Sport
and Education

Tribute to Martin Lee
SPORTS IN A CHANGING SOCIETY – THE CASE OF PORTUGAL:
origins, current statistics and new directions

1. Introduction

In contemporary society there are few individuals who do not encounter elements of sport in their social lives, often on a daily basis. This is not only illustrated by an increase number of participants during the last decades but also by the expanding variety of sports and ways to practice them.

The final decades of the monarchy witnessed the introduction of sports into Portugal. The phenomenon was mostly related to aristocrats and foreign communities living in the country while the popularization of sports was favoured by the social and cultural atmosphere emerged in the early XX Century with the Republic. The non-governamental sport expanded in the last quarter of the past century, especially after the end of the dictatorship.

It is difficult to organize chronological statistics for participation in sport in Portugal due to the lack of specific and uniform information. The present article examines the social environments and contexts that favoured the appearance, dissemination and differentiation of sports and attempts to interpret the trends of recently published statistics.

2. Brief notes about the introduction of sports in Portugal

2.1. Involvement of the monarchy in sports in the transition from XIX to XX Centuries

The main sports were introduced into Portugal in the second half of the 19th century (gymnastics) and early 20th century (football, basketball, hockey). This period coincided with the end of the monarchy, whose influence can be seen in reports published in important sports journals of the period ("Tiro e Sport"). In December 1906, a sport event was organised by a committee led by the Infante D. Afonso. Various awards bore names such as Her Majesty Queen Amelia or the Prince Luiz Filipe Award. Amongst the winners it was possible to identify Pinto Basto, a family also related to the organization of a soccer match in Belas by the end of the 19th century.