At a cost of about £80,000, the stadium offered an estimated 68,000 seats, 17,000 of which were covered, and it had a total capacity of 150,000. A 660 yard, banked concrete cycling track encircled a cinder running track, 1/3rd of a mile in length. The running track framed an area of grass

⁵² Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908; Cook, International Sport, 153-154.

⁵³ Cook, International Sport, 158; The Times, 11 July 1908, 18.

235 yards long and about 100 yards wide. A portion of the infield area on the western side of the stadium held a tank 14 feet deep, measuring 330 feet by 50 feet for the swimming and diving events.⁵⁴ The infield also contained equipment for gymnastics and platforms for boxing and wrestling. On the day the Olympic Games opened the Daily Mail printed a graphic illustration of the stadium.⁵⁵

A review of the exhibition described the stadium as a “truly great structure, on the heroic scale; too great, indeed, to serve the purpose of a single season only: it is surely a permanent possession.”⁵⁶ The stadium originally was planned as a temporary arena for the Olympics, after which it would be demolished.⁵⁷ The exhibition itself, which opened on 14 May 1908, two months before the Olympic Games, covered 140 acres and it acquired the nickname “The White City” because of its all-white exhibition area. With operating hours from 11am-11pm patrons could attend for a daily price of 1/- or purchase a season ticket for one guinea (£1-1-0).

⁵⁴ Franco-British Exhibition, London, 1908, Official Guide and Description, (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1908), 7; Mallon and Buchanan, 5, claim the stadium’s seating capacity was 63,000 with standing room for another 30,000.

⁵⁵ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 7. See 8 for the illustration.

⁵⁶ A. Shadwell, “Introduction,” The Franco-British Exhibition Illustrated Review 1908, ed. F. G. Dumas (London: Chatto and Windus, 1908), 8

⁵⁷ Cook, International Sport, 159.

Railway stations located near the exhibition could convey up to 80,000 people per hour to the exhibition.⁵⁸

A major undertaking of the BOC was the development of rules for each sporting contest. Without the international bodies to govern sport which are so ubiquitous today, the BOC had to codify the regulations for the games, as well as translating the codes into German and French. One member of the BOA argued that “if the Olympic Games of London were to produce no other results they would at least have laid the basis of an international code in various forms of sport, which will be of incalculable service in all future international contests.”⁵⁹ At this time, the IOC left the matter of sporting regulation and officiating to the host country and the British monopoly of these duties became the most controversial aspect of the games. The BOC allocated the responsibility for administering each sport in London to the governing bodies represented on the council. These governing bodies chose all officials judging each respective sport and foreign countries set up their own three member committees to handle protests during the competition and present them to the appropriate governing body. Before the games were underway, such a system

⁵⁸ Donald R. Knight, The Exhibitions: Great White City, Shepherd's Bush London (New Barnet, Herfordshire: D. R. Knight, 1978), 1 and 4.

⁵⁹ Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908. For some of the rules used during the Olympic Games, see Cook.

seemed “the most satisfactory one” because “the employment of international juries for the purpose of judging has not been a success at former Olympic Games.”⁶⁰

Only a few months before the start of the games the BOC’s financial position had not improved and Desborough enlisted the aid of the press in its campaign to obtain subsidies from the public. Early in March Desborough wrote to The Times appealing for funds for the games. The BOC’s resources were inadequate to pay for the competitions, the awards, and the entertainment for the participants, including the athletes, judges, IOC members, and the members of the national Olympic committees. Desborough implored readers to help out the BOC, which sought to entertain the athletes in a manner “worthy” of England.⁶¹ Public aid remained inadequate and a new appeal for funds appeared in The Times in May, buried on page 13, at the end of a preview of the Franco-British Exhibition.⁶²

A lack of public interest resulted in frantic last minute appeals in the press for support just prior to the scheduled start of the games in July. At the beginning of June, the BOC remained unable to finance its planned hospitality for visiting athletes and officials. New appeals by the BOC appeared in The Times, and in the newspaper

⁶⁰ The Times, 11 July 1908, 18.

⁶¹ The Times, 5 March 1908, 5.

⁶² The Times, 12 May 1908, 13.

with the largest circulation in Britain, the Daily Mail.⁶³ Desborough met with Northcliffe and the publisher “reluctantly agreed” to assist the BOC in its final appeal, although it is not clear when this meeting occurred.⁶⁴ The Mail’s proprietor, Northcliffe appealed to the public in his paper for assistance, as well as seeking funding from the government, which had not contributed any grants or subsidies to the Olympic program. W. T. Stead, editor of the Review of Reviews and a fellow supporter of tariff reform and the naval program, wrote to Northcliffe in early June to express his appreciation for the Daily Mail’s involvement.⁶⁵

By the end of June, two appeals to the public by the BOC had raised little toward its £10,000 goal. Desborough explained the dilemma of the BOC in the Daily Mail:

I do not think it is at all generally realised how great are the responsibilities the British Olympic Council have undertaken in this matter and how small their resources are. In the first place the Olympic Games of London, which open the fourth Olympiad of the modern Olympic cycle, are entirely dependent upon voluntary effort. At all previous Olympic meetings the committees in charge of them have had substantial subsidies from their various Governments. We are without official help or recognition of any kind.

⁶³ The Times, 22 June 1908, 17.

⁶⁴ Mallon and Buchanan, 5.

⁶⁵ W. L. Stead to Northcliffe, June 3, 1908, ADD 62298B, f. 11, Northcliffe Papers, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London.

The interview with Desborough listed the expenses associated with the games, including £3000 for medals, badges, and diplomas, £2000 for BOC council expenses over its two year existence, and £2000 for printing expenses. At the time of this particular pre-Olympic appeal the BOC had raised only £2840 from 200 individual and corporate contributors.⁶⁶

The press campaign continued the next day in the Daily Mail with headlines reading “OLYMPIC GAMES CRISIS” and “AN EMERGENCY.” In honor of the competitors the BOC had planned excursions to Oxford, Cambridge, Windsor and Eton, Stratford-on-Avon, and Portsmouth, and had arranged five 500 person banquets. Without £10,000 this hospitality agenda was doomed and according to one BOC official competitors and officials would have to pay their own way into the stadium to attend the events.⁶⁷ The Daily Mail appealed to the public in a leading article that argued, “It rests with the United Kingdom not only to endeavour to hold its own in the athletic world, but also to show its visitors that hospitality which is proverbial among sportsmen.”⁶⁸

The following day the Daily Mail published a letter of appeal from Desborough and R. S. de Courcy Laffan, the honorary secretary of the BOC. As part of the campaign the Daily Mail donated one hundred guineas to the Olympic

⁶⁶ Daily Mail, 30 June 1908, 3.

⁶⁷ Daily Mail, 1 July 1908, 5 and 6.

⁶⁸ Daily Mail, 1 July 1908, 6.

cause.⁶⁹ Desborough was grateful for Northcliffe's assistance and thanked him for his interest: "The DM is splendid this morning: I only hope it will have the desired effect. It is very good of you to take the matter up."⁷⁰ In order to drum up the support necessary to fund the BOC's needs, the Daily Mail resorted to chauvinistic rhetoric comparing the London Olympiad to the 1896, 1904, and 1906 Games: "Is the British nation willing to be outdistanced by the Greek, whose citizens have to count every penny? Is John Bull willing to take second place to Brother Jonathan [United States] and leave the American courtesies [in St. Louis] unreciprocated?"⁷¹ The Daily Mail's sibling, the Evening News, claimed that providing for the athlete's hospitality was the "duty" of the public.⁷² Other newspapers joined in the Olympic campaign, calling for those interested in sport to contribute whatever they could manage.⁷³

The Daily Mail-led campaign had the desired effect. In only a few days, the paper had received £3000 and two days later the total had reached £5000 with only a

⁶⁹ Daily Mail, 2 July 1908, 7.

⁷⁰ Desborough to Northcliffe, July 2, 1908, ADD 62298 B, f. 7, Northcliffe Papers, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London.

⁷¹ Daily Mail, 3 July 1908, 4.

⁷² Evening News, 3 July 1908, 2.

⁷³ Pall Mall Gazette cited in the Daily Mail, 3 July 1908, 5.

week to go before the opening of the Olympics.⁷⁴ The Government arranged a banquet for foreign representatives and the ambassadors of states whose athletes would be in London.⁷⁵ By the ninth of July £12,000 filled the BOC's accounts and the following day the Daily Mail requested that people stop sending donations.⁷⁶ The British nation had responded with more than enough financial support for the BOC.⁷⁷

The BOC had allocated a portion of the campaign money for entertainment for the athletes and officials. On Saturday, 11 July, the weekend prior to the opening of the games, the BOA held the first reception for its guests at the Grafton Galleries.⁷⁸ In an attempt to illustrate its "hospitality," the BOA also held banquets on 14, 16, 17, 21, 23 July as well as hosting other receptions in September, August, and the end of October, all of which one historian has described as "wildly extravagant."⁷⁹ Other organizations also arranged their own receptions during the Olympic festival on

⁷⁴ Evening News, 4 July 1908, 1, 6 July 1908, 1.

⁷⁵ Daily Mail, 7 July 1908, 4-5.

⁷⁶ Daily Mail, 9 July 1908, 7-8, 10 July 1908, 5.

⁷⁷ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, "OGS."

⁷⁸ Daily Express, 13 July 1908, 1.

⁷⁹ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, "OGS;" Lucas, 61.

evenings the BOA had left open. These included events hosted by the Lord Mayor of London, the Amateur Swimming Association, and the Government.⁸⁰

In its previews of the coming London games the press sought to place them in historical perspective. Six days prior to the start of the games, The Times began a series of articles covering the Ancient Games, the Modern Games, and “the Games of London.”⁸¹ The papers published by Northcliffe promoted the games as an unparalleled festival of sport, and a fitting event for the premier sporting country.

It may well be doubted if in the whole history of the world a finer body of men has ever been assembled together than this wonderful army, every member of which has some excellence in bodily strength and skill, which places him far above the run of his fellows; and the parade, therefore, is likely to be remembered long not only by those who take part in it, but by those who witness it.⁸²

In its guide to the Games, the Daily Mail headlined Lord Desborough’s introduction to the Olympiad, “THE GREATEST ATHLETIC CONTEST IN HISTORY.”⁸³

The public’s reception of the Games, as measured by its lethargic financial support of the BOA, caused the Daily Mail to ponder the lack of enthusiasm, which

⁸⁰ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, “OGS.”

⁸¹ The Times, 7 July 1908, 16; 9 July 1908, 16; 11 July 1908, 18.

⁸² Evening News, 13 July 1908, 4.

⁸³ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, “OGS.”

paled in comparison to a Cup-tie football match or a first-class cricket contest.⁸⁴ Perhaps the reason was that the public realized that the British squad was not truly representative of the best athletes in Britain. Because only amateurs could compete in the Olympic Games many of the top competitors were barred from participation. In their preparation for the Games the BOA had defined an amateur as someone who had been compensated for competing in a sporting event and it allowed each national and international sporting organization to apply the definition as each saw fit. Each national Olympic body verified the eligibility of its athletes and if any conflicts arose the BOA was the final arbiter. The BOA also established measures to resolve sporting disputes.⁸⁵

The opening of the London Olympic Games illustrated the irreconcilable tension between nationalism and internationalism which was inherent in the Olympic movement. Edward VII was the patron of the Games and the monarch presided over the opening ceremonies. While his presence was meant to project amity toward other nations, it also illustrated the British Empire's preeminent role in the world. The teams from all the participating countries marched before a crowd of Edward VII and an estimated 30,000 spectators. The ritual and ceremony of opening day, "splendid, public and popular," illuminated the contradictions between internationalism and nationalism. At this international competition the press presented the monarch as the

⁸⁴ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 6.

⁸⁵ Guttman, 29.

head of the nation, an example of an “invention of tradition” which characterized the late Victorian and Edwardian years.⁸⁶ The ceremony celebrated Britain’s dominant role in the world and The Times described the monarch as “King Edward the Peacemaker.” The paper hoped that “some day it may be possible to look back on these Olympic Games of 1908 as having given a powerful impetus to the brotherhood of the world.”⁸⁷

The athletic events in the stadium were the highlight of the games, drawing the largest crowds and the most extensive coverage in the press. These reports in the press illustrated the contradictions inherent in Olympic competition. Newspapers supported the sporting philosophy behind the Olympic movement and amateur sports as The Times explained:

It is commonly said, and, indeed, is put forward as a conclusive argument in favour of the modern Olympic movement, that international athletics encourage international amity. This is only the case if they are organized in so orderly and impartial a manner that every competitor, whether he has won or lost, goes away satisfied and feeling that every opportunity has been given and every courtesy shown to him.

⁸⁶ David Cannadine, “The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the ‘Invention of Tradition’, c. 1820-1977,” in The Invention of Tradition, eds. E. J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 120-123.

⁸⁷ The Times, 14 July 1908, 10.

Certainly Britain would respond with hospitality and fairness as it played host to the games.⁸⁸ Again, after all, peace was the goal of the Olympics.⁸⁹ The Daily Mail supported the ideals of the Olympic movement as the Games began and its sibling in the Northcliffe stable of papers, the Evening News, argued that “best of all, we find that the idea of sport for sport’s sake has survived the long ordeal of the centuries, and the men of the Stadium to-day are as keen and as clean of mind as the athletes of nearly three thousand years ago.”⁹⁰ Lord Desborough promoted the Olympic movement’s principles in his introduction to the games published in the Daily Mail on the opening day of the games. He believed the games would encourage patriotism in the participating countries and foster “generous rivalry and friendship” between competitors.⁹¹

Competitors sought victory and in the Olympic formulation success was measured on a national basis. The press anticipated a titanic battle in the stadium: “which nation will emerge triumphant from the struggle? Never since athletic records were kept has there been such a gigantic and widespread contest for supremacy.”⁹²

⁸⁸ The Times, 11 July 1908, 18.

⁸⁹ The Times, 14 July 1908, 10.

⁹⁰ Evening News, 13 July 1908, 4.

⁹¹ Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908.

⁹² Sporting Life, 11 July 1908, 6.

Athletes participated in the quest for victory, not just to play the game. British athletes' main competition came from the United States squad, which was intent on victory, and the Mail hoped for a British triumph.⁹³ As the paper argued, "to play the game and win is still their highest aim. Long may it be so, for while the true spirit and practice of sportsmanship endure, we shall always feel that there is some hope left for decadent humanity."⁹⁴

International peace was not the outcome of the London games, which were characterized by national rivalry, especially between the United States and Britain, and by the related charges of favoritism by British officials.⁹⁵ From the perspective of the United States' team managers the principle that "no fear or favour shall be shown" to any athlete was violated on many occasions by the hosts.⁹⁶ While the Olympic mantra was the promotion of peace and cooperation by athletic competition between national representatives, the press focused, not surprisingly, on the results of the contests. Prior to the start of the Games the papers previewed Britain's chief rivals for victory from the United States, Canada, and Australasia in their surveys of

⁹³ Matthews, 42.

⁹⁴ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 4.

⁹⁵ See Matthews; S. W. Pope, Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 45-49; Mallon and Buchanan, Appendix III, "The British and American Responses to 'The Battle of Shepherd's Bush,'" 327-405.

⁹⁶ Daily Mail, "OGS," 13 July 1908.

the top performers in the athletic events.⁹⁷ The Sporting Life looked forward to “a mighty struggle for a fortnight between the United States and England.”⁹⁸ The survey in the Daily Mail’s “Olympic Games Supplement” was similar to the preview of a horse race with the prophet forecasting a winner in each race and field event. It introduced its coverage with the claim that “It is surely too much to say that today finds us confronted with the most serious and severe ordeal which, as a nation of sportsman, we have yet been called upon to undergo.” Britain’s claim as the leading power in the world would be reaffirmed or discredited in the arena of competition.⁹⁹ The Daily Mail acknowledged the pressure for victory among athletes at the Games.¹⁰⁰

The program in the stadium consisted of two daily sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to accommodate the various sports and to increase the gate money. To the disappointment of the authorities and the press their bright expectation for large crowds was dampened by rain and expensive ticket prices. Rain marred three out of the first four days of the Games. The estimated attendance for each day varied from paper to paper but low numbers characterized Tuesday,

⁹⁷ Evening News, 11 July 1908, 3; 13 July 1908, 1.

⁹⁸ Sporting Life, 11 July 1908, 6.

⁹⁹ Daily Mail, “OGS,” 13 July 1908.

¹⁰⁰ Daily Mail, 13 July 1908, 6.

Thursday and Friday, especially during the morning portions of the program. The problem was not a lack of leisure time as Lord's and the Oval drew large crowds for cricket matches during the week.¹⁰¹ The weather was not the only culprit: poor advertising and an unattractive program also kept attendance low, according to some commentators. The Daily Mail argued that "it cannot be denied that the games have been imperfectly advertised, and less attention has been drawn to them than to an ordinary music-hall wrestling match."¹⁰² With two or three competitions occurring at once in the vast stadium it was difficult for spectators to follow the action.¹⁰³ There also were many events in the first week which were unfamiliar or not popular with the public.¹⁰⁴ On Saturday, 18 July, the program included the discus, "fancy diving," cycling, the tug of war, and two water polo matches. These were not popular sports in Britain and the vastness of the stadium made many of the events difficult to follow for spectators far from the action on the field. Only the tug of war, "which was tucked away in a corner," held any interest for most of the spectators.¹⁰⁵ One

¹⁰¹ The Times, 16 July 1908, 10.

¹⁰² Daily Mail, 16 July 1908, 6. The Daily Telegraph also was critical of the lack of advertising, even within the exhibition, 18 July 1908, 11.

¹⁰³ Daily Telegraph, 15 July 1908, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Daily Express, 18 July 1908, 6.

¹⁰⁵ Daily Mail, 20 July 1908, 5.

Sunday paper summed up the first week with the following description: “despite the presence of the world’s picked athletes, and the daily breaking of records, the events have so far proved a complete fiasco from the public point of view, the attendance being so small that the vast arena has been practically deserted.”¹⁰⁶

A few days into the opening week the Star maintained that Britain’s sporting reputation was at stake because of the poor attendance at the stadium. While newspapers had promoted the Games for weeks, “there is a grave danger that the whole festival may end in a depressing fiasco, and that our foreign guests may tell all over the world a dismal tale of British apathy and indifference.”¹⁰⁷ Even Wednesday, 15 July which the Athletic News implied was well attended, drew a crowd of between 30,000–40,000 to the stadium.¹⁰⁸ The Star argued that all of the seats were too expensive with the least costly selling for a shilling. Even if people had bought the cheapest seats their distance from the action in the stadium was far enough for the Star to assert that spectators needed “telescopes and megaphones.”¹⁰⁹

If they did not know of the separate entrance to the stadium, sports lovers had to pay to enter the stadium on top of the admission cost of a shilling spectators paid to

¹⁰⁶ Lloyd’s Weekly News, 19 July 1908, 5.

¹⁰⁷ Star, 16 July 1908, 1.

¹⁰⁸ Athletic News, 20 July 1908, 5; Star, 16 July 1908, 1; The Times, 16 July 1908, 10; Star, 17 July 1908, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Star, 16 July 1908, 1.

enter the exhibition. The Star demanded “FREE SEATS AND CHEAP SEATS FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES”: it suggested free admission for the shilling seats at either end of the stadium. The rest could be sold for sixpence and a shilling apiece.¹¹⁰ The honorary secretary of the games, Robert Laffan, believed that Londoners did not realize the significance of the spectacle at the stadium and on Friday (17 July) authorities lowered some prices for the morning session to 6d. Admission still ranged from 6d. to 10s. 6d. for the morning and 1s. to one guinea during the afternoon. The Star insisted on reductions for the entire program because seats were still too expensive and many of the 6d. seats were far from the finish line.¹¹¹ Desborough claimed that ticket prices were reasonable considering the historical significance of the games, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle also voiced his support for the current price of admission.¹¹² The Star appealed to its constituency in a Saturday leading article: “it is suicidal to attempt to run the Olympic Games for the benefit of the elite and the elect. The people, and the people only, can fill the Stadium, and they ought to be

¹¹⁰ Star, 16 July 1908, 1.

¹¹¹ Star, 17 July 1908, 2.

¹¹² Star, 18 July 1908, 3. See Conan Doyle’s letter to the editor praising the games and the spectator accommodations in the Daily Telegraph, 18 July 1908, 12.

treated generously. It is sixpences and shillings, not half-guineas and guineas that pay.”¹¹³

The rest of the press did not seem to take up the campaign for inexpensive admission until the first weekend when the authorities - the British Olympic Committee and the Committee of the Exhibition - lowered most of the admission prices to the stadium. While The Times had noted the poor attendance and largely blamed the poor weather, it acknowledged that some prices should come down.¹¹⁴ According to a letter from the head of the exhibition published in the Daily Mail, the paper had been instrumental to the discussion of admission prices to the Games.¹¹⁵ With the change in prices the paper promoted the incredible bargain spectators could enjoy in order to witness “the greatest athletic spectacle that this country and this generation can see.” The paper also included a map of the stadium which listed the new prices of seats by location.¹¹⁶

In the arena of competition, the only satisfaction for some in Britain would have been total victory in every event. The press celebrated the host country’s

¹¹³ Star, 18 July 1908, 1.

¹¹⁴ The Times, 18 July 1908, 10.

¹¹⁵ Daily Mail, 20 July 1908, 5.

¹¹⁶ Daily Mail, 20 July 1908, 5-6.

victories with headlines and crossheads like “BRITISH SUCCESSES.”¹¹⁷ “ENGLAND’S WIN.”¹¹⁸ and “BRITISH SUCCESSES AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES / FOUR VICTORIES TO AMERICA’S TWO.”¹¹⁹ The coverage of some newspapers also reveals the primacy of England in the imagining of Britain as the papers used England and Britain interchangeably in their headlines, crossheads, and stories.¹²⁰ At the end of the first week “BRITISH TRIUMPH” headlined the Lloyd’s Weekly News for Sunday, 19 July.¹²¹ “MANY BRITISH SUCCESSES” characterized the first week of competition, according to the Athletic News and “the reputation of the United Kingdom has been well sustained awheel and afoot, and also to some degree afloat.” The Daily Express noted that “the Union Jack was hoisted time after time amid loud cheers,” which provided “double satisfaction” on Saturday with all the British victories seen by a considerable crowd.¹²²

This success did not come quietly, as the American team officials began protesting against perceived British favoritism. The “ENGLISH-AMERICAN

¹¹⁷ Daily Telegraph, 15 July 1908, 12.

¹¹⁸ Evening News, 15 July 1908, 5.

¹¹⁹ Daily Mail, 16 July 1908, 7.

¹²⁰ Evening News, 15 July 1908, 5; Daily Telegraph, 20 July 1908, 12.

¹²¹ Lloyd’s Weekly News, 19 July 1908, 1.

¹²² Daily Express, 20 July 1908, 5-6.

STRUGGLE.” as the Daily Mail characterized the sporting duel in the stadium developed into a battle between American and British Olympic officials.¹²³ In the tug of war, the American squad lost to a British team of Liverpoolian policemen in a Friday trial and protested against the winners wearing boots versus their own gym shoes.¹²⁴ Along with their other victories during the first week the British had humiliated the Americans, according to the Daily Express. “Serious charges of favouring British competitors are made against the British Olympic Council, but some of the complaints seem animated by chagrin at the remarkable British successes in the Games, and to be based on very shadowy foundation.” Correspondents in Paris and New York reported that French and American critics questioned the British claim to sportsman-like honor. The critics’ view of British sportsmanship was the advantage the British judges gave to their fellow athletes, not the fair play the British often claimed.¹²⁵ The Times claimed such criticism was ridiculous because sportsmanship was more important to the athletes and judges than victories. “To ourselves, as Englishmen, these gentlemen need no defence and no justification. We know that they could not do what they are vaguely accused of having done. In any

¹²³ Daily Mail, 17 July 1908, 6.

¹²⁴ Lloyd’s Weekly News, 19 July 1908, 24.

¹²⁵ Daily Express, 20 July 1908, 1; Daily Mail, 20 July 1908, 6, 21 July 1908, 4-5; The Times, 20 July 1908, 7.

case of doubt they would give the benefit to a foreigner rather than to an Englishman.”¹²⁶ British sportsmen were beyond reproach.

Both the Daily Mail and the Daily Express also defended the BOC and their officials by polling athletes and officials about the conduct of the games. Their conclusions were nearly identical as they appealed to Coubertin and other members of the IOC for their judgments. The Daily Mail declared that “the fairness of British sportsmanship has not only been vindicated, it has received a high meed of praise from the most influential and important of our visitors to the Olympic Games.”¹²⁷ while the Daily Express proclaimed that “the charges of unfairness and lack of consideration made by some friends of American competitors in the Olympic Games, which have already been rebutted in the ‘Express’ by the British officials, are not borne out by members of the International Olympic Committee.”¹²⁸

What was the uproar all about? While the French voiced concerns about their treatment, the major barrage of criticism came from the head of the American Olympic delegation, James E. Sullivan, an ex-athlete turned journalist, who also served as president of the American Athletic Union (AAU). He had guided American athletics to the premier position in the world during his tenure with the AAU because, as John Lucas has explained “sport was a serious business to him, and international

¹²⁶ The Times, 21 July 1908, 14.

¹²⁷ Daily Mail, 22 July 1908, 5.

¹²⁸ Daily Express, 23 July 1908, 1.

track and field athletic domination was a clear-cut manifestation of national strength.”¹²⁹ Needless to say, in London, he and his American colleagues were intent on defeating the British in the stadium.¹³⁰

In his quest for victory, Sullivan fostered an “anti-British sentiment” among the American team.¹³¹ Sullivan and the Americans felt slighted and publicly voiced their complaints about the administration of the games. Among the numerous American complaints and protests were that: the officials had rejected an American request to dig a hole in which to plant the pole in the vaulting competition; the high jumpers had no mattress to land on; and the shot put competition was poorly staged. According to the BOA regulations athletes who placed second in the heats were not eligible for the finals, and the Americans felt they had been slotted into the same heats, rather than spread among all the heats.¹³² The BOA rejected the protests of Sullivan and the Americans due to Britain’s preeminence in the history of modern

¹²⁹ John Lucas, “Early Olympic Antagonists: Pierre de Coubertin versus James E. Sullivan,” Stadion 3 (1977): 261, 268.

¹³⁰ Pope, 46-48; John Lucas, “The Hegemonic Rule of the American Amateur Athletic Union 1888-1914: James Edward Sullivan as Prime Mover,” International Journal of the History of Sport 11, no. 3 (1994): 361.

¹³¹ John Lucas, “Theodore Roosevelt and Baron Pierre de Coubertin: Entangling Olympic Games Involvement 1901-1918,” Stadion 8/9 (1982-1983): 142-143.

¹³² Daily Express, 21 July 1908, 1.

athletics. If anyone knew how to run an athletic competition, it was the British, according to this arrogant view. The misunderstanding about the rules, however, suggested that while the BOA had created rules to govern all of the events, they had not publicized them thoroughly.¹³³

American discontent remained in the headlines on Wednesday, 22 July, as the Daily Express published a statement from James B. Connolly about the lack of fairness shown to athletes by the British. “Your officials too much desire to run things to suit themselves, and themselves alone, or at least so it seems to us,” wrote Connolly. He had sought a consultation between the delegations and British officials ruling on the competitions, rather than the outright rejection of American proposals, like digging a hole for the pole vault. “Are we not handicapped sufficiently by length of journey, change in climate, of food, of surroundings?” Connolly asked. He also was critical of the decision to allow the British team to wear their boots in the tug of war despite protests by the Americans. His jeremiad continued:

The Press has educated us to believe that the English sports man is the best on earth. You still say so, yet never in any other country - and this is the fourth Olympiad I have attended - have I seen a victorious stranger get less recognition from the populace or the officials than here.

And to close: Your officials ought to remember, especially when foreigners are allowed no representation on the field, that they are in a Stadium to see that everybody gets fair play: They are not there to coach their own people, nor to cheer a stranger's mishap.¹³⁴

¹³³ Daily Express, 21 July 1908, 1.

¹³⁴ Daily Express, 22 July 1908, 1.

In response to Connolly's criticism, in particular the events at the stadium on Tuesday, a Daily Express journalist claimed that "Britishers had few chances to cheer in appreciation of their countrymen's triumphs yesterday at the Stadium. Certainly our men were not backward in again giving the Americans their due for the great performances, but appreciation for a rival's triumph must necessarily contain a plaintive note."¹³⁵

Incidents prior to the start of the Games had planted the seeds of resentment among American officials. Apparently no one had greeted the American squad upon its arrival in Britain. Then, an oversight had occurred at the stadium and when the Americans first glimpsed the display of the national flags the American standard was missing (Sweden's flag also was omitted). United States officials also were upset that they had to pay admission to the stadium at the beginning of the Games.¹³⁶ One early expression of possible American displeasure occurred at the opening ceremony when the American flag-bearer, Ralph Rose, failed to dip the flag in the customary manner as he passed the royal box. It is not clear, however, whether this was a deliberate slight.¹³⁷ The British press must not have thought so; they omitted this seeming retaliation by the Americans from its coverage.

¹³⁵ Daily Express, 22 July 1908, 6.

¹³⁶ Daily Express, 22 July 1908, 5; Matthews, 44.

¹³⁷ Mallon and Buchanan, 316-319.

American incredulity toward the British intensified after the drama in the stadium on Thursday, 23 July. Officials nullified the 400 meter race after an incident between American J. C. Carpenter, who crossed the finish line first, and the British contestant, Wyndham Halswelle, a lieutenant with the Highland Light Infantry. Officials decided that Carpenter had interfered with Halswelle as the two runners came around the last turn and entered the straightaway. They disqualified Carpenter and ordered the race rerun on Saturday with Halswelle and the other athletes in the final, the Americans W. C. Robbins and J. B. Taylor.

In the eyes of some observers Halswelle was the favorite in the original race with one paper claiming Sullivan had even predicted a Halswelle victory.¹³⁸ As the papers described it, during the last half of the race, with Carpenter in the lead and Halswelle closing the gap between them and the crowd roaring in anticipation of a British triumph, a “catastrophe” struck.¹³⁹ “Suddenly, like a bolt from the blue, the shout of joy changed to a storm of ‘boos.’ Everyone was amazed.”¹⁴⁰ According to the Daily Express account, Carpenter had interfered with Halswelle by driving his challenger wide and nearly onto the grass strip which divided the running track from the cycling track. Unlike the sprints, competitors had no lane assignments in the 400

¹³⁸ Daily Express, 24 July 1908, 7.

¹³⁹ Daily Express, 24 July 1908, 1.

¹⁴⁰ Daily Mail, 24 July 1908, 7.

meters. Officials then broke the tape at the finish line before Carpenter reached it. Although this was the final event of the day spectators lingered throughout the stadium awaiting a decision about the race.

The officials determined that Carpenter had run wide and elbowed Halswelle which had caused the track judges to declare no race. They disqualified Carpenter and rescheduled the 400 meter final for Saturday. The American manager, Mr. Halpin, protested the decision and lobbied in the press for his runner. He claimed that Carpenter's style was to run wide around the turn "so as not to chop his stride, as was his tactics in both of the heats." In his view the runners had not come in contact and Halswelle could have taken an inside route down the stretch. Ending the race prematurely was wrong; it should have been completed and judged following its conclusion.¹⁴¹ American officials also argued that if the race was voided then Carpenter should not have been disqualified, since no race had been run.¹⁴²

The British press was unanimous in their contention that Carpenter had fouled Halswelle and that such gamesmanship violated the principles of sport. The Star argued for objectivity in the matter: "the fact that Halswelle happens to be an Englishman, and the fact that Carpenter is an American, ought to be resolutely ignored by our American friends and by ourselves." Fellowship between sportsmen was more important than the outcome of contests. The Star sided with the British

¹⁴¹ Daily Express, 24 July 1908, 1.

¹⁴² Morning Leader, 25 July 1908, 1.

judges' version of the incident, as it appealed to fair play and the final judgment of the officials: "for the spirit of sport is a higher thing than patriotism, and there are times when it calls for the sacrifice of our dearest prejudices and our most cherished convictions." Part of the Americans' sensitivity was caused by their losses in the 100 and 200 meters.¹⁴³ On Saturday, the day of the 400 meter rerun, as an illustration of the hosts' graciousness and fairness, the Star's demanded, "LET CARPENTER RUN!"¹⁴⁴

The 400 meter fiasco did not end the drama in the stadium, but was merely a prelude to another confusing and thrilling climax on Friday in the Games most celebrated event, the marathon. "No event appeals more strongly to the imagination than the Marathon race." So wrote E. Norman Gardiner to begin his historical preview of the marathon in the Daily Mail, on 22 July.¹⁴⁵ The following day the Evening News previewed the event on its front page. It included a list of the positions the runners drew for the start of the race, an interview with one of the favorites, Tom Longboat, a Canadian Indian runner, and a lengthy description of the race course.¹⁴⁶ Similar introductions to the race appeared the day of the race in the

¹⁴³ Star, 24 July 1908, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Star, 25 July 1908, 1.

¹⁴⁵ Daily Mail, 22 July 1908, 9.

¹⁴⁶ Evening News, 23 July 1908, 1.

Morning Leader, the Daily Express, and the Star. Both the Star and the Evening News provided regular updates about the race in each of their afternoon and evening editions in the days leading up to the race, as well as a map of the course. The Star predicted that “this afternoon’s great race, with Windsor for the Fennel-field and the Shepherd’s-bush Stadium (approach by Duncane-rd.) for the Akropolis, should go down to history as the most successful of the series so dramatically inaugurated by Pheidippides.”¹⁴⁷

Fifty-five runners began the race at 2:33pm near the East Terrace at Windsor Castle and the course meandered around suburban London, passing through Slough, Uxbridge, Ruislip, Harrow, Wembley, Harlsden, and Wormwood Scrubbs before reaching the finish line in the stadium. The evening papers, the Star and the Evening News, kept their readers updated on the progress of the race during the afternoon.¹⁴⁸

Saturday’s newspaper columns recounted the race from start to finish. At the starting line, on Friday, “blazing sunshine” had replaced the inclement weather which had plagued the Games since their commencement two weeks before.¹⁴⁹ The race began on the Windsor Castle grounds, about a quarter of a mile from the castle, with a signal from the Princess of Wales to Lord Desborough, who fired the starting pistol.

¹⁴⁷ Star, 24 July 1908, 2.

¹⁴⁸ Star, 24 July 1908, 3; Evening News, 24 July 1908, 1.

¹⁴⁹ Morning Leader, 25 July 1908, 1.

About a third of the way into the race two British runners, T. Lord and J. Price, led by ten seconds over C. Hefferon (South Africa) and P. Dorando (Italy), who were followed by T. Longboat (Canada), J. T. Beale (Britain), and F. Appleby (Britain). By the time the runners had reached Harrow (18 miles) and its two-mile long steady incline, the race was over for many of the runners. Hefferon led the way, “looking a definite winner,” followed by Dorando and soon after, a trio of competitors, Longboat, Appleby, and J. J. Hayes (United States). “What amazed everybody who watched was the absence of the Britishers,” according to the Morning Leader, and it was clear that Appleby, Britain’s only hope, would not overtake the leader.¹⁵⁰ As the runners reached Wormwood Scrubbs, Dorando had overtaken Hefferon and opened up a commanding lead over Hayes and Hefferon, who began struggling and soon fainted.

Meanwhile, newspapers estimated the crowd packing the stadium at between 80,000 and 100,000, and authorities turned away approximately 20,000 people.¹⁵¹ Dorando entered the stadium first, almost at a walking pace, and three minutes ahead of Hayes. The leader struggled to orient himself as he seemed unsure of which way to travel around the track. His indecision and fatigue surprised the crowd: “this was not the triumphant victor they had so eagerly awaited.”¹⁵² Officials, friends, and

¹⁵⁰ Morning Leader, 25 July 1908, 1.

¹⁵¹ Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5.

¹⁵² Daily Express, 25 July 1908, 1.

supporters surrounded Dorando, and as the crowd roared, he struggled to run 80 yards before collapsing. He remained there for over a minute with officials encircling him. After finally arising, he struggled on again, before tumbling to the track, rising to his feet and falling once more halfway around the turn. With Dorando on his back and the crowd riveted to the drama on the track, Dorando's pursuer, Hayes, entered the stadium. Once again the exhausted Dorando rose to his feet, only yards from the finish, and continued his trek at a staggering walk, which seemed to get slower and slower as Hayes closed the gap. Just a few feet from the finish Dorando went down again with a mass of people surrounding him. The race's leader floundered to his feet for the last time and crossed the finish line with assistance from an official, 30 seconds ahead of Hayes.¹⁵³ As one Daily Express journalist observed Dorando's finish, "he was finally hauled across the tape, more dead than alive; only to lose the victory for which he had struggled so hard."¹⁵⁴ Personnel took the exhausted Dorando to his dressing room on a stretcher. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a guest columnist for the Daily Mail, described the turmoil and intrigue experienced by the huge audience in the stadium, "It is horrible, and yet fascinating, this struggle between a set purpose and an utterly exhausted frame."¹⁵⁵ American officials

¹⁵³ This account of the marathon's conclusion is drawn from reports in the Daily Express, the Daily Mail, and the Morning Leader from 25 July 1908.

¹⁵⁴ Daily Express, 25 July 1908, 1.

¹⁵⁵ Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5.

protested the ill-advised aid rendered to Dorando in his attempt to finish the race, because "it was their duty, as well as their right to make it."¹⁵⁶ After a conference, officials upheld the protest and declared Hayes the victor, because Dorando had received assistance.

The final day of the London Games saw a few events and the prize ceremony at the stadium. One event was the repeat of the 400 meter final in which Halswelle won a gold medal for Britain. While officials had disqualified Carpenter, who had interfered with Halswelle in the first final run on Thursday, the two other American finalists, Taylor and Robbins, refused to rerun the race in protest of the disqualification. Halswelle ran to victory unopposed in 50 seconds.¹⁵⁷

At the stadium on Saturday afternoon, the Queen presided over the presentation of gold medals to the athletes. Earlier in the day, the second- and third-place finishers had received their awards. Even as the Olympic heroes were on parade, public imagination focused on the tragic figure from the marathon race. The Queen awarded Dorando with a personal gift of a gold cup for his effort and "moral victory."¹⁵⁸ He had become a celebrity overnight as the press coverage of the marathon and the prize ceremony illustrated. The "ITALIAN'S HEROIC

¹⁵⁶ Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5.

¹⁵⁷ Evening News, 25 July 1908, 1.

¹⁵⁸ Lloyd's Weekly News, 26 July 1908, 2.

STRUGGLE,” as Lloyd’s Weekly News described it, triumphed over the perseverance of the champion, J. J. Hayes, in some newspapers.¹⁵⁹ Even in defeat, Dorando had exhibited the “pluck” expected of a sportsman.¹⁶⁰ Conan Doyle had penned his account of the marathon as a letter from the stadium and as news reached him that Dorando might be disqualified, he wrote that “if true, it is indeed a tragedy. But there are prizes higher even than the oak branch and the medal. The Italian’s great performance can never be effaced from our records of sport, be the decision of the judges what it may.”¹⁶¹

With the close of the Games newspapers reflected on the meaning of the Olympiad and the Olympic movement. International cooperation had taken a blow with the intense criticism from France and, especially, the United States concerning “British methods, British rules, and British fairness.” A Daily Mail leader noted the contradictions between the international fellowship which was an ideal of the Olympic movement and the conflict promoted by the Olympic contests. “Too little allowance was made for the spirit of competition and racial rivalry, which in the

¹⁵⁹ Lloyd’s Weekly News, 26 July 1908, 1-2 and 5.

¹⁶⁰ The Times, 25 July 1908, 11; Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5; Evening News, 25 July 1908, 1.

¹⁶¹ Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5.

modern world is particularly strong.”¹⁶² The contests and protests in the stadium had overflowed into the columns of newspapers at home and abroad.¹⁶³

Some of the same newspapers which shaped the perceptions of their readers with reports about the conflicts and controversies in the stadium also were staunch promoters of British military superiority. As supporters of the naval program and the arms race with Germany the Daily Express and the Daily Mail published updates on the international military rivalry in the same pages with their Olympic coverage.¹⁶⁴

In this view, sporting contests were measurements or reflections on the state of a nation and its race. The Daily Mail suggested that the Americans’ numerous protests against the British during the Games was due to British successes and American failures in the arena of sport. In effect, accusations of unfairness were excuses that did not address the “real causes” of American mediocrity at the Games. The competitors were not at fault, rather the blame lay with the team managers and the foreign press, which had stoked the flames of indignation. The contests on the field of play seemed to mirror the conflict in life, instead of promoting peace. Competition, after all, was the key to progress, the controversial incidents were few in number, and hopefully, the aggrieved parties would soon abandon their animosity

¹⁶² Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 4.

¹⁶³ The Times, 27 July 1908, 10.

¹⁶⁴ For example, see the Daily Express, 13 July 1908, 1; 14 July 1908, 1, 4; 15 July 1908, 1; 17 July 1908, 1; 20 July 1908, 1, 5; 23 July 1908, 4; Daily Mail, 18 July 1908, 4; 23 July 1908, 4; 24 July 1908, 7; 25 July 1908, 5.

about the London Games.¹⁶⁵ Such hope was misplaced, however, and the acrimony continued throughout the rest of the year, as Mallon and Buchanan have documented.¹⁶⁶

Such chauvinism as displayed in the Daily Mail and the Daily Express which downplayed Britain's defeats, was balanced by the more evenhanded analysis in The Times. Overall, Britain had earned victories in 23 events to the Americans' 18 successes. On the running track, however, where press attention seemed most focused, the United States outpaced Britain 15 to 8. The Americans had taught the British some lessons, according to The Times:

Especially we of the United Kingdom have learnt that in speed and strength we are far behind the Americans, and even our last confident hope that the older nation was endowed with greater powers of endurance than its mighty rival received a rude shock when our chosen long-distance runners were hopelessly out-classed in the severest test of all.¹⁶⁷

These comments reflect the attention focused on the medal race which Britain and the United States dominated. These numbers brought some relief to those concerned

¹⁶⁵ Daily Mail, 27 July 1908, 4.

¹⁶⁶ Mallon and Buchanan, Appendix III, "The British and American Responses to 'The Battle of Shepherd's Bush,'" 327-405.

¹⁶⁷ The Times, 27 July 1908, 10.

with Britain's athletic superiority.¹⁶⁸ The Games were a success because of good performances by British athletes in cycling, swimming, and wrestling.¹⁶⁹

As journalists noted, the key to victory for athletes was their specialization. Specialization was a corresponding virtue of the efficiency movement. British society, according to this view, needed specialized technicians in government, industry, and the military to maintain its dominant position in the world.¹⁷⁰ In their quest for national glory, states needed the top performers, or specialized technicians, in each sporting event, not the best athletes in general. A division of labor existed in the Olympics. Athletes concentrated on their best events and the Americans had numerous specialists in the discus, hammer throw, shot put, and the sprints which they had expected to win.¹⁷¹ Even Conan Doyle noted the make-up of the American squad: "These Americans specialise, and yet they retain a remarkable appearance of all-around excellence."¹⁷² The Sportsman argued that

in the eyes of the world that nation which can point at the conclusion of the games to the greatest number of gold medals secured is the

¹⁶⁸ Sportsman, 29 July 1908, 7.

¹⁶⁹ Athletic News, 27 July 1908, 5.

¹⁷⁰ George C. Brodrick, "A Nation of Amateurs," Nineteenth Century 284 (1900): 521-535. For the rebuttal to Brodrick, see Herbert Maxwell, "Are We Really a Nation of Amateurs?" Nineteenth Century 284 (1900): 1051-1063.

¹⁷¹ Daily Mail, 11 July 1908, 3.

¹⁷² Daily Mail, 25 July 1908, 5.

nation most entitled to plume itself on athletic supremacy, and it cannot be denied that victory goes, and must go, to the nation which sends the most carefully picked and completely organised team of specialists.¹⁷³

British athletes were amateurs compared to the professional manner of the Americans. Even after this analysis of the outcome on the track, The Times remained wedded to the amateur ideal that sport was not a business that required endless toil. Extensive and exhaustive training ruined sport. The ideal amateur was an all-around athlete who competed in numerous sports and, after all, British athletes had fared well utilizing their “antiquated methods.”¹⁷⁴ Such a view of sport was analogous to the powerful anti-industrial current of thought prominent at the time and recounted by historian Martin Wiener.¹⁷⁵ This variety of athlete was still the rule in Britain as John Arlott has argued:

despite the hints of deepening study of technique, the Olympics of 1908 were genuinely amateur at heart. . . . Many of the best performers took part in two or three events, and the large number of athletes who entered for eight or more indicates that it was still the day of the gifted all-rounder with a natural aptitude for sport, and that strict specialization still lay ahead.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Sportsman, 29 July 1908, 7.

¹⁷⁴ The Times, 27 July 1908, 10.

¹⁷⁵ Martin J. Wiener, English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹⁷⁶ Arlott, “Sport,” 458.

The Americans were “business-like” in their quest for victory while the British lacked the systematic physical training and racing strategy necessary to defeat their adversaries in athletics.¹⁷⁷ During the first week of the games the Daily Mail had been critical of what it termed Britain’s “national apathy.” It displayed itself in the British approach to sport, the casual training athletes pursued, and the second place finishes in athletics that the newspaper expected. The apathy was prevalent in more important areas of British life as well, and this was the newspaper’s main point: “It is seen not only in the neglect of the Olympic Games: but also - and even more markedly - in the carelessness which pays no attention to the rapid progress of the German Navy.”¹⁷⁸ Casualness in sport mirrored what the Daily Mail and other concerned Britons viewed as an indifference to the growing strength of Germany.

The amateur selection and training which had characterized British athletics during the 1908 Games came under serious attack following the next installment of the Games. Four years later in Stockholm, Sweden dominated the medal count over the United States and Great Britain. In the Social Darwinist and nationalistic zeal of the era such a defeat was a cause of significant worry, and reflected on Britain’s role in the world, as well as its methods. Before and after 1912, T. A. Cook continued to lobby the Foreign Office for financial and diplomatic help for the British Olympic

¹⁷⁷ Pope emphasizes this point in the case of the American team, 46.

¹⁷⁸ Daily Mail, 26 July 1908, 6.

effort but the office believed the games were not a government concern.¹⁷⁹ The BOC also created a special committee, whose members included Cook and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, which made a public appeal for £100,000 to underwrite the 1916 Olympic team. Sidney S. Abrahams explained the predicament in Badminton Magazine: “there has been a splendid assumption of British infallibility, and a sudden discovery (after an egregiously crushing defeat) that foreigners do not ‘play the game’ as the Briton understands it.”¹⁸⁰ The committee sent an open letter to 3,000 newspapers and periodicals throughout the United Kingdom for their support in improving on Britain’s poor performance in Stockholm with a program which included talent searches, coaching, and special training. Prominent supporters of the fund included The Times, which Northcliffe had acquired in 1908, and the Duke of Westminster.¹⁸¹ Pledges only totaled over £10,000 at the end of 1913 and the special committee abandoned further attempts at fund raising.¹⁸² The Morning Leader attributed the failure of the fund to the persistence of the amateur ideology,

¹⁷⁹ Polley, 116-110.

¹⁸⁰ Sidney S. Abrahams, “English Athletics and Future Olympic Contests,” Badminton Magazine 35 (1912): 508.

¹⁸¹ Appeal for National Subscriptions for the Olympic Games, Open Letter, ADD 62167, f. 67, Northcliffe Papers, Manuscript Reading Room, British Library, London.

¹⁸² Arnd Krüger, “‘Buying Victories is Positively Degrading’: European Origins of Government Pursuit of National Prestige through Sport,” in Tribal Identities, 186-189.

which was incompatible with the committee's program because an amateur "must not make sport the business of his life or anything but a casual interlude in it."¹⁸³

While the Olympic mantra remained peace, cooperation, and understanding, after 1908 international sporting competitions became a standard of national rank for competing countries in an increasingly threatening Europe. After the events in the stadium at Shepherd's Bush had concluded the Daily Mail declared that "the Olympic Games were designed to test and did fairly test, the physical capacity of the civilised peoples."¹⁸⁴ The question that was debated in and out of the press in Britain was how to ensure first-rate performances by British amateur athletes that would lead, in turn, to victories. In his history of sport in modern Britain, Richard Holt has written that "the balance between nationalism, 'professionalism', and science on the one hand and individualism, the games ethic, and 'effortless superiority' on the other set the tone of inter-war representative athletics."¹⁸⁵ While certainly true, the dilemma

¹⁸³ Morning Leader, 17 January 1914, 4.

¹⁸⁴ Daily Mail, 27 July 1908, 4.

¹⁸⁵ Holt, 275.

posed by these competing values had emerged as early as 1908, in the crucible of
“THE GREATEST ATHLETIC CONTEST IN HISTORY.”

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION: "THE NEWS THAT SELLS"

During the sixty years prior to 1914 a new leisure economy had emerged in Britain aimed at a mass market. Two critical components of this economy were sport and the press, which combined to create a vibrant commercialized sporting culture. Sport furnished the press with daily subject matter and the press offered sport daily promotion. A third factor, closely related to sport and the press was betting, which in some ways served as a link between the two. If sport and the press had a "symbiotic relationship," as this study has attempted to illustrate, then betting, sport, and the press had a synergistic association during the same period.

The repeal of the Stamp Duty in 1855 allowed penny newspapers to take advantage of the popularity of horse racing as a subject that sold newspapers. Over twenty years ago Hugh Cunningham declared that the leisure culture of 1880 would have looked familiar to us today.¹ In the case of horse racing and its coverage in the press this was certainly the case. Prior to the appearance of the "Hotspur" column in the Daily Telegraph, and the creation of the first penny sporting paper, the Sporting Life, sporting papers largely were beyond the means of many readers. Horse racing remained a socially exclusive sport, but it gained a regular following farther down the social scale as newspapers provided daily information about the sport. For many

¹ Hugh Cunningham, Leisure and the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-1880 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 14.

readers, racing became a sport they could follow each day in the newspaper. This “daily” quality altered the nature of interest in horse racing. The experience of racing was a festive, annual, and local affair before the birth of the penny press. With the advent of the Daily Telegraph, its “Hotspur” column, and the many “Hotspur” imitators in the press, racing became a daily, national part of the social life of many readers as it is today. Access to racing information increased even further during the 1880s, when halfpenny evening papers began featuring the subject and publishing a condensed version of the information available in the morning press, including racing entries and the “latest results.” Most of the evening papers also published a “one o’clock” edition which was filled with racing information.

Penny sporting papers attracted readers with training intelligence, starting prices, and predictions from a tipster. Correspondents and columnists with the penny sporting papers analyzed the performances of horses in training and in competition and scrutinized the movements in the betting market for their reports. These papers were also vital to the mass betting culture of the period as the publication of starting prices by these papers governed the relationship between the punter and the bookmaker. The Sporting Life, the Sportsman, and the Sporting Chronicle were the authorities on starting prices and supplied their information to bettors and bookmakers via their own pages and the morning and evening newspapers to whom they sold their information.

Perhaps the most compelling service newspapers provided to bettors was tipping. Almost all newspapers furnished their readers with predictions for the races.

“Hotspur” of the Daily Telegraph and other racing columnists in the press reported on the events at the track and made selections which they shared with readers. Even newspapers not known for their sporting news employed tipsters, like the Standard. Racing information provided by newspapers became a significant aspect of a paper’s overall coverage which bettors relied on daily. It became so important to the social practice of betting that the anti-gambling movement could do nothing to stop it, even as it championed the prohibition of betting with the Street Betting Act of 1906.

The press was also a critical factor in the emergence of soccer and cricket as popular, commercialized sports with regularized schedules. Like with horse racing, newspapers enabled readers to experience the matches in print, and follow their clubs at home and away. With the success of halfpenny evening papers during the 1880s, the evening press counted on football and cricket news for a portion of their circulation and readers relied on newspapers as a conduit of information about their favorite clubs. Newspapers were instrumental in the creation of the organized, codified association football game. Proponents of a national organization had used the press to communicate their message and by the mid-1880s soccer had become popular enough to encourage publishers to devote entire editions to the game. These Saturday night specials were the medium for the language of soccer linking players and supporters. Unlike soccer, cricket had a long heritage of respectable competition. The rise of the county championship, however, was dependent upon the press. The press invented the championship during the late 1860s by rating the best county eleven at the end of the cricket season. Without any formal organization to govern

the schedules and play of the counties the press remained the authority for the championship until 1894. The arbiter of cricket rules, the Marylebone Cricket Club, remained a hands-off organization until 1894 when it reluctantly began to administer the championship.

While newspapers were powerful instruments in the promotion of sports they also were central to the fabrication and dissemination of their meanings. Racing received an immeasurable boost from the publication of training reports, starting prices, and predictions in the press between 1855 and 1914. It remained the most popular sport, appealing to “kings and commoners,” and newspapers promoted its aristocratic image. These key bits of information illustrate the synergistic relationship of racing, betting, and newspapers. As producers of this information newspapers were a critical element in sporting culture before and after 1914.

The press also sold soccer and cricket as popular sports with their coverage of the games. Even as professional soccer dominated the columns in newspapers after its legalization in 1885, the amateur ethos remained the ideal. In print, newspapers extolled the virtues of the amateur game and the amateur athlete which were the cornerstones of British sport. The same was true of cricket, which utilized both amateurs and professionals. Professionals, while vital to the health of the game, remained relegated to a secondary position as the newspaper coverage of the 1896 cricket strike illustrated. Amateurs, especially the legendary figure of W. G. Grace, were the ideal cricketers displaying genius, style, and verve in leading their respective elevens. Although Grace was not an amateur in the strict sense of the word, the press

presented him as an amateur as he transformed the game between the 1860s and 1900.

The amateur ideal also triumphed at the 1908 London Olympic Games as the press celebrated British sport in its battle against the world. Overall, Britain triumphed over its sporting adversaries in London, but not with the dominance some would have liked. After all, the Olympic Games were a symbol of amateurism, with only amateurs allowed to participate and some of Britain's best athletes were excluded. A lethargic response to the games from the public marred the first week, but agitation by the press helped to reduce the prices for the second week of competition and draw larger crowds. Because this was a unique event, lacking the regularity to which followers of sport were accustomed, perhaps this limited the attraction of the games. The infrequent nature of the Olympic Games also illustrates how crucial a regular schedule of sporting events was to the press and its growing readership. The 1908 Games also demonstrated the link between sport and national esteem. The perceived lack of British domination in the competition was associated with the relative decline of Britain in economic terms. In the language of the day, the British race was under attack and some newspapers, most notably the Daily Mail and the Daily Express, fed this hype as they promoted increasing naval expenditures in the face of German spending. Britain faced competition from America in the stadium and from Germany on the high seas.

The press was a conduit of information for readers interested in sport and newspapers in search of readers employed sporting news to broaden their potential

audience. The press was a creative force which helped to shape the meanings of racing, soccer, cricket, and the Olympics. These meanings were not monolithic, but multi-faceted, as this study has illustrated. Betting was always central to the publication of racing news, as the questions about training intelligence in penny sporting papers in the late 1860s and the debate over betting information in Nonconformist papers during the 1900s exemplify. Of course, the Street Betting Act of 1906 prohibited betting outside of racecourses and clubs without touching the publication of racing news and betting information. Most football news celebrated the amateur ideal in soccer, even as papers covered the increasingly popular professional leagues from 1885 onward. Even papers which advocated professional soccer like the Athletic News and the Football Evening News remained wedded to the amateur ideal. In the case of cricket, one only has to recall the very different coverage by The Times and the Star of the 1896 professional cricketers' strike to identify the various meanings of the game.

This varying coverage left readers to interpret the meanings of sport in their own ways.² While participating in and watching sport were important activities, reading about sport and discussing form, whether one bet or not, were significant social practices for all sections of the population, especially the working class. Betting occurred on street corners and in pubs throughout Britain between 1855 and

² Margaret Beetham, "Towards a Theory of the Periodical as a Publishing Genre," in Investigating Victorian Journalism, eds. Laurel Brake, Aled Jones, and Lionel Madden (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 21-22.

1914, and the press offered information to aid bettors in their forecasting. Whether bettors used this information was their own choice. Reading sporting news and discussing sport were activities in which followers of sport asserted their common interests.³ “The News That Sells” was more than just a product delivered by publishers as it connected Britons to contests on the field, to races on the track, and to the sporting culture of Britain.

³ Ross McKibbin, “Working-class Gambling in Britain, 1880-1939,” 120-126, and “Work and Hobbies in Britain, 1880-1950,” 163-164, in The Ideologies of Class (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo, “Perceived Patterns: Competition and Licence versus Class and Struggle,” Popular Culture and Class Conflict: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure, eds. Eileen Yeo and Stephen Yeo (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1981), p. 272.

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Cricket
Cricket and Football Field and Sports Telegram (Bolton)
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Daily Express
Daily Mail
Daily Telegraph
Evening News
Field
Football
Goal
Lloyd's Weekly News
Manchester Guardian
Morning Leader
News of the World
Penny Bell's Life and Sporting News
Referee
Reynolds's Newspaper
Saturday Night (Birmingham)
Spectator
Sporting Chronicle (Manchester)
Sporting Life
Sporting Mirror
Sporting Times
Sportsman
Standard
Sunday Chronicle (Manchester)
Star
Times

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Badminton Magazine
Baily's Magazine of Sports and Pastimes
Circulation Manager
Master Printer and Newspaper Owner
National Sporting League Journal
New Sporting Magazine
Newspaper Owner

Newspaper Owner and Manager
Newspaper Owner and Modern Printer
Newspaper Press Directory
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