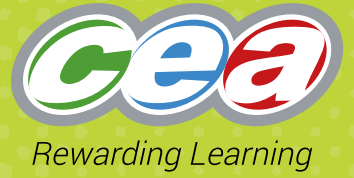


CELEBRATING OUR SPORTS



Pupil Book



Key Stage 2

Preface

This resource helps you to explore the history of sports played around the world, including in Northern Ireland.

Some of these sports, such as Gaelic football and hurling, first developed in Ireland. Others, such as rugby and cricket, originated in Britain and became popular around the world, particularly in countries that were part of the British Empire.

In Northern Ireland, the sports we learn to play are often a product of family and community ties stretching back generations. These sports are part of our local culture. The types of sports we play and teams we follow often have cultural, religious and class connections.

This situation is not unique to Northern Ireland. Many societies express their political and cultural allegiances in the sporting teams they support. For example, in soccer, Barcelona FC proudly proclaims the identity of the region of Catalonia. Their main rivals, Real Madrid, historically were viewed as being favoured by the Spanish Government and identified with Spain as opposed to any particular region.

Many famous sports men and women from Northern Ireland have been successful internationally. You will learn about some of them in this book.

Women's sport developed more slowly. In some cases, this was because of prejudice. You will read about some of the challenges women have faced in sport and in having their achievements recognised. Racial inequality has affected some sports. This book also covers this topic.

This book will introduce you to the history and features of many sports, as well as individual sports women and men. The activities will encourage you to discuss and explore the topics in your classroom and elsewhere.



Mythology, the Ancient World and Sport

There are many old stories, legends and myths in Ireland.

These are known generally as mythology. Most countries have myths and legends. Ancient Greek myths are very famous and Roman mythology has many similar stories.

These stories are not history; they are as prehistory. History is a written record of the past.

Mythology can be a lot more exciting than history. As myths are not actually true, they can tell us stories that are more exhilarating. There is often some element of truth in a myth.



The story of Cú Chulainn is one of the most famous Irish myths. It is also one of the most interesting when it comes to sport.

The original Cú Chulainn stories were probably passed on orally. They were first written down before Christianity came to Ireland in the fifth century. These stories tell us about what is one of the most ancient sports in the world.

What is even more remarkable about this sport is that it survives to the present day and may be more popular than ever. Both male and female players take part. Tens of thousands of people watch the biggest games, which are mostly played in Dublin.

It is the Irish sport of hurling.

The Cú Chulainn story includes an early reference to it.

People have played hurling for at least 1600 years, probably much longer. In fact, hurling is so ancient we could call it a prehistoric game.

Hurling is not the only sport with ancient origins. Every four years, coinciding with leap years, the world's biggest sporting event takes place: the Olympic Games.

Like hurling, these games are ancient. However, unlike hurling, they are not prehistoric. We know when and where they started: 3,000 years ago in an area of Greece called the Peloponnese.

Greeks were once the most powerful people in Europe. They built remarkable buildings and produced great soldiers, writers and poets.

Sports competitions took place at Olympia. The games took their name from this location. The first written reference to the Olympic Games that we know of was in 776 BCE.

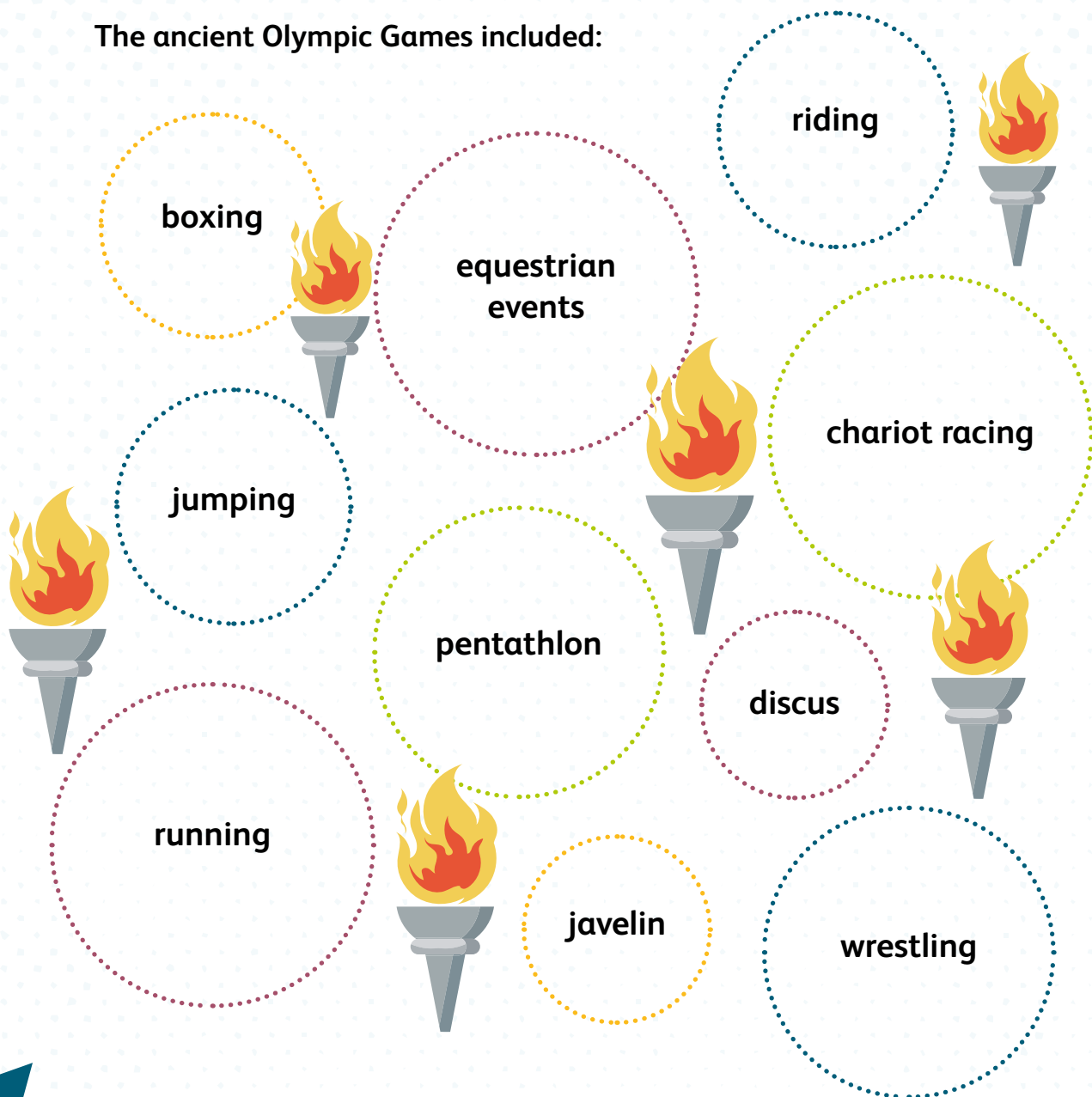
We don't know how the ancient games started. Some people think they began as a way to unite different parts of Greece that were at war with each other. The games took place every four years. This four-year period was known as an Olympiad and used as a date system.



The Ancient Olympics were different from the modern games. There were fewer events, and only free men who spoke Greek could compete. In the modern games, athletes from any country can compete. The ancient games always took place at Olympia. The modern Olympic Games take place in a different location every time.

As in our modern Olympics, winning athletes in the Ancient Olympics became heroes and made their hometowns famous. Politicians from Athens were very popular if they were also Olympic heroes.

The ancient Olympic Games included:



When the Romans conquered Greece, most of the rest of Europe and parts of Asia, Rome became a powerful, wealthy city. Its inhabitants needed entertainment.

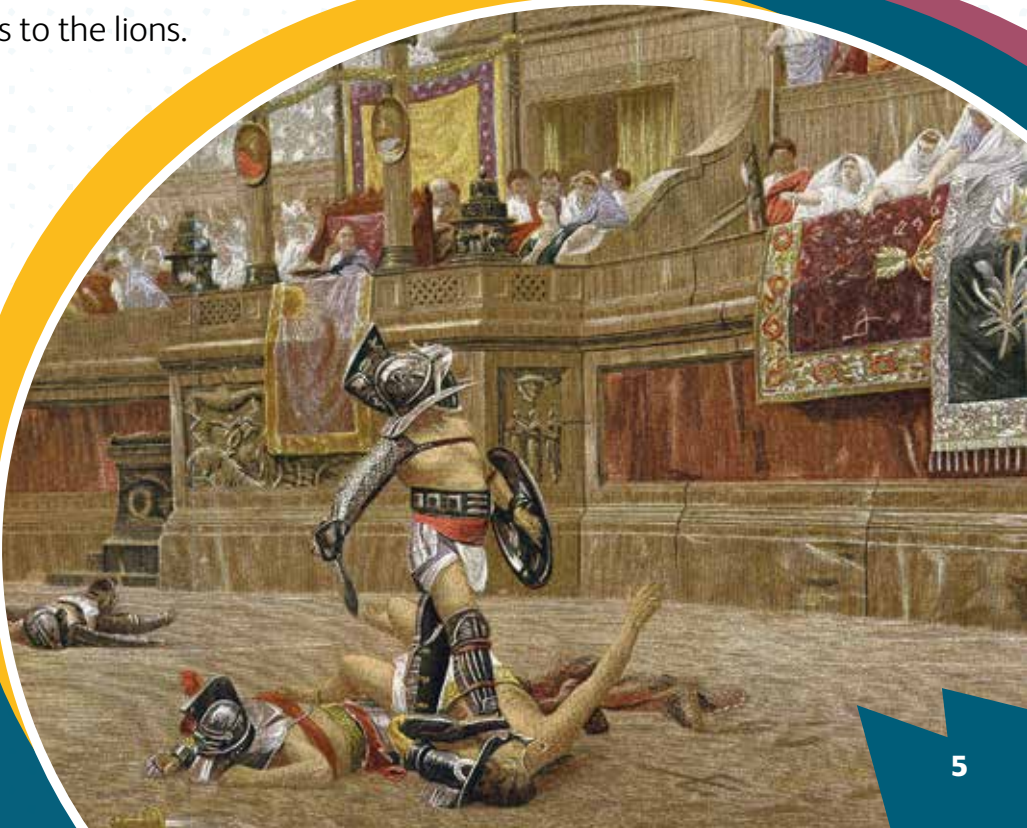
By 80 CE, the Romans had built a stadium bigger than many modern day stadiums. It took eight years to build and is still standing today.

It is called the Colosseum.

Stadium designers around the world have copied the Colosseum's design. The sports that took place in the Colosseum were very different from our modern sports. Up to fifty thousand spectators from all sections of Roman society watched as people hunted wild and exotic animals, executed prisoners and threw religious martyrs to the lions.

Gladiators were the stars of the show. They symbolised Roman honour and courage, using all their martial skills in a kill or be killed contest. Gladiators usually came from a slave or criminal background. Many were prisoners of war forced to perform in the arenas. Until 200 CE, women also fought as gladiators.

Romans set up special gladiator schools throughout the empire. Just as agents and scouts search all over the world for potential football stars today, potential gladiators were chosen from all over the Roman Empire.





Unlike the lifestyles footballers have today, conditions in the gladiator schools were similar to those in a prison. The food was good, as gladiators had to be fit and strong. Trainees also received the best possible medical attention.

Gladiators were very popular in ancient Rome, in the same way that footballers or boxers are today. Ordinary people saw them as heroes. Most gladiators were slaves, but some went on to make a name for themselves in Roman history as even the Emperors enjoyed being associated with them. The gladiator games continued for nearly a thousand years. They were especially popular between the first century BCE and the second century CE. The games declined during the early fifth century when the Roman Empire embraced Christianity.

The Circus Maximus

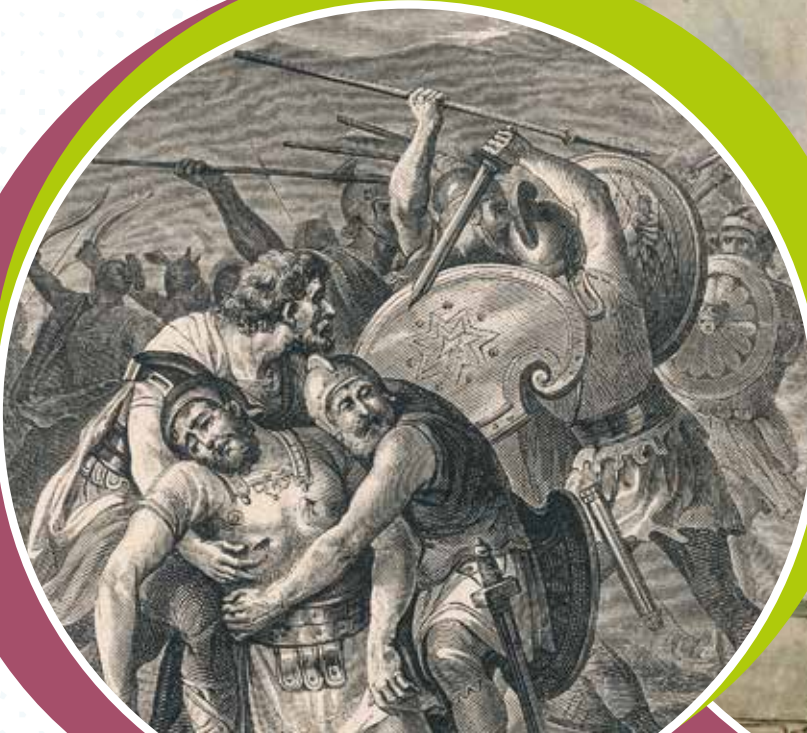
The Circus Maximus was another venue for Ancient Romans events.

It wasn't a circus with clowns and acrobats. It was a circuit where special horse and chariot races took place. As many as 150,000 people came to watch. Chariots were small carts or wagons pulled by up to four horses. Chariot racing was very dangerous and there were frequent crashes, injuries and even deaths. These races were popular right up to the fall of the Roman Empire.



Find Out More

- Try to find out more about the story of Cú Chulainn. You might find it in a library book about Irish myths and legends. You will see the game of hurling mentioned at least once in the story.
- Which other Irish myths and legends can you find? Here are some names of characters to help you: Fionn Mac Cumhaill (Finn McCool), Oisín and the Children of Lir.
- Spartacus was one of the most famous gladiators. The Romans captured him and sold him as a slave. Find out more about how Spartacus and other gladiators escaped from gladiator school and rebelled against the Romans.





Origins

The first recorded reference to cricket is from the late 1500s. Mainly farm workers and wealthy people played the game. It was a great opportunity for noblemen to bet. Cricket was first played in the southeast of England. It has grown to become the world's second most popular spectator sport, after football. The first reference to women playing the sport was in 1745 when the 'eleven maids of Bramley played the eleven maids of Hambledon'.



The Need for Rules

Cricket was the first sport to have its own set of rules. These rules were created because of the high stakes involved in betting on the outcomes of cricket matches. The earliest rules were written on a handkerchief in 1744. This is now on display at Lord's Cricket Ground in St John's Wood, London.

Cricket in Ireland

The first record of a cricket match in Ireland was in 1792, when the Military of Ireland played the Gentlemen of Ireland at Phoenix Park in Dublin. The game became extremely popular, as it did in most British colonies, reaching its height in the middle of the nineteenth century. Cricket is a major part of Ireland's national sporting heritage, pre-dating all of the Gaelic sports except hurling. People throughout Ireland enjoyed the game.

By the end of the nineteenth century, cricket's popularity began to decline. This was mainly because the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), which formed in 1884, banned its members from playing British or garrison sports. Garrison sports were those that soldiers stationed in Ireland played.

The GAA wanted to encourage Irish sports such as football and hurling. It especially wanted to do this in poorer areas, particularly those where people had suffered at the hands of landlords during the Famine.

There was a perception that cricket was the preferred game of landlords who had treated many of their tenant farmers badly. This is why the numbers of people playing cricket in Ireland dwindled. After partition, in 1922, cricket became more popular with people in Northern Ireland, which had stronger ties to Britain.

The GAA lifted its ban on members playing cricket in 1971, but the growth of cricket's popularity in Ireland has remained slow. A cricketing union was established in 1923, but it was not until the 1980s that it was able to field a team to take part in a proper competitive international match.





International Cricket

Although the interest in cricket in Ireland grew slowly, it developed rapidly elsewhere in the world. It became popular in nations that were part of the British Empire, in particular India, Australia, New Zealand and the West Indies. These countries enjoy hot, dry climates that provide perfect conditions for playing the game. Over one hundred countries around the world play cricket, although only about ten of these play at the highest level. There are three main formats in professional cricket: test cricket, one-day cricket and Twenty20 (T20). Both one-day cricket and T20 cricket have their own World Cup tournaments.

Notable Successes

Ireland had its greatest success in the one-day format of the game. On 2 July 1969, Ireland scored what is probably its most famous cricket victory in a one-day game, beating the West Indies in Sion Mills, County Tyrone. The West Indies were the kings of cricket at the time and this victory was a huge upset. Ireland achieved another great and unexpected win in 2011, when they beat England in the World Cup in Bangalore, India. This was only the team's second appearance at a World Cup. Batsman Kevin O'Brien scored what was the fastest ever hundred in the history of the competition.



Women in Cricket

Women participate in all three formats of cricket. In Ireland, women had an international team before men. They played their first one-day game in 1987. They finished fourth at the World Cup just one year after playing their first match. They went on to great achievements in the following two decades. They were runners-up in the European Championship in 1995 and 1999. They became champions in 2001 and 2009. Test cricket has not been so popular with the women's national team. They played one match against Pakistan in Dublin in 2000 and won comprehensively. This gave the Ireland women's cricket team a 100 percent winning record in test cricket.

Cricket has many different customs and rules. It was the first sport to have its own written rules and governing body, setting the tone for how the sport developed.

Find Out More

- Carry out some research about the different people involved in a game of cricket. How many are in a team? What are the different roles in the team? Are all players of equal importance to the team?
- Investigate where cricket is played. Look at a map of the world and identify which countries play cricket. Where is your nearest cricket club or school that plays cricket? Explore some of the history around this.
- Find out about the different cricket formats. What are the rules of each? How do you win the game?
- Each sport has its own language. Can you think of some terms associated with cricket that only a person familiar with the sport will understand?





The History of Football

Tsu' Chu, a form of football, was played in China in the second and third centuries BCE. The game involved kicking a feather-filled leather ball through a small opening into a net fixed onto bamboo canes.

The Japanese game of kemari dates back to the early centuries CE. Players stand in a circle and pass a ball to each other, trying to prevent it from hitting the ground.

The modern game of football began in England in 1863 with the formation of the Football Association. Football had different rules according to local traditions and agreements. The Association aimed to establish a fixed set of rules to govern the game.

The Football Association Challenge Cup was the first competition played according to the agreed rules. We now know this as the FA Cup.



Pioneers of the Passing Game

The Royal Engineers Football Club was one of the first twelve teams to compete in the FA Cup. Major Francis Marindin founded the club in 1863. It pioneered the passing game, when most other teams kicked long balls or resorted to dribbling to advance. The Engineers reached the final of the inaugural FA Cup in 1872, only to lose 1–0 to the Wanderers. In 1875, the Engineers won the FA Cup. Marindin retired and became a respected referee, officiating at eight FA Cup Finals.

Football in Ireland

The first game of football in Ireland was played on 24 October 1878. Two Scottish teams, Caledonians and Queen's Park, met at the Ulster Cricket Club in Belfast. John M McAleery, the treasurer of Cliftonville Cricket Club, arranged the fixture while he was visiting Scotland.

McAleery persuaded his cricket club to establish the first football club in Ireland the following year, making Cliftonville FC the first and oldest football club in Ireland. The Irish Football Association was formed in November 1880 and the Irish Cup tournament was first held in 1881.

Ten years later, an Irish League was formed. All of its teams were from Ulster. Most of the sport's main teams came from Belfast. Teams emerged in Dublin and began competing in the Irish Cup and league in the early twentieth century.





Irish Football's Cricket Roots

Three of the earliest football clubs in Ireland, Belfast Celtic, Distillery and Cliftonville, formed through cricket teams. Cricket arrived in Ireland and spread across the country earlier than football. Many cricket clubs were founded in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Laws of Cricket were drawn up in the 1700s. It was well established as a sport in Britain and Ireland when the rules of football were written. Many cricket clubs decided to establish football teams to have a sport to play when the summer cricket season finished.

The Beginnings of International Football in Ireland

John McAlery also captained the Ireland team in their first international fixture against England in February 1882. The Irish team lost, 13–0. It was another five years before the Ireland team claimed its first international victory, a 4–1 win over Wales at Cliftonville's Oldpark Avenue home ground in March 1887.

For the first forty years that Ireland played international matches, almost all of their games were against the Home Nations: England, Scotland and Wales. These games were part of an annual competition called the British Home Championship.

Ireland's record in the Home Championship competition was not particularly impressive. In the first 30 years of the tournament, the Ireland team finished last of the four countries seventeen times.



The 1913–14 Home Nations Championship

The last tournament before the outbreak of World War I gave Ireland its first significant achievement in international football. After defeating England for the first time in their previous meeting, the Ireland team repeated the feat, stunning their English hosts with a 3–0 win after defeating Wales 2–1 in Wrexham. A last minute equaliser in Belfast against Scotland secured the country's first Home Nations title.

That 1913–14 Home Nations winning Ireland team included a Lithuanian-born Jewish player, Louis Bookman. Born Louis Buchalter, he moved with his family to Cork aged nine to escape anti-Semitic violence in the Russian Empire. The son of a rabbi, Louis went on to become the first Jewish footballer to play in top-flight football in England, winning five caps for Ireland along the way.



BELFAST CELTIC 1st XI., 1936-37.

Winners of Irish League, Co. Antrim Shield and Irish Cup.

"Irish News" Photo



Two Irelands

The early 1920s was a defining period in Ireland's history. Partition created two states: The Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. The political divisions in Ireland contributed to a growing sense of frustration, outside of Ulster, with how the northern-dominated Irish Football Association was developing the game throughout the rest of Ireland. Because of this, the Football Association of Ireland was established at a meeting in Dublin in June 1921. It administered and organised the game in the Irish Free State (later renamed the Republic of Ireland).



For almost three decades after partition, the two associations played under the name Ireland and selected players from the whole island. Players could be picked and play for both Ireland teams. Jimmy Kelly was one of the dual Ireland international players who, in March 1936, was on the winning side for both Ireland teams (against Wales in Belfast and Switzerland in Dublin) in the same week.

It wasn't until 1953 that the Federation of International Football Associations (FIFA), the world governing body for football, demanded an end to this practice. It asserted that the two Ireland teams should be renamed: Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Northern Ireland

George Best, one of football's greatest ever players, came from Belfast. He wore the green and white shirt of Northern Ireland throughout his career. Although he never represented his country at any major tournament finals, his achievements for Manchester United have become legendary. These included winning the club's first European Cup in 1968.

In 1958, Northern Ireland secured its first ever place in a World Cup tournament. The team would not achieve this again until the 1980s, when the team secured places in two more World Cup finals (in 1982 and 1986) under Billy Bingham's management. In 2016, Northern Ireland competed in the finals of a European Championships competition for the first time.

Republic of Ireland

Robbie Keane was the most prolific Irish goal scorer ever at international level. He scored 68 goals in the 146 games he played for his country in an 18-year career. He played for the Republic of Ireland in the 2002 World Cup and the 2012 and 2016 European Championships.

The Republic of Ireland competed in three international tournaments between 1988 and 1994 under Jack Charlton's management. He was a former World Cup winning player with his native England in 1966.





Sectarianism and Politics in Football

Belfast was the first home of football in Ireland. The teams and their support bases reflected the tight knit communities in all four quarters of the city – Glentoran in the east, Cliftonville in the north, Linfield in the south and Distillery and Belfast Celtic in the west.

With their base in the Pound Loney (Falls) district of the city, Belfast Celtic soon became the team supported by many Catholics across Belfast. Many Protestants supported Linfield and Glentoran.

Linfield and Belfast Celtic became the most successful Irish League sides. By 1949, Linfield had won nineteen titles and Celtic fourteen titles of the first 48 league campaigns since 1890. The league was suspended during both world wars.



Massive crowds attended fixtures between these two Belfast giants. The sectarian tensions and violence that flared up in the city over political events soon found an outlet at football games. Many matches between Celtic and their cross-town rivals, Linfield and Glentoran, were marred by violent incidents.

The Celtic team was twice forced to withdraw from competition due to political and religious upheaval affecting the city. The most infamous incident occurred at the annual Boxing Day match against Linfield at Windsor Park in 1948, when some Linfield fans ran on to the field and attacked several of the Celtic players, breaking the leg of Celtic striker, Jimmy Jones.

The Celtic team left the league a few months later, never to play again.

The Derry City Story

Derry City played in the Irish League from its formation in 1928 until 1972, when the club withdrew after a dispute with the football authorities over its ability to play home matches in Derry amid the political violence engulfing Northern Ireland.

The club joined the southern League of Ireland in 1985, and has competed in that league since.





Women's Football

Women were playing football within decades of the formation of the Football Association in England. The first recognised, recorded women's football match was in 1895. The city of Preston in England was the first stronghold of women's soccer. Dick Kerr's Ladies team was formed there. It became famous for organising matches to raise money for charity.

It wasn't until much later that organised women's football leagues were established in England. By the 1920s, there were more than 150 women's football teams. A game between Dick Kerr's Ladies and St. Helen's Ladies in 1920 drew more than 53,000 spectators to Goodison Park in Liverpool.

In 1921, the English Football Association banned women from playing in their football grounds. This was because it believed that the game was 'quite unsuitable for females and ought not to be encouraged.' This was a devastating blow, effectively killing off the game for several generations in England.



Women's football leagues were set up in Italy and France during the 1930s, but it wasn't until the 1970s that the women's game really began to flourish once again. It has continued to grow since then. The FA lifted its ban in 1971.

Women's football teams now compete in leagues and tournaments in the same way as their male counterparts. There are also international tournaments, including the European Championships and World Cup. These have helped to promote the sport and increase participation. In 2017, Northern Ireland hosted the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Women's Under 19 Championship. This was the first time that Northern Ireland had hosted an international women's football competition.





The Irish Inventor of the Penalty Kick

Milford, a team from a village of the same name in County Armagh, was one of the teams to play in the first season of the Irish League in 1890–91.

They were not particularly successful, finishing the season in last place without claiming a point, conceding 62 goals along the way.

But their goalkeeper, William McCrum, submitted a proposal to the Irish Football Association to introduce a new rule to the Laws of the Game that would associate the small village with one of the most exciting aspects of the sport: the penalty kick.

The Irish FA liked McCrum's idea and, with the support from their counterparts in England, the rule formally became a part of the game from 1891.



Find Out More

- Most of Ireland's early international matches were against the other Home Nations. Find out the first time they played a team outside the British Isles. Were they able to play outside the British Isles often? What do you think are the reasons for this?
- Patrick O'Connell was a player in the 1913–14 Ireland team. He had a remarkable career in Ireland, England and eventually Spain. Research his story. What makes it so remarkable?
- Derry City played in the Irish League from 1928 to 1972 before having to leave. In 1985 they joined the Football Association of Ireland and since then have played competitively in the Republic of Ireland. Find out what made it difficult for Derry City to remain in the Irish League. Can you find any similar examples of teams playing in a different league to the one that would be considered as their own?





Sporting Relief

Victoria became the queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in 1837. This was a time of great change, as work and manufacturing became mechanised in the industrial revolution. Belfast was at the forefront of this revolution as it began to produce linen in mills. People moved to cities to find work in the newly built mills. In their leisure time, workers began playing sports.

Between 1845 and 1849 Ireland endured a famine. Approximately three million people either died or emigrated. Most of these people came from parts of Ireland where the Irish language and culture endured. This is one reason why the Irish language almost completely died out. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, groups formed to promote the Irish language and culture. The Gaelic Athletic Association, or GAA, was one of these.

The GAA particularly wanted to promote Gaelic football and hurling. At that time, cricket and soccer were the most popular sports in Ireland. The GAA succeeded in promoting Irish sports as they now attract huge crowds.

Gaelic football fans refer to the game as football. They refer to the game of football played in England and Europe as soccer, to differentiate between it and Gaelic football. Many countries that have their own version of football do the same. For example, the US, Canada and Australia have their own versions of football, so they use the term soccer to refer to the European game.



GAA Sports

The GAA also decided on the rules for an Irish version of football, known as Gaelic football.

Gaelic games became popular very quickly in all parts of Ireland, particularly in rural areas.

The GAA is organised in three main ways:

- club
- county
- province

Each county has clubs. There are more than 100 clubs in Cork, 90 in Dublin, but only 22 in Fermanagh.

In counties where both Gaelic football and hurling are popular, such as Cork, Galway, Dublin and Tipperary, many clubs have teams for both sports. This means that some clubs may have six or more teams for adults and twenty or more children's teams.

The two most important days in the GAA year are the All-Ireland Hurling Final and the All-Ireland Football Final.

Nowadays, the All-Ireland final is between the two best county teams. Originally, finals took place between the two best clubs, but this is now a separate tournament played on St Patrick's Day.

County Down is famous for being the first county from Northern Ireland to win the All-Ireland Football Championship. It won in 1960 and again in 1961, 1968, 1991 and 1994.





Women have been involved in Gaelic games since the early years of the GAA.

Women's hurling is called Camógaíocht, usually shortened to camogie. The Camogie Association was founded in 1905. Today there are 537 camogie clubs.

The rules of camogie are almost identical to hurling. One important difference is that camogie players can drop their hurls and handpass the ball into the net for a goal. This is against the rules in hurling.

Women's Gaelic football did not develop as quickly as camogie, but it is now well established. There are reports of games as far back as 1926, but the Ladies' Gaelic Football Association wasn't set up until 1974. There are now over 1,000 clubs, many of these based overseas.

Like camogie, the rules of Ladies' Gaelic football are virtually identical to the men's game. One important difference is that women can lift the ball directly off the ground when standing. In the men's game part of the foot must be touching the ball when lifting it.

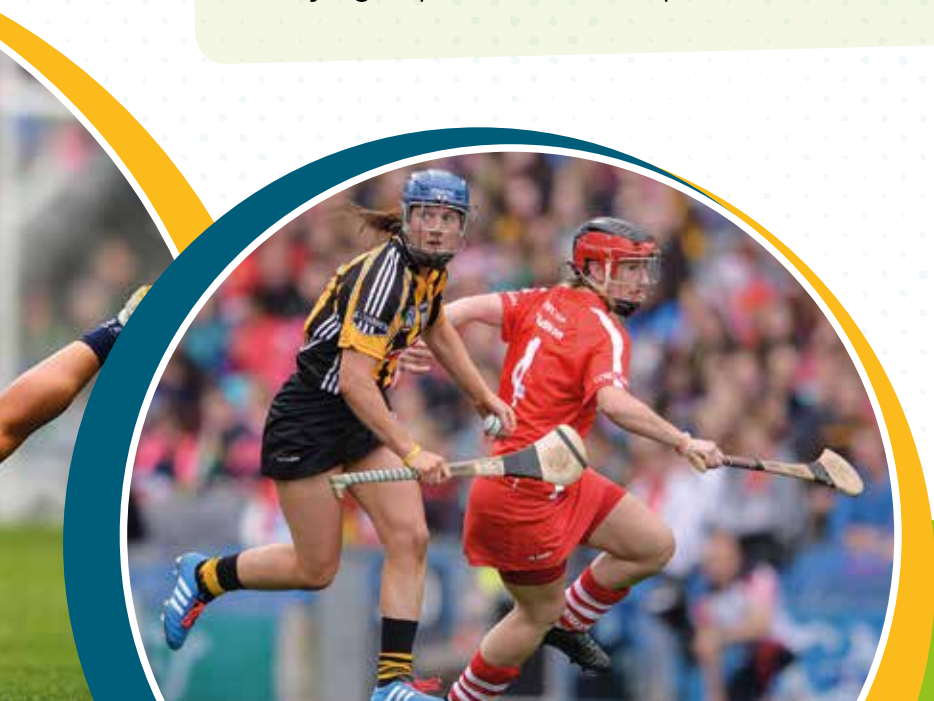
Gaelic games are mostly played in Ireland, but there are teams in other countries, especially England and North America.

The GAA holds an annual **World Games** with teams from all over the world competing. Many of the players in these games are not Irish and some have no connection with Ireland at all.



Find Out More

- Soccer or football was originally called association football. In most countries, it is called football or something similar in that country's language. Find out what football is called in these languages:
Spanish
French
German
Portuguese
- How many people died during The Famine? How many people emigrated? To which countries did they mostly emigrate? Which were the worst famine years? What effect did The Famine have on the languages spoken in Ireland?
- Kerry has won more All-Ireland Football Championships than any other county. Kilkenny has won more hurling championships. Find out which other counties have won All-Irelands finals. Which is the most successful Ulster county? Which is the only Ulster county to reach an All-Ireland Hurling final?
- The GAA was so focused in promoting Irish games that in 1901 it banned its members from taking part in or watching some non-Gaelic games. The GAA would expel anyone from the organisation for violating this rule. Find out more about this ban and any other controversial rules the GAA had in trying to promote Gaelic sports over others.





Rugby

The modern game of rugby has its roots in a version of football played at a school in the town of Rugby in England during the 1800s. In 1823, a student called William Webb Ellis picked up and ran with the ball during a game of football at the school, giving rugby its distinctive feature as a sport in its own right.

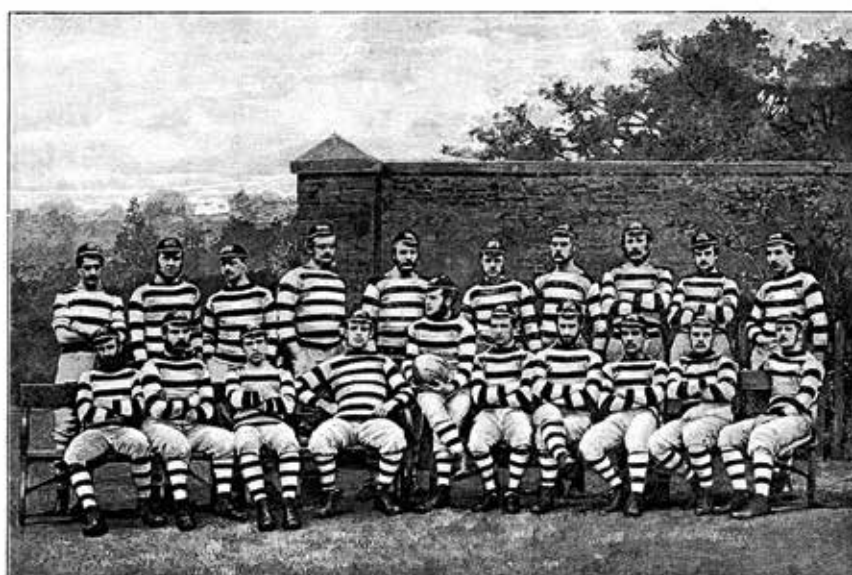
Carrying the ball did not formally enter the rules of the game until the 1840s. The game developed throughout the rest of the century. The first international match – between England and Scotland – took place in 1871.



Dublin University (founded in 1854) was the first organised rugby football club in Ireland. It was formed as many of its students had been introduced to and played the game when attending public schools in England. Many other clubs were established subsequently. These included the North of Ireland rugby football club, which was the first club in Belfast. It was formed in 1868 out of a cricket club of the same name. A year later, the first all-Belfast rugby club game was played between North of Ireland and Queens University.

There were two separate unions organising the game in Ireland, but they amalgamated in 1879 to form the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU).

The first rugby international for Ireland was against England in February 1875 at The Oval in London. Unlike today, the teams fielded twenty players each during the game. The English team won 7–0. It wasn't until their eighth international fixture that the Ireland side managed to register any points in a test match. Ireland didn't win a game until their eleventh game in an encounter with Scotland at Ormeau in Belfast in February 1881.



E. GALBRAITH. W. ASHE. R. GALBRAITH. J. MYLES. B. CASEMENT. W. GAFFKIN. M. BARLOW. H. L. COX. W. S. ALLEN. ANDREWS.
E. McILWAIN. H. D. WALSH. A. P. CHRYSE. M. GUINNESS. G. STACK. F. McDONALD. R. D. WALKINGTON. H. HEWSON. A. COMBE. R. BELL.

IRELAND V. ENGLAND; THE OVAL, FEB. 19, 1875.

(ENGLAND—2 GOALS, 1 TRY. IRELAND—NIL.)



The Six Nations

Today, Ireland competes annually in the Six Nations tournament alongside England, Scotland, Wales, France and Italy. The tournament began in 1882. The four Home Nations of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland played in it. Ireland was the last of the four countries to claim their first title in 1894. France joined the competition in 1910, making it a Five Nations event. Ninety years later Italy entered the field to make it a Six Nations tournament.

Ireland did not fare as well as the other nations in the tournament. However, in 1948 the country won its first Grand Slam. It defeated all opposition in a season for the first time. Ireland achieved this again in 2009 and in 2018.



The 1948 Story

Until 1948, Ireland had never beaten the three Home Nations opponents of England, Scotland and Wales in the same season since claiming the Triple Crown in 1899. Before then, they'd only managed the feat once, in 1894.

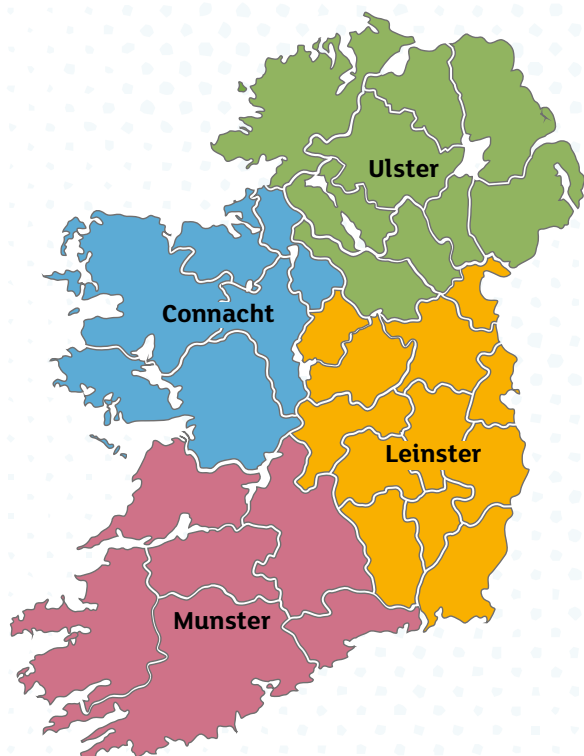
In 1948, the Irish campaign began with an unexpected 13–6 victory over France in Paris on New Year's Day. On Valentine's Day, Ireland defeated England 11–10 at Twickenham in London. Two weeks later, Lansdowne Road in Dublin hosted a hard fought 6–0 win over the Scots, with Jack Kyle scoring a try. This led to the final against Wales, at Ravenhill rugby ground in Belfast. On 13 March 1948, the Ireland rugby team won its first ever Grand Slam and only third Triple Crown with a 6–3 win against the Welsh.

Provincial Success

Rugby is organised on an all-Ireland basis with one international team and four provincial sides: Ulster, Leinster, Munster and Connacht. Local rugby clubs across the four provinces compete in all-Ireland leagues.

Ulster plays its games at Ravenhill in Belfast. It was here that Ireland won the 1948 Grand Slam.

The European Cup competition is the highpoint for the Irish provincial sides. Ulster was the first province to win the European Rugby Champions Cup in 1998. Since then, both Munster and Leinster have won Europe's premier club competition.



Schools' Competition

Schools' rugby has a long established tradition in Ireland, with provincial school titles annually contested. The first competitive rugby contest in Ireland was the Ulster School Senior Cup in 1876. The other provinces later established annual Schools' Cup competitions: Leinster in 1887, Munster in 1909 and Connacht in 1913.

Each year, on St Patrick's Day, the final of the Ulster Schools' Cup competition takes place at Ravenhill in front of thousands of supporters, cheering on their school teams.

Women's Rugby

Women's rugby was much slower to develop and emerge as a sport in its own right. This was largely due to perceptions in society about the role of women and the belief that rugby was too violent for women to play. Records of rugby games played between women during and after the First World War show that there was a keen interest, but women continued to face opposition. It was not until the 1960s that the women's game began to be played in numbers across North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

However, it was not until 1990 that the first women's rugby club was formed in Ireland. It played its first international game in 1993. Today, the Ireland women's rugby team participates annually in the Six Nations tournament and the World Cup every four years.



Emily Valentine

Emily Valentine played for the school's rugby team in Portora Royal School, Enniskillen in the mid-1880s, alongside her brothers. She secured her place in rugby history as the first known case of a woman playing the sport.

In 1887, Emily's father was the deputy headmaster of the school. Her two brothers, William and John, both played for the school rugby team. During one game, the team was a player short and invited Emily to play. She made an impression by scoring a try in the game. Emily recorded the event in her diary, providing a primary source for future generations of rugby enthusiasts to enjoy.

Find Out More

- Find out more about Emily Valentine and what she wrote about the first time she played rugby.
- Investigate which countries play rugby around the world. Explore the reasons why rugby might have become popular in these particular countries.
- There is increasing awareness of the risk of developing concussion through playing sports such as rugby. Investigate what steps have been taken to lower the risks.

Jack Kyle

Jack Kyle played for Ireland during the country's golden era, winning 46 caps between 1947 and 1958, when Ireland won its first Grand Slam (1948) and two further Five Nations Championships (1949 and 1951). He earned the nickname the ghost because his skill and speed meant he left defenders attempting to tackle him grasping thin air. He played during the amateur era, when rugby players did not receive payment for playing the game.





Hockey

Hockey has a rich history in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It has been played on the island for over 125 years. The Irish Hockey Union was formed in 1893. This was a significant time in the history of sport in Ireland and the UK as several stick and ball games were formalising their rules and becoming more organised. The Gaelic Athletic Association was beginning to grow rapidly and Ireland favoured Gaelic games over what people considered English sports such as football, cricket and hockey.

A man called W.E. Paterson led Irish hockey's revival. There were only two clubs in Ireland in 1893 and Paterson founded a third. His was the first club to play under new rules that the English Hockey Association had drawn up. The game became popular quickly. Six new clubs formed, mainly around the Dublin area, including one in Dublin University.



The Irish Hockey Union (IHU) established the Irish Senior Cup. It is now the oldest hockey cup tournament in the world. In 1894, Dundrum beat Dublin University in the first final. In the same year, the Irish Ladies' Hockey Union was formed. Both the men's and women's Irish national hockey teams experienced early success. The men beat Wales 3–0 in the first international match in 1895. The women's team beat England 2–0 in 1896. Unlike many other sports, men's and women's hockey developed at a similar pace.

At first, most games were played in Leinster. Then, the IHU began to set up branches and form clubs in the other three provinces. Interest in the game increased in 1904 when Ireland, England, Scotland and Wales came together to form the Home Nations tournament. The most coveted prize was the Triple Crown, which involved beating all three opponents. Ireland won the Triple Crown three times in a row from 1937 to 1939. The competition was suspended after the outbreak of World War II.

The other major competition in those early days was at the Olympics. The English Hockey Union suggested forming a British team from all four of the Home Nations, but Ireland refused to join. In 1908, four separate teams from Great Britain (England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales) competed in the hockey tournament at the Olympics held in London. Ireland won the silver medal, losing heavily to England in a one-sided final. The IHU agreed to be part of a British hockey team for the 1920 games in Antwerp, where the team won a gold medal. A team solely representing Ireland did not appear at the Olympics until 2016, although it had been trying to qualify since 1992.





Players from Northern Ireland have represented Great Britain at the Olympics. The 1988 men's gold medal winning squad had two players from Northern Ireland: Jimmy Kirkwood and Stephen Martin. Kirkwood also played for the Irish national team. Once these players made the decision to play for Great Britain, they no longer qualified to represent Ireland.

Throughout the twentieth century, and well into the twenty-first, hockey's popularity has grown considerably at home and abroad. In the 1920s, men and women formed their own world federations. In 1982, the two federations merged into one single body: Fédération International de Hockey (The International Hockey Federation), based in Switzerland. The sport then formed its own World Cup competition in 1971. This competition takes place every four years.



In 2018, the Irish women's team had remarkable success at the World Cup held in England. Starting the tournament as underdogs, the team beat the USA, India and Spain to progress to the final. Although the Netherlands beat them in the final, their achievement in the tournament should not be underestimated. All of the players who took part play on a part-time, amateur basis. Hockey has not received the same funding as other sports in Ireland. This means that the proper facilities to train and play games have not always been available. Up until 2016, players even had to pay €550 in fees to play for the international team.

By reaching the final, the Irish women's team defied the pundits and experts. Shirley McCay from Omagh in County Tyrone is a star of Irish women's hockey. The World Cup final in London 2018 was the 273rd time she represented Ireland, which is a remarkable feat. She is currently Ireland's most capped sportswoman. Although she retired after the World Cup in 2018, she may join the team attempting to qualify for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Find Out More

Shirley McCay is one example of someone who has represented her country many times at her chosen sport.

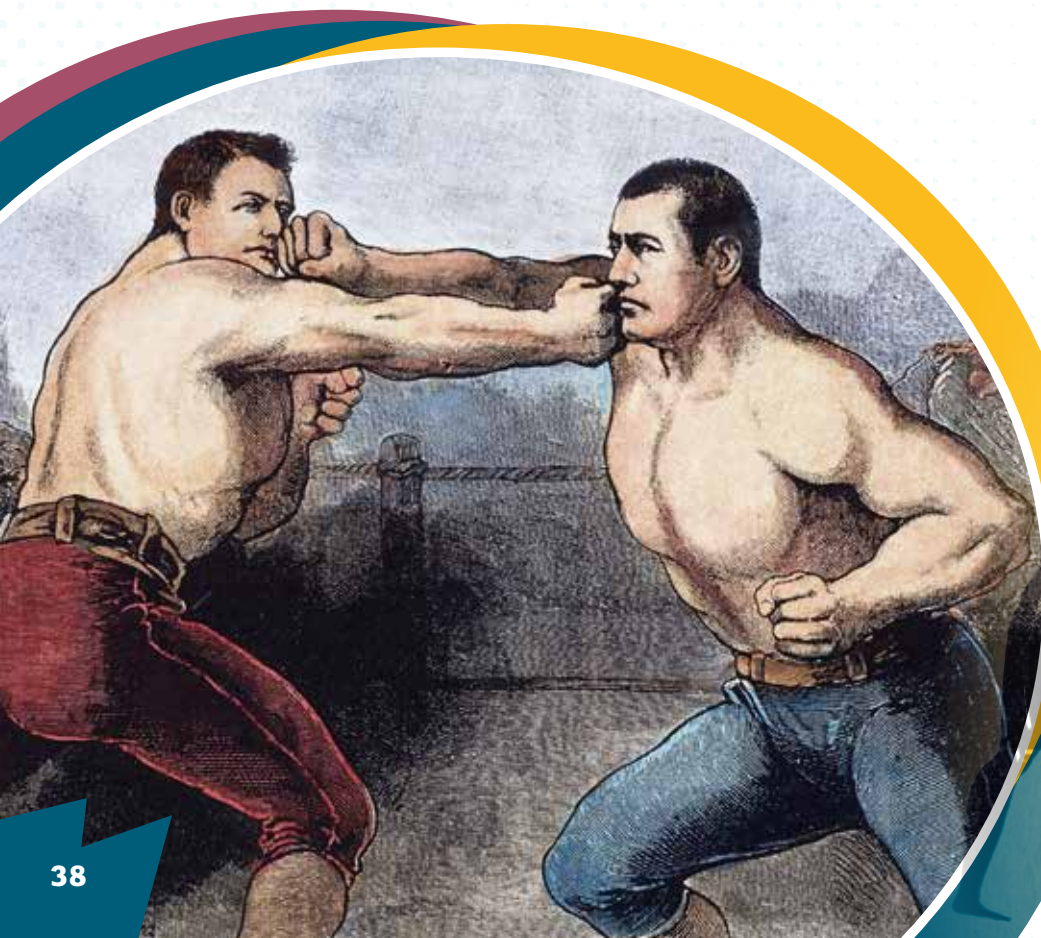
Carry out some research on how long it took her to achieve this many appearances. Research other sporting stars who have had long careers. Who are the record holders in their sports?





Boxing History: From Ancient Greece to Bare-knuckle Boxing

Boxing is a very popular sport around the world. It was included in the first Olympic Games in ancient Greece. It was also a favourite of the Romans, although its popularity declined after the fall of the Roman Empire. In London during the eighteenth century, bare-knuckle boxing became popular. Prizefights attracted large crowds. The fighters received payment to take part in these contests, which were bloody and brutal. During the next century, authorities agreed rules to govern the sport. These included banning hair pulling and preventing fighters hitting opponents who had been knocked down.



The Marquess of Queensberry Rules

It wasn't until 1867 that a British journalist and sportsman called John Graham Chambers devised a set of rules to govern boxing. The Marquess of Queensberry endorsed these rules, which we now know as the Marquess of Queensberry Rules. The rules continue to govern the sport of boxing today. They include banning wrestling, setting how long boxing rounds last, protecting helpless fighters and ensuring that both fighters wear appropriate gloves.

John L Sullivan

John L Sullivan was one of the most famous fighters of the bare-knuckle boxing era. He was born in Boston, the son of Irish emigrants who moved to the USA after the famine. He became heavyweight-boxing champion in February 1882. In 1887, he knocked out his opponent, Jake Kilrain, in the seventy-fifth round. This was the last heavyweight fight under the bare-knuckle boxing rules.

Boxing in the Broadcast Era

Boxing's popularity increased from the end of the nineteenth century when newspapers first introduced sports pages. Live radio broadcasts, introduced in 1910, gave ordinary people the opportunity to hear commentary on major fights.

Many of the most famous names in boxing in the early twentieth century were sons of Irish emigrants. They included Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney, two Irish-American heavyweight fighters who dominated the boxing world in the 1920s. They famously fought each other on two occasions, including in front of more than 100,000 spectators. In 1921, Jack Dempsey was involved in the first title fight broadcast live on radio.





Making Boxing Safer

In the 1980s, the number of rounds in professional fights was reduced from fifteen to twelve. This was because of growing concerns about safety after a series of severe injuries and fatalities. Amateur boxing bouts last three or four rounds.

A Sport of Skill and Discipline

Boxing is a very demanding sport. Fighters have to spend hours training to develop punching accuracy and power. The ability to defend and withstand blows is crucial. Boxers must have great self-discipline to follow a rigid training programme to sustain weight and maintain fitness.



Amateur and Professional

Professional boxers receive payment to participate in fights. They fight opponents of equal weight. This is important because heavyweight boxers can weigh over 200 pounds. Flyweights can weigh as little as 112 pounds. Other weight classes include cruiserweight, middleweight, bantamweight and featherweight. Professional fighters do not wear headgear. They compete to win championship belts. They win by knocking out their opponent or securing a majority decision by a panel of judges when the fight has finished.

Amateur boxers are not paid. They wear protective headgear during fights. Their bouts are much shorter. To win the fight they need to land clean punches to gain points. Men's fights have three three-minute rounds. Women's have four two-minute rounds. These shorter contests mean that the fighters can take part in bouts over several days, during competitions such as the Olympic Games.



Boxers: Olympic Medals and Professional Titles

Irish boxers have a long history of succeeding in the Olympics. More than half of the Olympic medals won by Irish athletes have been for boxing. In the 1956 Olympics, held in Melbourne, Australia, Irish fighters won one silver and three bronze medals. Two of the medallists, Freddie Gilroy and John Caldwell, were from Belfast. They both became professional fighters after the games. They famously faced each other in 1962 at the King's Hall in Belfast.

Another Belfast-born boxer, Paddy Barnes, became the first Irish boxer to win medals at successive Olympics when he won bronze in 2008 and 2012. He also became the first boxer from Northern Ireland to win gold medals at successive Commonwealth games (in 2010 and 2014).

Barry McGuigan won the featherweight world championship in 1985. Carl Frampton won the featherweight world championship in 2016, becoming the first Northern Irish boxer to hold world titles at two different weight levels.

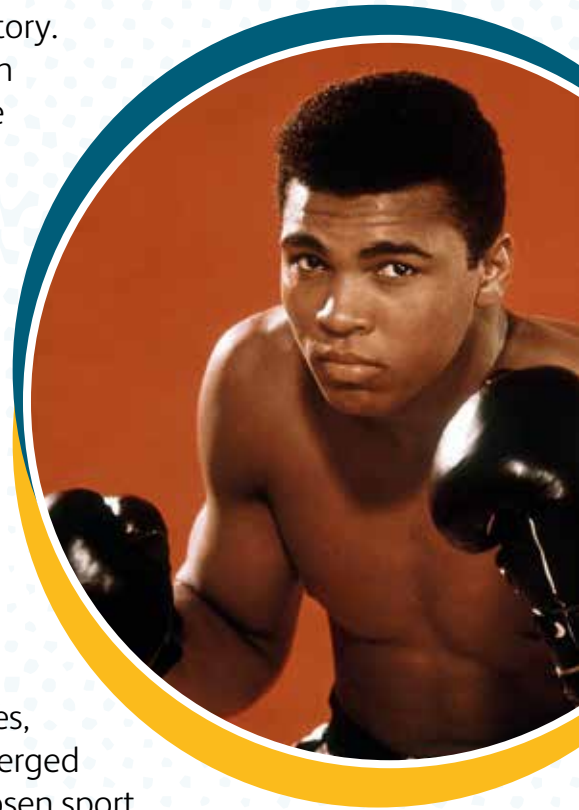


Muhammad Ali

Muhammad Ali was the most celebrated boxer in history. The famous American fighter was born Cassius Clay in January 1942. At age 18, he won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympics. He then turned professional and shocked the boxing world when, four years later, he defeated Sonny Liston to become heavyweight world champion.

Clay converted to Islam and changed his name to Muhammad Ali. He became a vocal supporter of the civil rights movement in the USA.

Boxers tend to come from poorer countries, such as Cuba and the Philippines, and from less well-off communities. Belfast's traditional working-class districts have produced many successful boxers, from Freddie Gilroy and John Caldwell to Paddy Barnes, Michael Conlon and Carl Frampton. These boxers emerged from humble beginnings to reach the top of their chosen sport, sometimes against the odds.



Find Out More

Choose one of the famous boxers mentioned in this chapter and create a fact file on them. Search online to find further information about them.

Eventing and Horseracing

Equestrianism and horseracing are very popular sports in Ireland. The word equestrianism comes from the Latin equus, which means horse. The main equestrian sport is racing. The second most popular equestrian sport is eventing. This is sometimes called three-day eventing as it consists of three different competitions held over three days: dressage, cross-country jumping and showjumping.

- Dressage is a form of horse gymnastics. In dressage, horses perform a series of movements. A panel of judges then awards marks for how well they perform, testing their physical ability, balance, obedience, responsiveness and agility.
- In cross-country, riders take horses over courses between 2.75 miles to 4 miles long and between 24 and 36 obstacles. The horses race against the clock. If a horse refuses a jump or hits a fence, judges add penalties to the final time. Horses and riders need speed, strength and stamina to complete a challenging cross-country course.
- Showjumping takes place in an arena on the last day of a three-day eventing contest. Horses and riders must jump 12 to 15 fences in an arena measuring roughly 60 m × 30 m. As well as being good at jumping, the horses must be very nimble to make tight turns and position themselves correctly to approach the jumps. Competitors are penalised for any mistakes they make.



At the end of the three-day competition, judges calculate the scores for each stage to determine the winner and other placings. They score each phase individually and add penalties to calculate the results. The winner has the lowest score. Awards are available at individual and team level. In a team contest, the team with the best (lowest) three scores is the winner. Eventing takes place at major events such as the Summer Olympics and the World Equestrian Games.

Horseracing

Horseracing is thousands of years old. It originated around 4500 BC in Central Asia when people first began to tame horses. The Ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians held horse and chariot races. In Celtic mythology, the Irish giant Fionn McCool had an army known as the Fianna that raced horses for fun.

The modern sport of horseracing began in the seventeenth century. Many royals and aristocrats imported thoroughbred horses to use solely for racing.

Horseracing takes place on every continent, except Antarctica. Many countries have developed their own customs, including the types of races, the breeds of horses and the prizes available.

In the UK and Ireland, horseracing is a very popular sport. It makes up a huge part of the betting industry. The two main types of horseracing are National Hunt racing and flat racing. Each horse should have a jockey. Jockeys control their horses' speed and direction. In National Hunt racing, horses jump hurdles or fences over a distance of between two to four and a half miles. The Grand National is the most well-known National Hunt race. This is just over four and a half miles long with thirty fences. Some of these fences are over five feet (1.52 m) high and can have ditches that are six feet (1.83 m) wide in front of them. As in eventing, horses need speed, strength and agility for this race and jockeys need exceptional physical strength and powers of concentration.





Flat races, as the name suggests, don't have hurdles or fences. In the UK and Ireland flat races can be between five furlongs and two miles. The UK and Ireland have some very prestigious flat races. For example, The Derby and The Oaks, held in Epsom in England, have a prize fund of over one million pounds. Horses, often owned by very wealthy business people, royalty or celebrities, are sometimes trained in different countries to take part in these races.

Northern Ireland has two racecourses: Down Royal just outside Lisburn and Downpatrick in County Down. The Republic of Ireland has twenty-six racecourses. Some of these hold flat racing events only, some only hold Irish National Hunt racing and others have both. The Irish Grand National takes place at Fairyhouse in County Meath. The Irish Derby takes place at The Curragh in County Kildare. Many superstar jockeys have either been born, raised or trained in Ireland.



Horseracing Legends

Nina Carberry is a jockey from County Meath. She comes from a well-known racing family and holds the record for a female jockey competing in the Grand National (six times). She has completed the course four times, which is also a record. In 2011, she became the second woman to win the Irish Grand National, riding a horse called Organisedconfusion. She has also ridden seven winners at the Cheltenham Festival, which is the sport's showpiece in England.

Tony (A P) McCoy, the most successful National Hunt jockey of all time, comes from Moneyglass in County Antrim. He became a professional jockey at 17. He spent his first seasons riding at Irish racecourses. When he moved to England in 1996, he became an unrivalled success. McCoy won the title of English champion jockey twenty times in a row from 1996 to 2015. Renowned for his toughness and insatiable desire to win, he overcame many injuries, including broken legs, arms, ribs and ankles. He has won every major race in Ireland and England.





Controversy

Some people argue that horseracing is a dangerous and cruel sport for animals. Horses have died from bad falls and, on rare occasions, have had heart attacks after running gruelling races. Jockeys use short whips to encourage maximum effort from their mounts. Whether the horses feel pain, when jockeys use whips is disputed. There are strict rules governing how jockeys use whips in racing. If the racing authorities think they have used their whips excessively, they are penalised with suspensions.

Many jockeys and eventers remain in the sport after they retire. Some, such as Venetia Williams, go on to become very successful trainers. Others such as Clare Balding present racing coverage on television.



Find Out More

- Horseracing uses its own language of measurement and money. Try to research this. For example, how long is a furlong? How many furlongs do you complete when you walk to school?
- Horseracing has a handicapping system; some horses carry more weight than others to give all competitors a fairer chance at winning. Find out exactly how this works. How do they increase the weight that the horse carries? Are there any other sports that use a handicapping system?
- Find out about some famous horses. What made them famous? What were their achievements?
- Many people protest at horseracing, saying that it should be banned for putting animals in danger of serious injury or even death. Read about some of their arguments and draw your own conclusions.





Golf

Golf is an ancient game. The modern game originated on the east coast of Scotland during the fifteenth century. As far back as 100 BCE, Romans played a form of the game called paganica. It involved players hitting stuffed leather balls with bent sticks.

Golf must have been popular in Scotland as, in 1457, the Scottish parliament banned playing it (and football) to prevent it interfering with military training.

The first rules of golf were set out in 1744. Twenty years later, St Andrews golf course in Scotland reduced the number of holes on the course to eighteen. This gave us the format for today's game.



Today, golf is popular across the world. Golf tournaments attract thousands of spectators. There are some very successful Northern Irish golfers, including Graeme McDowell and Darren Clarke, who have won at least one of the major golfing tournaments. Rory McIlroy is the most successful and famous golfer from Northern Ireland. He won four major tournaments by the time he was 25 years old.

The objective of golf is to hit the ball into each hole in as few shots as possible. The total number of shots a golfer expects to take to complete a course is known as par. Par is determined by factors including the distance from the tee to the hole and the terrain and hazards (such as trees, bunkers and lakes) along the route.

The par figure provides the total number of shots that a golfer's final score is compared against. If a golf course has a par of 70, completing the course in 67 shots will result in a score of -3, or three under par.





Ireland is renowned for its golf courses, which attract casual players as well as amateurs and professionals.

The majors are the most famous men's golf tournaments. These include the Open, which is the oldest golf tournament. The first Open took place in October 1860 at Prestwick Golf Club in Scotland. In 1951, Royal Portrush golf club in Northern Ireland hosted the tournament. This was the only time the event took place outside England or Scotland in the twentieth century. The Open returns to Royal Portrush in 2019.

The other three Major championships in men's golf, attracting the best golfers from around the world, are the Masters Tournament, the US Open and the US PGA Championship.

Women's golf also holds a series of Major tournaments throughout the year. As with many other sports, women and black people faced discrimination in golf. Many golf clubs refused to allow women to be members. In the United States, black players weren't allowed to compete alongside white players in professional competitions until 1961.

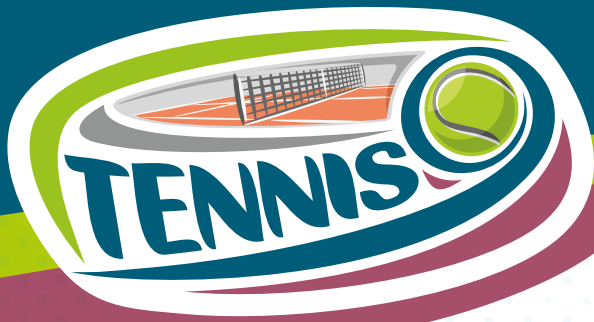


Although golf is usually played by individuals, there are team competitions. The Ryder Cup is the most famous of these, when a team from Europe plays a team from the United States.

Find Out More

- Find the nearest golf courses to where you live.
- Find out what eagle, birdie and albatross mean in golf.





Tennis

People have been playing different versions of tennis for hundreds of years. European monks developed a game known as jeu de paume, meaning game of the palm. This medieval game involved playing against walls and a roof. At first, people played it using just their hands, but as it developed players used a racket to serve and hit the ball.

The modern game used to be called lawn tennis to distinguish it from the earlier version of the game. Walter Wingfield adapted the rules and promoted the game in the 1870s.

In 1877, the first official men's tennis tournament took place at the All England Croquet and Tennis Club at Wimbledon, in London. Seven years later, the same tournament held the first women's competition.



By the end of the 1880s, male and female tennis competitions took place in the USA, France and England as the sport grew in popularity.

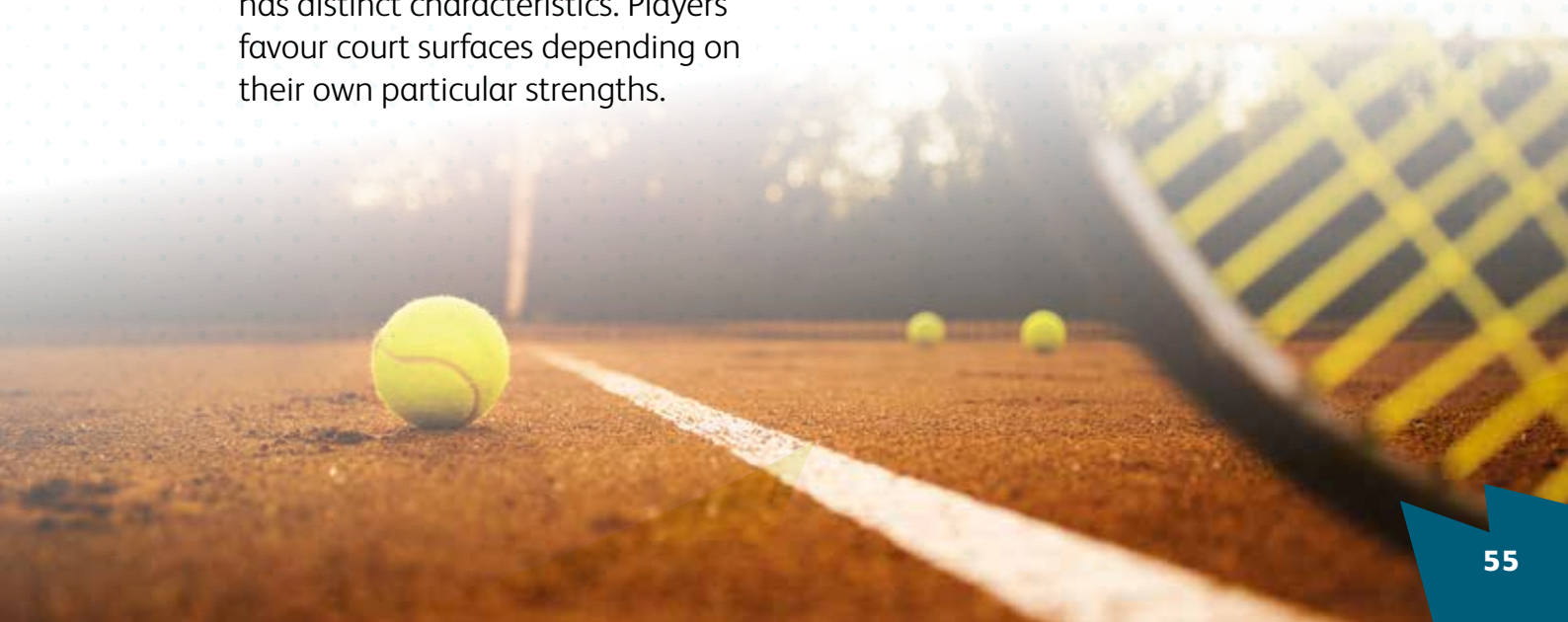
There are tennis clubs across Northern Ireland today. Irish tennis players were most successful in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In 1890, the men's and women's singles champions at Wimbledon were both Irish. An Irish duo also won the men's doubles title. The growth of the game across the world since then means that Irish players rarely feature competitively in the sport.

People can play tennis as individuals or in pairs as part of a doubles game. Technological advances in racket design allow players to produce increasingly powerful shots. Tennis can be played on grass, clay or hard courts. Each surface has distinct characteristics. Players favour court surfaces depending on their own particular strengths.

The clay court surface slows the ball down and produces a higher bounce than grass or hard courts. This makes it more difficult for players who rely on powerful serves to dominate games, meaning they must focus more on their forehand and backhand shots.

Hard court surfaces have a greater consistency of bounce than the other surfaces. These tend to be faster than clay, but slower than grass.

Grass courts are the most difficult surfaces to maintain, as they need regular watering and mowing. Grass is the fastest playing surface. The lower bounces mean players can win points more quickly than when playing on hard or clay courts. The grass court game favours players with a more powerful serve.





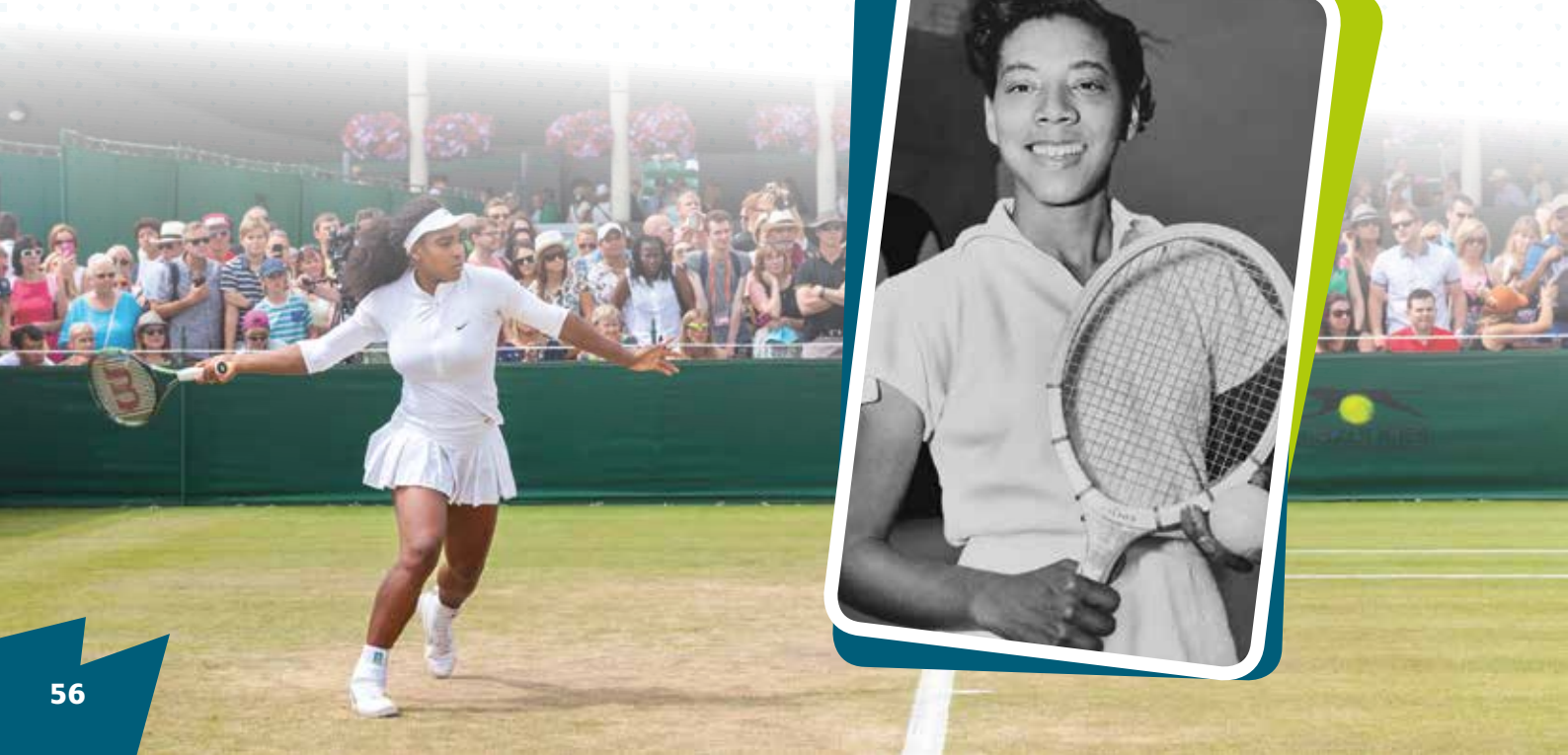
Professional players compete in regular tournaments. The four most prestigious competitions are known collectively as the Grand Slam. These are the US Open, Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon.

Unlike many other sports, women's tennis developed alongside the men's game. Players of both genders have become famous, although some women have struggled against prejudices that made playing the game more difficult.

Women originally had to wear long dresses when playing tennis. This only changed as the game developed its appeal in the early twentieth century. Women players have also had to struggle for equal pay.

The US Open was the first Grand Slam tournament to pay women the same amount of prize money as men in 1973. It wasn't until the turn of the century that the other three Grand Slam tournaments would follow suit. Wimbledon was the last, in 2007.

Althea Gibson is famous for being the first black player to win a Grand Slam tennis championship when she won the French Open in 1956. Her victory was significant. Tennis was traditionally a sport dominated by white people in the USA, where segregation laws in many American states prohibited black people from playing on the same courts as white people.



Find Out More

- Find out the names and nationalities of the current male and female winners of each of the Grand Slam tournaments.
- Find out the dimensions (the length and breadth) of a tennis court from both singles and doubles games. How does this compare with other sports played on courts, such as volleyball and badminton?
- Andy Murray is the most famous British tennis player today, winning the men's singles title at Wimbledon on two occasions. Investigate who was the last British Wimbledon champion, before Murray, in both the men's and women's singles tournaments.





Athletics

Athletics refers to a range of sporting events involving running, jumping, walking and throwing. Athletics formed a central part of the Ancient Olympics. It is part of many of the main events in the modern Summer Olympics, which takes place every four years.

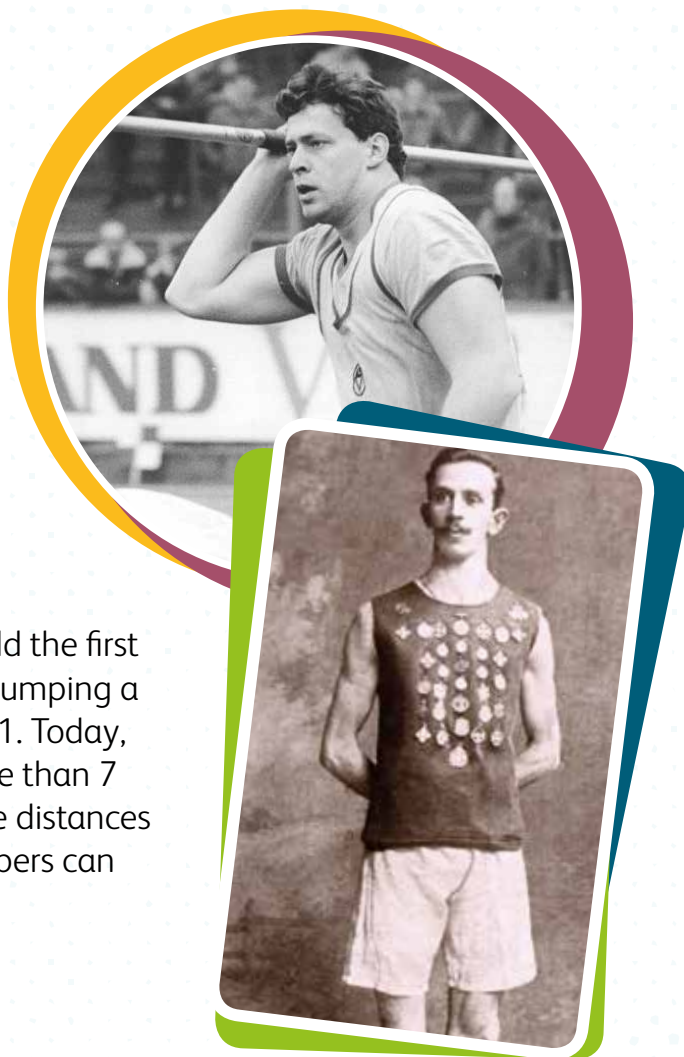
An Olympic racing track is 400 metres long. The winner of the 100 metres sprint race holds the title of the fastest person on Earth. The Olympics has races of varying distances. The marathon, at 26.2 miles, is the longest.

The throwing disciplines include javelin, hammer and shot put. In these sports, athletes must develop great arm strength and power.

A javelin is a 2.5 metre long spear. Uwe Hohn, a German athlete, threw a javelin 104 metres. He is the only athlete in history to throw a javelin further than 100 metres. In 1986, the javelin was redesigned, making it much harder to throw long distances.

Jumping events include the long jump, triple jump and high jump. All of these events involve athletes running to gain momentum before jumping for distance or height.

Peter O'Connor, an Irish long jumper, held the first recognised world record in the event by jumping a distance of 7.61 metres in Dublin in 1901. Today, female long jumpers regularly jump more than 7 metres. Their male counterparts manage distances of more than 8.5 metres. Male high jumpers can jump more than two metres.



Mary Peters is one of the most famous track and field athletes from Northern Ireland. She won a gold medal in the pentathlon in 1972. The pentathlon is a particularly challenging Olympic event. Competitors take part in five different disciplines, including running, throwing and jumping events. Judges score performances in each event. The athlete with the best overall scores in all five events becomes the champion.



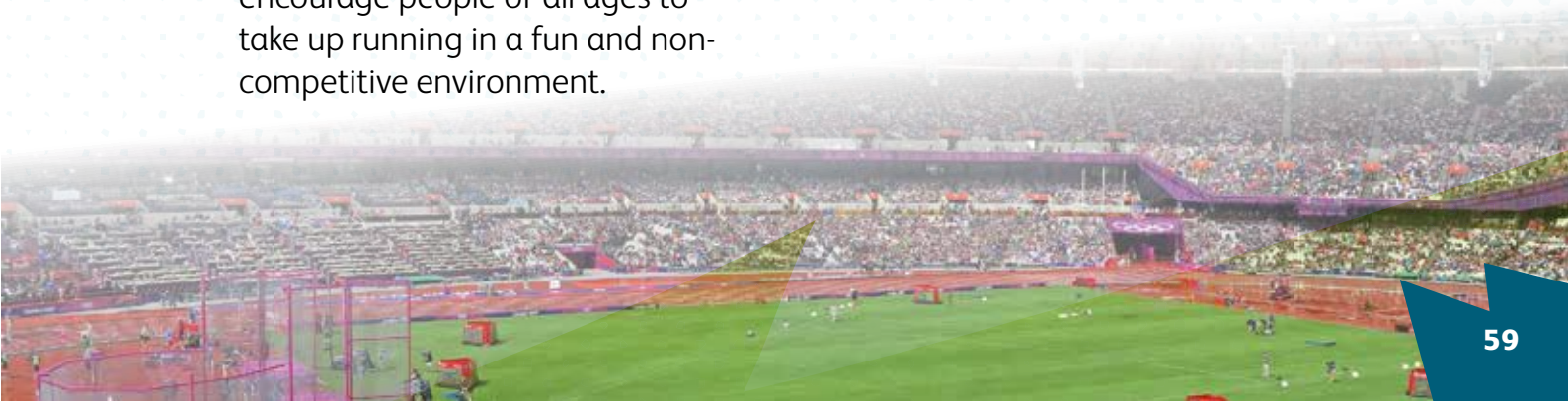
The word pentathlon is a combination of the Greek words pente, meaning five, and athlon, meaning contest. The Greeks later added two more events to the pentathlon, changing the overall event title to heptathlon (hept means seven in Greek). The male equivalent of these events is the decathlon. As its name suggests, this involves athletes competing in ten events (dece means ten in Greek).

There are athletics and running clubs in schools, towns and villages across Northern Ireland. Park runs take place every week. These encourage people of all ages to take up running in a fun and non-competitive environment.

The best athletes compete in the Commonwealth Games for Northern Ireland. At the Olympics, athletes choose to represent either Ireland or Great Britain.

Find Out More

- Explore the history of the marathon, the longest running event in the Olympics.
- Identify where your nearest park run takes place. Do you know anyone who regularly participates in park run? Would you be interested in taking part?





Cycling

The main difference between a pastime and a sport is that a pastime is not competitive. A pastime has no winners or losers. Many sports are also pastimes.

For many people, cycling is a pastime or simply a mode of transport.

Health experts, governments and environmentalists encourage cycling. It benefits our health and the environment and reduces traffic congestion.

Cycling is a very healthy activity. It is good for the heart and lungs. Also, cycling puts less pressure on our joints than other activities. Many health professionals think that cycling is a particularly healthy way to keep fit.

Cycling is a very popular, competitive sport, especially in Europe. Every year, Le Tour de France takes place in France. It is one of the biggest sporting events in the world. It is the most popular cycling event, although there are many others such as the Giro d'Italia and the Vuelta a España.



Irish cyclists have done very well at these events. The most famous achievement by an Irish cyclist was in 1987 when Dubliner Stephen Roche won Le Tour de France. Seán Kelly from Tipperary also won some important races at the same time as Roche. He was one of the top cyclists in the world.

More recently, British cyclists have become some of the best in the world. Chris Froome has won three Tours and Bradley Wiggins won it in 2012.



Find Out More

- Find out about how cycling could be good for the environment. Here are some words and ideas that might help you with this:
 - exhaust fumes
 - traffic jams
 - air pollution
 - global warming
 - public transport
- In 2014, one of the world's most prestigious cycling events came to Northern Ireland. Which event was this? How long was it here for?

Where did it visit? Find out how the media reported it.





Motorcycle Road Racing

Most motorcycle races today take place on purpose-built circuits. These circuits have wide roads, allowing riders to reach high speeds and race in relative safety. Spectators watch from a safe distance in grandstands.

However, many races take place on the open roads. These traditional road racing competitions are popular in many parts of Europe. Two of the most famous road racing events are the North West 200 and the Ulster Grand Prix. Both of these events take place in Northern Ireland. These annual races attract thousands of supporters every year.

Motorcycle racing always involves an element of risk because riders race at very high speeds. Road racing, however, has additional dangers. Kerbstones, trees, hedges and lamp posts are potentially fatal obstacles for road racers. Spectators watch from fields and makeshift stands.

The sport continues to be very popular across Ireland. Many of the most famous riders come from north Antrim.

The Dunlop family, from Ballymoney in County Antrim, is most closely associated with road racing. Joey Dunlop began racing in 1969. He became one of the greatest road racers of all time. He won the Ulster Grand Prix 24 times and was very successful at the Isle of Man TT throughout his career. He died in an accident while racing in Estonia in 2000. His brother, Robert Dunlop, was also a very successful road racer who died in an accident at the North West 200 in 2008. Robert's son, William, also died in a racing accident in 2018.



Handball

People have been playing different variations of handball since ancient times. Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs show players taking part in a game similar to handball. Handball has been played in Ireland for centuries. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) wrote the first set of rules for the modern game of handball. The GAA included the game in its 1884 charter as a sport that it would promote.

The game is played in a court or an alley. Players hit a ball with their hand against a wall, winning points by preventing their opponent making a return shot before the ball bounces twice. Only the player serving the ball can score points. The first player to reach a predetermined number of points wins the game.

Handball has different codes, relating to the number of walls, the size of courts and the type of balls used. Both men and women play handball in both singles and doubles competitions.

The sport has grown internationally. A World Handball Championship competition takes place every year.

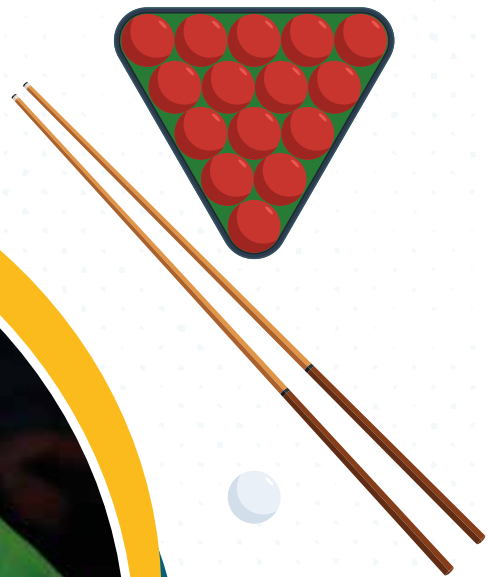
Michael 'Ducky' Walsh, from Kilkenny, is one of the greatest handball players of all time. He won 38 Senior All-Ireland titles across the differing codes.



Snooker

British soldiers serving in the Indian town of Jabalpur invented the game of snooker in 1875. At the time, billiards was a popular game played with a cue and billiard balls on a cloth-covered table with pockets. Snooker is a variation of billiards. The objective is to strike the cue ball with the cue to knock the remaining 21 balls into the pockets in the correct order. Every time a player pots a red ball, the next shot must be one of the other coloured balls. When a player has potted all the reds, they must then pot the yellow, green, brown, blue, pink and black balls, in that order. Players win points for each ball correctly potted. Each red ball is worth one point. The yellow ball is worth two. The green three, the brown four, the blue five, the pink six and the black seven. Players win points for each ball correctly potted. The player with the most points wins the game (known as a frame). The player who wins a predetermined number of frames wins the match.

The game slowly spread throughout India and other parts of the former British Empire. A set of rules to govern the game was finally agreed in 1919.



Joe Davis was the first superstar of the game. He won the first snooker World Championship in 1927. Davis dominated the sport for the first two decades, winning the first fifteen World Championship titles between 1927 and 1946.

The highest possible score in snooker is 147. A player can achieve this by potting every ball in the correct order without missing any. This is called a 147 break. Joe Davis was the first person to record an officially recognised 147 break.

Alex 'Hurricane' Higgins, from Belfast, made history in 1972 when he became the first man from Northern Ireland to win the World Snooker Championship. Thirteen years later Dennis Taylor, from Coalisland, defeated the legendary Steve Davis in a thrilling final frame encounter. Taylor won by the narrowest margin in a 35 frame contest. In 1997, Ken Doherty became the only other Irishman to win a World Championship.

Find Out More

You are not likely to play any of these sports in school. Find out how you could try one of these sports. Where would you go? What equipment would you need? How much would it cost?

Acknowledgements

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