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War, Peace and Sport

It seems almost mandatory to begin any discussion of the relationship between sport and war with George Orwell's famous dictum that sport 'is war minus the shooting' (1945, p. 10). For Orwell, even the Olympics should be considered as nothing less than 'mimic warfare' (1945, p.10). However, as Peter J. Beck observes (2013, pp. 72-73), such references usually overlook the precise context of Orwell's assessment and his specific targeting of international competition. Orwell was writing in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, on the eve of the Cold War, and at a time when memories of the Nazi mobilization of the Berlin Games of 1936 were still vivid. The Olympics would go on to form an arena of sporting diplomacy as well as a means of measuring national grandeur for many nations in the post-war era, lending itself in particular to the confrontation of the Western democracies and the Soviet bloc in a battle that also pitched capitalism against communism. Paradoxically, the event's founder, the aristocrat Pierre de Coubertin, had conceived the modern Games in a France still traumatized by defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870; not least as a riposte to the state's use of gymnastics in the schools of both countries as a form of military training for a future European conflict (Dine, 2012, p. 49).

Coubertin's vision for the International Olympic Congress in 1894 was founded on his own patriotic pacifism as well as a profound respect for what he saw as the British approach to sporting encounters, driven by amateurism, the spirit of fair play and the principles of muscular Christianity (Dine, 2012, pp. 45-50). Drawing on this tradition, Stuart Murray invites sports historians and sociologists to look more closely at international sporting organizations and 'the multifaceted contacts between a diverse cast of actors that make international sports possible' in order to understand the contribution that sports can make to diplomacy, conflict resolution and cultural understanding (2013, p. 193). We might therefore add a third term to Peter Donaldson's 'sport/war nexus' (2020, p. 7); that of peace. This frequently overlooked connection has been illustrated emblematically by such celebrated events as the football matches played by soldiers on the Western Front during the spontaneous truce of Christmas 1914 and the symbolic triumph of post-apartheid South Africa's 'Rainbow Nation' at the 1995 Rugby World Cup. As Bruce Kidd (2008) highlights, related principles of sporting reconciliation today inform those governments and NGOs seeking to mobilize sport in post-conflict situations, as well as for humanitarian and social development projects, under the banner of 'sport, development and peace'.

The present issue of the *Journal of War and Culture Studies* sets out to explore some aspects of the complex, overlapping relations of war, peace and sport. While defenders of the principles of muscular Christianity, for example, highlighted the values of team spirit, self-abnegation and the taming of base, sexual urges in adolescents and young men through seemingly innocent physical activity, 'the Victorian notion that the games pitch and the battle ground could be equated' gained prevalence in late nineteenth-century British society and beyond (Donaldson, 2020, p. 4), despite Coubertin's apparent aversion to bellicosity. As Varda Burstyn contends, at this time: 'Sport emerged as an institution [that provided] training in manly pursuits – war, commerce, and government – and a stepping stone out of the family of women and into the world of men' (1999, p.45). In short, muscular Christianity was the driving force of 'militarized, masculinist, corporate capitalism in its early-mature phases' as it spread through the English-speaking world. 'Core sports', such as football (in all its various forms), reflect this spirit in their emphasis on territorial conquest (Burstyn, 1999, p. 73).

Moreover, focusing on the evolution of a range of sports in the broader context of nineteenth-century Europe, Tony Collins demonstrates how nationalism and the emergence of sporting practice became intertwined in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars; sport thus became not only a way of preparing young male bodies and minds for combat, but a form of cultural defence in the assertion of a particular national identity (2013, pp. 21-25). It is this long-standing association of sport, army and empire that led Orwell to declare that 'Probably the battle of Waterloo *was* won on the playing-fields of Eton […]' before he decries the subsequent 'decay of ability in the ruling class' (1982, p. 55).

It is no coincidence that, as the century of nationalism, the nineteenth century was also the century of both mass education (where physical education often bore a deliberate resemblance to military training) and the codification of sporting practice. For Burstyn, the association of sport with warfare persists in the athletes idealized in modern sports culture who are constructed in the media 'as symbolic warriors or warriors-in-training' (1999, p. 43). Famously, Norbert Elias offers a more benign interpretation of this process of sublimation. Sport, he contends, 'offers people the liberating excitement of a struggle involving physical exertion and skill while limiting to a minimum the chance that anyone will get seriously hurt in its course' (1986, p. 165). Contact sports, from rugby to martial arts, as well as forms of hunting and horse racing, for example, operate a civilizing function in so far as their primary and original function is to remove actual physical combat from social interactions whilst offering 'the pleasurable excitement which appears to be one of the most elementary needs of human beings […]' (1986, p. 174.) It is perhaps thanks to sport's seemingly paradoxical nature, offering a simulacrum of war through ritualized competition, that the Olympics could become a simultaneous celebration of international understanding and of national, but also, in the Cold War, ideological rivalries. To this day, and around the globe, the language and rituals of many sports and their associated cultural practices continue to be influenced by the adversarial structures of warfare whilst being promoted as regulated encounters that promote mutual understanding and tolerance.

But what happens to sport at a time of real warfare? How is it experienced and justified by those who appear to have chosen the simulacrum of conflict over the opportunity to engage in the real thing? These are the questions explored by the first two articles of this special issue. In ' "Flannelled fools are strutting about tennis courts": lawn tennis in Britain during the Great War', Robert Lake examines the fate of a sport that failed to fulfil the criteria of muscular Christianity and which had become associated before the First World War with a leisured and supposedly effete social elite. Lake shows how, despite opposition, the sport not only continued to be played, but carved out a place for itself within the British war effort and then served to reinforce a certain idea of Britishness. Greg Ryan's article, ' "You are absolutely indifferent to the call of your King": horse racing, war and politics in New Zealand 1914-18', offers a similarly revealing case study from the same conflict. Like tennis in Britain, horse racing in New Zealand failed to fit a particular military-sporting paradigm that might have been invoked in order to support its continuation. Ryan explores how criticism of the sport's continuation was couched in both moral terms (through a long-standing attack on the sport's association with gambling) and as a need to demonstrate New Zealand's total commitment to the British imperial struggle.

The relationship with, and resistance to, empire also informs Paul Rouse's 'Sport and war in an Irish town', which uses the case of sport in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century

Enniscorthy, in South-East Ireland, to understand how resistance and then armed rebellion against the British empire expressed itself – and was literally played out – in the sporting choices of individuals and groups within the local community. The choice between 'foreign' or 'barracks games' (those imported from British sporting culture) and 'games of the Gael' (those advocated by the Gaelic Athletic Association) is often conceived at the macro-historical level as an essentially binary one: a choice between British rule or Irish nationalism. Rouse's study of individuals' and groups' engagement in sporting practice, however, offers a more nuanced reading of such choices whilst illustrating how they were nonetheless bound to the experience of conflict.

Our fourth article, Peter Watson's 'No place for a left-winger: the historical relationship between football and the FARC in Colombia', also traces the politics of sporting practice in a time of civil strife. Here Watson examines how the celebration of Colombian football (soccer) successes from the 1960s to the beginning of the twenty-first century were exploited by the press and successive governments to exclude FARC members from the national community and to construct the FARC as the Other against which the 'legitimate' Colombia defined itself. As Watson reveals, however, it was through football that the presidency of Juan Manuel Santos was able to construct a more inclusive national narrative. Football thus became a way of reintegrating the FARC into Colombian civil society, uniting former enemies through both spectatorship of the national team and sporting encounters on the pitch, thus ultimately helping to end the armed conflict.

Our two final articles highlight the persistence of the association of sport and martial cultures. 'Women, war and sport: The battle of the 2019 Solheim Cup', by Ali Bowes, Alan Bairner, Stuart Wigham and Niamh Kitching, demonstrates how the language of warfare continues to infuse not only media narratives of sporting encounters, but also the way that many sports professionals conceive their sport. Using women's international golf as a case study, the authors demonstrate how a sport that is usually pitched as a battle between individuals can, in the case of the Solheim Cup, which sees a US team take on a European team, serve as a vector for national (and supranational) identities. Moreover, their study of British press coverage reveals how, in the contemporary media, women can now also be conceived as proxy warriors, just as their male counterparts have been since the nineteenth century.

The notion of the proxy warrior is evident in Emma Pullen's and Michael Silk's 'Disability, masculinity, militarism: The Paralympics and the cultural (re-)production of the para-athlete-soldier'. Focusing on Channel 4's television coverage of the 2016 Paralympic Games in the UK, the authors argue that media coverage helps to build a plausible narrative in the minds of many viewers around inclusivity by highlighting the sporting achievement of para-athletes. However, it does so on the back of a narrative that continues to privilege the relationship between sporting prowess, masculinity and martial culture, often highlighting individual Paralympians' service record and detailing injuries received in combat. Paralympic coverage thus promotes a form of militarised, techno-human hyper-masculinity that ultimately fails to challenge gender norms or society's attitudes towards armed conflict.

A whole issue could rightly have been devoted to the history of the Olympics as a project designed to promote international understanding through international rivalry, for example. Similarly, the history of sporting practice as a site of resistance to oppression merits a special issue in its own right. And much more remains be written about the use of sport in conflict resolution. However, each of the articles contained in this special issue offers in its own way a valuable original contribution to our understanding of the wealth of relations that exist between war, peace and sport.

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