

OLYMPIC TEAM SPORTS

Study for the
**British Olympic
Association**

by the



**Carnegie National Sports Development Centre
Leeds Metropolitan University**

1996

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RESEARCH TEAM

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*“The Media expect us to win every match
with the effortlessness of the Gods”*

*(Charles Hughes, Director of Coaching and Education,
The Football Association)*

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OLYMPIC TEAM SPORTS

Introduction

A concern of the British Olympic Association is the general failure of Great Britain to qualify for the Olympic Games in team sports. Hockey is the only team sport in which Britain has qualified for Atlanta in 1996 (England women's football team did finish high enough in the European Championships to qualify, but the Football Association was unable to nominate the team to participate, in view of the absence of a British Football Federation). The Great Britain women's beach volleyball pair has qualified for Atlanta, as have various crews (notably in rowing) and pairs or teams in what are essentially individual sports (eg. badminton, table tennis, equestrian events).

In order to assess the present situation related to Olympic Team Sports, to identify the reasons for the comparative lack of success of Great Britain in recent years, and to make recommendations for the future, a study was undertaken by Carnegie National Sports Development Centre of the following sports:-

Olympic Sports

- Baseball (men only in Olympic Games)
- Basketball (men & women)^o
- Football (men & women)^o
- Handball (men & women)
- Hockey (men & women)^{*o}
- Ice Hockey (men only in the Olympic Games until now, but women also from 1998)
- Softball (women only in the Olympic Games)
- Water Polo (men only in the Olympic Games)^o
- Volleyball (men & women) including Beach Volleyball^o

Other Team Sports - It was recognised that there would be merit also in reviewing some other team sports, in some of which Great Britain has been comparatively successful, to identify any common themes. These sports are:

- Rugby Union ^{*o}
- Rugby League
- Cricket ^{*o}
- Netball ^o (women's only sport)

(^o) - In these sports there are separate associations for England, Scotland and Wales.

(^{*}) - In these sports there are separate governing bodies for men and women.

The Future

Great Britain is unlikely to achieve a great improvement in the success rate of the national teams in team sports in the foreseeable future, unless a number of significant changes take place. Perhaps the most significant of these involves our taking a more realistic view of the true present position in world terms.

Great Britain may continue to be competitive in **hockey**, but this is likely to become increasingly difficult. Part of the reason for the success of Great Britain in hockey is that in the rest of the world, the sport is still run largely on the same (amateur) lines as in this country, but there are signs that this is changing rapidly. It seems inevitable that the sport will follow most other team sports and become professional, at least for men, in many of the leading countries. The structure of the sport in Britain, and the facilities, suggest that a professional league would not be viable in the foreseeable future. British players may have to choose between playing in lower standard domestic competition or playing abroad. Women's hockey in Great Britain is fortunate to have an outstanding schools' structure which support the senior game, and generates a continuing stream of young players. The sport is very dependent on this structure, and would find it difficult to replace.

Britain's men's **ice hockey** team has a realistic chance of reaching the top 12, and therefore a place in the winter Olympics, in 1998. It has the best financed club structure of any of the Olympic team-sports in Britain apart from football, and has the opportunity to recruit ready-made players from Canada, who are eligible to play for Great Britain.

The success in beach **volleyball** does not disguise the fact that in the full-scale version Great Britain is a long way off the pace in Europe, in what is a truly world-wide sport. We have come close to qualifying in the past in **basketball** (notably in 1988) but domestic standards have not increased in recent years, whilst internationally the sport has moved forward and several very competitive 'new' nations have emerged in Europe. Realistically, the earliest date to which Great Britain could aspire to qualify for the Olympic Games is 2004, and even this will require significant financial input both at club and international level.

Water polo and **handball** are two sports that both suffer from a lack of suitable facilities, and a European domination of their sport, which makes Olympic qualification unrealistic at present, and renders European Championship competition almost as daunting as World and Olympic events. The lack of suitable spectator facilities makes it difficult to develop a national league based on promoted matches in the home towns of the clubs concerned, thereby limiting the development of worthwhile media exposure, or spectator interest. The enthusiasts responsible for the promotion and development of these sports are to be

congratulated for establishing viable development programmes without many of the components usually essential for sustained growth, but international success will require the injection of considerable finance, although it may be achieved given the political will.

Baseball and **softball** are sports new to the Olympics, and relatively undeveloped in Europe. At present, the sports have limited impact in this country and yet Britain performs relatively well in Europe championship competition. However the inclusion of the sport in the Olympics will mean that many other countries will increase the resources spent on these sports. Britain will need to make a similar increased commitment, or face a rapid slide down the rankings.

Finally, **football** is a sport in which Britain has the potential to make an impact, but until the impasse between the UK football associations and FIFA is resolved we shall be unable to compete. This is particularly unfortunate for the development of women's football, for which participation in the Olympic Games could provide a major impetus.

This Report

The work involved in preparing this report relied heavily on the support of the National Governing Bodies responsible for the Olympic team sports, and the other sports organisations who co-operated in the project.

The BOA Team Sports Working Group undertook discussions, during meetings in July 1995 and also September 1995, regarding the apparent failure by Great Britain in team sports in the Olympic Games, and the special problems that might militate against success, or perceived success, in these events.

The Carnegie National Sports Development Centre was commissioned to prepare this report in October 1995. A research team was assembled, comprising a range of experienced sports and leisure researchers, and sports administrators. The research team was led by Mel Welch, Co-ordinator of the Carnegie National Sports Development Centre. The other members of the team were:-

- Dr Ron Butterly - Senior Lecturer, Leeds Metropolitan University.
- Mr Richard Callicott - National Indoor Arena, Birmingham
- Mr Jonathan Long - Reader in Leisure Studies, Leeds Metropolitan University
- Mr David Oxley OBE - Member of the Sports Council
- Ms Elizabeth Smears - Senior Lecturer, Leeds Metropolitan University

Preliminary discussion among the team identified the main issue for investigation before the various sports were assigned to members of the team for more detailed study. The preliminary discussions were reported to the BOA Team Sports Working Group in December 1995, and further information was obtained from delegates at that meeting.

Representatives from each sport were sent proformas to complete and return which provided important background data (mainly of quantitative measures).

The team then undertook a series of structured interviews with representatives of the eight team sports active in Olympic competition. In each case the governing body was asked to assemble a representative cross-section of delegates from the sport. Wherever possible, representation was sought from:

- All parts of Great Britain, especially where the sport is normally or frequently organised separately by England, Scotland & Wales.
- Administrators, coaches and players.
- Representatives of men's and women's teams &/or organisations.

In order to obtain realistic responses, it was vital to emphasise that this study is intended to seek to find ways to assist and is not an attempt to assess performance, likely future growth, etc., with a view to providing grant-aid or other support. This approach helped to ensure that the responses were not over-optimistic, uncritical of the present structures, or generally unrealistic in their expectations. The National Governing Bodies were asked also to provide statistical information that would be of value to the research team to underpin the subjective views and opinions that had been presented in the interviews.

The structured interviews covered the following topics:

- World-wide participation - number of active countries and the significance of the sport in these countries.
- Levels of funding world-wide.
- National participation - numbers, levels, significance of the sport in comparison with world-wide.
- Levels of funding nationally, and in clubs and degree of professionalisation at home and abroad
- Present levels of success in international competition.
- Present progress compared with previous results.
- Development plans, and anticipated progress in short/medium term future at present levels of funding/support.
- Gt. Britain v England/Scotland/Wales/N .Ireland issues
- Club v country issues
- Availability of appropriate facilities
- Training and preparation
- Junior development and long-term strategies
- Finance
- National competitions
- Media profile
- Endemic systems and difficulties that exist within the NGB
- The realistic ideal scenario (i.e. what can be done, who by, and how).

The Research team wishes to pay tribute to the co-operation provided by the National Governing Bodies concerned. It can be seen from the reports attached as a supplement to this report, that a wide range of viewpoints were represented at the meetings, and we are confident that the responses obtained do provide a representative view on behalf of each sport throughout Great Britain.

Several other non-Olympic team sports were identified, and some consultation took place with selected representatives of these sports, to further inform the team. Additional statistical information was obtained from the British Olympic Association, and via the Internet. All this information helped to inform the team, and also provided the raw material for a detailed analysis, which forms an appendix to the report. The provisional findings were presented at a meeting of the BOA Team Sports Working Group in March 1996, after which the draft report was presented to all members of the research team for comment. The final report was completed in May 1996, and submitted to the British Olympic Association for its consideration.

Interviews were held as follows:

Sport	National Governing Body	Date	Venue	NGB Delegates	Interviewer
Handball	BHA	3/1/96	Rawtenstall	Jeff Rowland JJ Rowland (player) Steve Jones Chris Fox	J Long
Water Polo	ASFGB	20/1/96	Birmingham	Alan Roberts (WWPB) Mike Clark (GBWPC) Stephen Baker (GBWPC) Mike Glover (EWPC) Ross Elder (GBWPC)	R Butterly & J Long
Ice Hockey	BIHA	24/1/96	Holmepierpont	David Frame Ian Cooper (player) Nico Toeman Laura Urqhart Peter Woods	R Callicott & M Welch
Baseball	BBF	25/1/96	Leeds	Ralph Rago Ian Smyth	D Oxley & M Welch
Basketball	BIBF	7/2/96	Leeds	Keith Mitchell (BIBF) Peter Knowles (EBBA) Mike Gilbert (BIBF) Ken Johnston (SBA) Sandy Sutherland (SBA) Frank Daw (BAW)	D Oxley & R Butterly
Rugby League	RFL	9/2/96	Leeds	John Kear	J Long & M Welch
Softball	NSA	18/2/96	London	Nicola Harper Bob Fromer Natalie Fox Mike Jennings Rick Hillson Chris January	E Smears
Hockey	GBOHB	22/2/96	Rugby	Wendy McLean Liz Howard Sue Slocombe Simon Mason (player) David Whitaker David Whittle	D Oxley & R Butterly
Volleyball	BVF	13/3/96	Nottingham	Nick Moody (BVF) George Bulman (EVA) Matthew Jones (player) Ralph Hippolyte (BVF) Dudley Williams (EVA)	J Long
Netball	AENA	16/4/96	By telephone	Elizabeth Nicholl	M Welch
Football	FA	26/4/96	By telephone	Charles Hughes	M Welch
Rugby Union					M Welch
Cricket					M Welch

Sport Specific Summaries

Full detailed reports of each of the sports studied are contained in the Appendices, together with the relevant statistical information where available. In this report there is a brief summary, which seeks to identify the most important points regarding each of the sports studied.

Baseball

Baseball became a full Olympic sport in 1992 in Barcelona. Traditionally it is dominated by the USA, but it is also a major sport in Central America and the Far East. Europe has two places in Atlanta, taken by Italy and the Netherlands, where there are semi-professional leagues. These two nations also qualified to represent Europe in the 1992 Olympics but finished as also-rans.

Internationally, the USA is the 'home' of the sport, but failed to win a medal in Barcelona. The major leagues did not provide players for the USA Olympic team, and several other countries also have 'professional' leagues of their own, including the 1992 medallists Cuba, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan) and Japan.

In Britain, baseball has been popular in small geographical pockets since the second world war, having been popularised by American servicemen, and the British Baseball Federation now has support from the (American) Major Leagues. A development programme has been launched to enable the sport to be introduced to schools, which will give young players a chance to take-up the sport and develop their skills.

At senior level Great Britain gained promotion to the 'A' division of the European Championships in 1989 (top 8), but have since been relegated, and the break-up of Eastern Europe means that several 'new' countries are coming through and making it more difficult to regain 'A' division status.

The financial dimension of the sport in Britain (and indeed most of Europe) does not compare with the levels of the leading nations, but there are opportunities for success in European competition if the sport can be developed in schools, to provide an influx of promising young players.

Britain is poorly served by proper facilities for the sport and this makes it difficult to attract large numbers of spectators or media coverage of any significance. The increasing coverage of Major League Baseball on (satellite) television is increasing the awareness of the sport in Britain, and there is an opportunity for an expansion of junior participation and the establishment of an elite junior programme, but this will need increased resources.

Basketball

Basketball has a world-wide profile but is dominated by the USA. Basketball became an Olympic sport in 1936, and was exclusively won by the USA until their first defeat, by the USSR in 1972. Thereafter the USA team, represented by college-based players, found increasing difficulty coping with the challenge of the USSR and Yugoslavia, until in 1992 the 'Dream Team', selected from the best USA players in the NBA (the North American professional league), played for the first time and swept all before them.

Basketball is a major professional sport in every continent, and the standard and intensity of competition is extremely high. Europe has been allocated 4 places in the Men's competition in Atlanta (from 52 European nations in FIBA), out of the 12 competing teams. The other places go to The Americas (4), Asia (2), Oceania (1), and Africa (1). This reflects the relative strengths of the continents. European qualifiers are selected on the basis of the European Championships the previous year. Yugoslavia, Lithuania, Croatia and Greece have qualified to play in Atlanta. Many major basketball nations, such as Russia, Spain, Canada and Italy have not qualified. Italy (Olympic silver medallists in 1980), has the strongest and best financed league in Europe, but has not qualified to play in the Olympic Games since 1984, once again demonstrating that money does not always buy success.

Great Britain does not compete in the European Championships - England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (a combined north-south team) compete separately. Of these only England are still in the 1997 Championships, which are held in three stages (preliminary, semi-final and final). England are in the semi-final stage, but have little chance of qualifying for the final stage (top 12). The best placing achieved by Great Britain was in the European Olympic qualifying competition in 1988, when GB finished 6th. Since then the performance of the team has declined, and the break-up of Eastern Europe has added a number of 'new' countries to the top ranks.

British basketball has a professional league for men, and clubs spend significant sums on player salaries, and occasionally obtain some success in European club competitions. In comparison with many other countries, however, player salaries are low and club budgets do not approach the levels spent in countries such as USA, Italy, Spain, Greece, Australia, Brazil and many others.

Women's basketball became an Olympic event in 1976. USA, USSR, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Korea and China have shared all the medals. Asian nations are comparatively stronger than in men's basketball and Europe has only 3 places (Russia, Italy & Ukraine) in Atlanta and Asia 3 of 12. British teams rank lower in Europe in women's competitions than for men's, which may be partially explained by the presence of netball in the UK, which is not played elsewhere in Europe.

"England is not ranked in the top 40 nations in the world in basketball, volleyball or handball yet is probably ranked higher in the Commonwealth in those sports than in cricket, rugby and netball - the difference is that the rest of the world also take basketball, volleyball and handball seriously".

Football

Football, unlike the other Olympic team sports, has chosen for commercial purposes to limit the eligibility of players to participate in the Olympics to ensure that the Olympic competition is clearly second best to its own championship, the World Cup. The Olympic Games is played by teams made up largely of young players, or players who have not previously played in World Cup competitions. These artificial restrictions mean that, whereas the World Cup has always dominated by Europe and South America, success in the Olympic Games is much more evenly spread between the various continents.

All this is immaterial however to Great Britain since Britain has not been represented in Olympic competition since the 1960's. Difficulties were being experienced by the need for the four home football associations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) to bury their traditional rivalry and co-operate in the selection training and management of a single 'amateur' Great Britain team to play in the Olympics. This problem was exacerbated by the increasing calls from some other countries to reduce the membership of the United Kingdom in FIFA from four nations to just one, a move which is felt by the football authorities in the UK as something to be avoided, as being detrimental to the sport overall.

The net effect of this is that Great Britain does not compete in the Olympic football competition, a fact which has scarcely been noticed by the British public. The British media pays scant attention to the competition, preferring to reserve its energy for hounding our national teams' performances in the World Cup and European Championships, and random 'friendly' matches.

The loss to men's football has probably been negligible but the impact of the introduction of women's football to the Olympic Games in 1992 was considerable throughout the world, leading to a great upsurge of interest and participation in the sport. Sadly the problems that keep Britain out of men's soccer have now conspired to prevent any British women's players travelling to Atlanta, despite the fact that England's performance in the 1995 European Championships was good enough to earn a qualifying place in the 1996 Olympics. There is no doubt that the potential for good publicity and the upsurge in interest that the participation of a Great Britain women's team in Atlanta would have created makes it a sad loss. However, this must be weighed against the greater loss that might occur if the four UK football associations were in future to be regarded as one for international purposes. This would lead to a reduction not only in British participation in European and World Championships but also in the number of clubs participating in European Cup competitions.

England 0 USA 1 (World Cup 1950)

Handball

Handball is a major sport throughout continental Europe, which dominates the Olympic competitions. The sport is highly professional in many of the leading European nations, and draws large spectator and media attention in these countries. By virtue of the popularity of handball there, the sports halls are usually built of sufficient size for the game, contrary to the situation in Great Britain, where most of the halls are too small for championship handball.

Handball became an Olympic sport in 1972 for men, and in 1976 for women. The competition has been dominated by Europe, to the extent that Korea are the only non-European nation ever to gain a place in the top eight nations in the men's competition. Eastern Europe dominated the early competitions, but in 1992 Sweden, France, Iceland and Spain were in the top five.

Great Britain suffers in competition terms by this domination which makes it difficult to compete successfully in European championships, and has turned towards Commonwealth Championships for worthwhile competition, with an opportunity of success. In Europe, although the Great Britain senior teams find it difficult, a group of young players is now emerging who have performed well at junior level against some of Europe's leading nations.

The lack of suitable facilities or financial resources make it unrealistic at present for Britain to hope to succeed in Europe at senior level, or to sustain a professional national league at present. However, the sport has enormous potential and proves immensely popular when introduced into schools. The British Handball Association achieves much with limited resources, and has put into place a comprehensive development plan, leading to the year 2000. By then it is intended that Great Britain will be ready to re-enter European Championship Competitions, but Olympic qualification is a long way off - 2004 at the earliest. Even that would require a major financial input. However, it did happen in France, who came from a very low ranking to win an Olympic medal in 1992 and then win the World Championship.

Women's handball is, comparatively, even less well developed in Britain than for men. The women's Olympic competition has been won by Korea twice, but again Europe usually dominate the top places (4 of top 5 in Barcelona).

"Cyprus pay their junior team coach more than we get in grant aid to run the whole of the BHA"

Hockey

Hockey is the only sport in which Great Britain has regularly qualified for the Olympic Games, and has achieved some notable successes in recent years, including men's gold medal in 1988, and women's bronze in 1992.

Olympic hockey started in 1908 (but only involving teams from England, Scotland, Ireland & Wales). Great Britain won the first truly international Olympic competition in 1920, but from 1928 when it became a permanent Olympic sport, until 1960 India dominated the competition, winning 30 consecutive matches and six gold medals. Pakistan upset the sequence by winning in 1960 and again in 1968 and 1984.

Great Britain is hampered in its qualification for the Olympics by virtue of the need to rely on performances by one of the home countries (England, Scotland or Wales - Ireland fields a single united team) in the European competitions, prior to the Olympic qualification events. Nevertheless Britain has always managed to qualify, and the final positions in the men's Olympic championship since the second world war include 2nd (1948), 3rd (1952), 4th (1956), 4th (1960), 6th (1972), 3rd (1984), 1st (1988), and 6th (1992).

The other main contenders are habitually Germany, Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Spain and of course, India & Pakistan. All the Olympic medals since 1928 have been shared by just 9 countries (discounting the silver & bronze 'won' by Japan and USA in 1932 when only 3 countries entered. India beat Japan 11 - 1 & beat USA 24 - 1).

In 1996 Europe will have four places in Atlanta (Great Britain, Germany, Spain and Netherlands). Asia has four, Oceania & Africa one each and the America's two (including USA as hosts).

Women's hockey became an Olympic sport in 1980 in Moscow. Inevitably, the boycott caused major disruptions (all of the countries that had originally qualified withdrew) and the event was won by Zimbabwe. Great Britain finished 4th in 1988, and 3rd in 1992. Germany, Australia and the Netherlands have consistently performed well. For 1996 four European nations (Spain, GB, Germany and the Netherlands) will be joined by Australia, Korea, Argentina, and the hosts, USA. All eight of the nations in the women's event have also qualified for the men's event.

Great Britain still enjoys significant strength in women's hockey based on history, tradition and structures. Recent statistics suggest that nearly 10% of all registered senior players in the world are in Britain, and the extensive schoolgirl network provides an unrivalled nursery of future talent.

The challenge Great Britain faces for the future is the increasing move towards 'professionalism' in world sport. At present there is a (relatively) level playing field in hockey in terms of professional players, but this could soon be changing and leave Britain with an 'uphill' struggle.

Ice Hockey

Ice Hockey, the only winter Olympic team sport, has been a permanent part of the Olympic Games since 1920. Canada dominated the early years, and only the USA could come close, until the remarkable success of Great Britain in winning the gold medal in 1936, albeit with a squad almost entirely imported from Canada.

Canada continued to dominate in post-war years until the emergence of the all-conquering Soviet Union squad, who proved too powerful for the college based teams from North America. Meanwhile, Great Britain slipped out of the first division and the chance of playing in the Olympic tournaments. By 1980 the Czechoslovaks and the Scandinavians were pressing for honours, and the top six places in the 1994 Olympic Games went to Sweden, Canada, Finland, Russia, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Each non-Olympic year, the World Championships are held. Great Britain achieved promotion to the 'A' Pool (top 12 in the world) in 1993, only to drop back again the next year. In 1996 Britain finished 4th in Pool 'B' and are now competitive with the nations at the bottom end of the 'A' Group. It is still a very competitive world to tackle, but Olympic qualification in 1998 is a real possibility.

The sport is dominated by Europe and North America, and is highly professional in many countries. There is a moderately high level of professionalism in Britain, but inevitably this can lead to some conflict of interests between clubs and national team requirements.

The media profile and interest from arena owners makes ice hockey a viable professional sport in Britain, especially with the advent of major indoor arenas, but the likely effects of the formation of a 'Super League' for the 1996/97 can only be surmised at the present time.

Women's ice-hockey will enter the Olympic games in 1998 for the first time. Great Britain currently ranks about 15th in the world, and will not be represented in the 1998 Olympics. The women's game is not yet significantly developed in Britain, although a junior national team is now being formed. It is likely that the introduction of the event to the Olympics will herald a sharp increase in interest in many other countries with the corresponding rise in their standards, and Britain's position in the world rankings could fall dramatically unless suitable funding and support can be found to meet this challenge.

Softball

Softball becomes an Olympic sport (women only) in 1996. The sport is dominated by North America, where it is part of mainstream culture, and it tends to mirror the development of baseball in terms of its world-wide coverage.

In Britain the sport has developed through the corporate leagues, which play the 'slow-pitch' version of the sport, and today most softball in Britain is this version. However, the European and Olympic Championships are 'fast-pitch' softball. Nevertheless, Great Britain women are currently ranked 10th in Europe, and 23rd in the World (top 8 go to the Olympic Games).

The British Softball Federation now intends to concentrate on developing their young players in the fast-pitch version, with a view to seeking to qualify for the Olympics and World Championships in the future. The Federation does not have any significant resources or staffing support and therefore must still rely heavily on the present league structures, but of course these tend to be adult 'slow-pitch' competitions.

The amateur nature of the sport in Britain contrasts with the situation in some American and Far Eastern countries where players may be paid to play, and in some cases are recruited by clubs using financial incentives and rewards.

Volleyball

Volleyball Olympic competitions for both men and women were first held in Tokyo in 1964. Volleyball is now one of the world's most popular team sports, and has a strong following in Europe, North & South America, and the Far East. Great Britain is not in the top 20 in Europe, and the break-up of Eastern Europe has generated a number of outstanding 'new' nations, which has not helped.

The Olympic competition for men in 1992 comprised 5 European teams, 4 from the Americas, 2 from Asia and 1 from Africa, and was won by Brazil. Other gold medallists have been the USA, USSR, Poland and Japan, but competition is closely fought, and no one country dominates. The sport does not have such extensive professional league structures as football or basketball, although leading players can earn significant sums in many countries, but not in Britain.

The development programme in Britain focuses on the need to develop viable and successful clubs, and also seeks to identify and develop elite performers as part of the national team programme. Funding levels of British clubs are very low when compared with their European counterparts, and there are little or no resources available to pay players.

In women's volleyball, the situation is very similar to the men's. Olympic gold medals have been won by Japan, USSR, China and Cuba; Europe, the Americas and the Far East dominate. Canada with two appearances in the women's tournament (both times finishing in last place) and three in the men's, is the only Commonwealth nation ever to have qualified for Olympic volleyball competition.

However, the new event of beach volleyball, which begins in 1996 has brought success for Great Britain, with our women's pair qualifying to compete in Atlanta. This represents a major breakthrough for British volleyball, and shows that the potential exists as long as the essential support services can be provided.

"Britain will never succeed with bids to host the Olympic Games until we become a major player in truly world-wide sports like volleyball"

Water Polo

Water Polo originated in Britain and was established in the Olympics from the early part of the century. There have been 21 Olympic Championships, more than any other team sport. Great Britain won the gold medal four times in the early years, but has not featured on the podium since the second world war.

Italy, Hungary and USSR have won all the gold medals, and most of the other medals since 1948, and Europe still has the upper hand and the lion's share of the Olympic places. In Atlanta, the USA, as host country, will be the only non-European nation competing.

Great Britain now ranks about 20th in Europe, and 24th in the World, in men's water polo. The teams in Britain are completely amateur and display an ageing population, and there is a gradual decline in the number of clubs. In contrast, the sport is played professionally, with extensive spectator and media following, in many of the Mediterranean and central European countries.

As the demands of competitive swimming have increased, the opportunity for competitive swimmers to play water polo as well have decreased, and an increasing emphasis on age group swimming competitions is severely limiting the number of juniors coming into the sport.

Facilities are a continuing problem. There are only three pools in Britain which meet the full international specifications, and the demands of competitive and recreational swimming mean that water polo is usually relegated to the less desirable time-slots.

Great Britain is more successful in women's water polo at present (8th in Europe), but this is becoming much more competitive as more nations begin to compete seriously, and Britain will do well to maintain that position, especially if/when it becomes an Olympic event.

Non-Olympic Sports

For the purposes of comparison, a review is attached of the non-Olympic team sports which were studied. Once again, a full report, and appropriate statistical information is contained in the Appendices.

Cricket

The trials and tribulations of English cricket are well documented by the media, and are given greater prominence by the significance attached to them by leading members of the Government. On results in the last few years England's position in test match cricket is no higher than fifth and in the limited overs version of the game we probably rank seventh out of the eight nations who can be considered to be serious about the sport.

Perhaps we might be comforted by the fact that the failure of England at cricket is of little significance to the wider sporting world. The sport is virtually unknown outside the test match playing countries. Its enhanced status in England is due largely to its traditional place as the only summer team sport, but this position is now being seriously eroded by football, rugby league, and other sports switching to a summer or all year round programme.

England are the reigning women's cricket world cup holders but the significance of this event in world terms is even less value than the men's. Of the six teams that competed in the 1994 competition which was held in England, two were minnows in cricketing terms (Ireland and Netherlands). Of the others, England was soundly beaten by Australia, who only failed to reach the final by virtue of an upset defeat by New Zealand. Clearly we cannot rely on this solitary triumph, welcome as it was, to suggest that our stock in world sporting terms received a significant boost.

Cricket, of all sports, retains a nostalgia for the golden exploits of the past - somehow England always had a better team in days gone by - yet in reality the memories of the past usually centre on heroics in adversity, or perhaps the halcyon days of 1953 when England finally regained the Ashes!

"And England have won The Ashes, for the first time for 20 years"

(Brian Johnston, BBC radio commentary, 1953)

Netball

Netball is confined almost exclusively to the Commonwealth, and even in some Commonwealth countries participation is essentially by British ex-pats. The sport is remarkable for being essentially an all women's sport which has flourished in some unlikely parts of the World, including the Caribbean and the South Pacific, where it is firmly established along with rugby as the two major team games.

Realistically the only countries with the potential to challenge for the World Championships are Australia (the current champions), New Zealand, South Africa (who finished second in their return to World Competition after a long exile), England and the Caribbean nations of Trinidad and Jamaica. Netball is flourishing in England, with a steady increase in players and a national governing body showing increasing purpose and effectiveness, but in the British Isles outside England the picture is somewhat different. There are signs of decline in Scotland, and in Ireland women's basketball has a strong hold.

Indeed, the counter attraction of women's basketball in much of the rest of the world would seem to militate against any significant development of the sport outside its traditional homelands. Remarkably however, the Australian women's basketball team, despite fourth place in the Olympic Games, is greatly upstaged in media and public acclaim by the Australian netball team. It seems the Australians only really like winners, even though fourth place in basketball arguably may represent a greater achievement in world terms.

Britain (or to be more precise England) suffers from the lack of having any worthwhile local opposition. The European Netball Association has just seven members - the four home countries, Ireland, Malta and Gibraltar. However, due to the Commonwealth nature of the sport, netball has been included in the 1998 Commonwealth Games and can expect to draw a significant following for an event which is in all but name the World Championship.

Rugby League

Rugby league has always had very limited appeal in world terms, being restricted to parts of France, Australia, New Zealand, and the north of England. The geographical limitations have been recognised by those responsible for the organisation of the game and they have undertaken much 'missionary' work with considerable success in some cases. The European Super League now includes teams from London and Paris and the sport has a significant following in places as far apart as Morocco, Moldova, Papua New Guinea, and the Cook Islands.

Nevertheless it is a minority sport in world terms and one in which only Australia, Great Britain (or England and Wales if we decide to split our resources) and New Zealand are candidates for world honours. The dominance of Australia (World Champions since the 1970's) is unlikely to be threatened, other than by political and commercial disputes currently taking place in the sport in that country. In addition, the changing climate of rugby union is likely to impact on rugby league in some way in the near future including the possibility of some form of integration or coming together of the two codes after 100 years of separation. The recent excursions of Wigan into union territory may mark the way ahead.

These opportunities to compare rugby league players with those from another sport graphically illustrate the exceptional levels of fitness, strength, power and speed which the top players have reached. They would seem to be equal to or better than any other team sport, and are an example to everybody else to try to emulate.

"You have to be really brave in this sport just to set foot on the pitch"

Rugby Union

Rugby Union is a sport which until recently seemed to be the last bastion of pure amateurism, but which changed almost overnight last autumn. The new professional regulations mean that the sport may soon radically change from its traditional structure. It has been dominated by just eight nations (England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa) but now new challengers might emerge, although not in the immediate future. The rapid development of professional club rugby, led by the national league in England, and the major provincial competitions in the Southern hemisphere may reduce the significance of national teams in the future, especially if the players are relying on their clubs for most of their earnings. Until recently, the five nations championship has reigned supreme in the minds of all British players, augmented by the occasional Lions tour to the Southern hemisphere. However, the introduction of the World Cup has changed this and in future the domestic and European competitions will be seen merely as a prelude to the World Cup.

This sport is still predominately a Commonwealth activity, and the Commonwealth Games will include rugby sevens for the first time in 1998. Women's rugby is also developing and attracting interest from North America, but it is still a minority sport and technical standards need to be significantly developed.

In a professional sport the leading nations are likely to be those who pay the players most money. England will probably be one of the high rollers in this respect although New Zealand, Australia and South Africa have been there for a number of years in all but name. The Commonwealth nations dominate, but some of the emerging nations (Italy, Argentina, Japan, Romania, etc.) could make significant inroads if they can get the economics right.

(When referring to the possibility of a player registration and transfer system being introduced to Rugby Union)

"It'll never happen in our game - our chaps are all amateurs, you see"

(the then-Secretary of the Rugby Football Union - 1985)

Governing Body Grant Aid 1995/96

SPORT	NGB	GRANT (£)	AFFILIATED CLUBS & SCHOOLS	INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	NOTES
Baseball	BBF	43,000	121	1,496	
Basketball	BIBF	0			1
	EBBA	355,000	872	26,369	2
	BAW	37,057			1
	SBA	<u>68,000</u>			6
		<u>460,057</u>			
Handball	BHA	16,000	299	20,976	
Hockey	GBOHB	229,000			3
	GBWHOC	157,500			3
	HA	190,000	776	55,000	
	AEWHA	168,750	2685	35,000	
	Welsh HA	123,862			1
	Scot. HA	<u>167,000</u>			6
		<u>1,036,112</u>			
Ice Hockey	BIHA	30,000	53	7,000	
Softball	NSF	0			4
Volleyball	BVF	100,000			1
	EVA	215,000	1,206	29,294	
	Welsh VA	2,000			1
	Scot. VA	<u>79,900</u>			6
			<u>396,900</u>		
Water Polo		0			5

1. The Welsh associations receive funding direct from the Sports Council for Wales.
2. The grant figure includes funding for schools, mini and wheelchair associations.
3. This grant figure is for calendar year 1996
4. Submission being considered by GAP in 1996.
5. Water polo is governed within the respective swimming governing bodies (ASFGB, ASA, SASA, WASA). No specific grant aid is given to water polo, which is supported by internal funding from its parent bodies.
6. The Scottish associations receive funding direct from the Scottish Sports Council.

Conclusions

THE SPECIAL NATURE OF TEAM SPORTS

- The benefits of team sports are many, and most are well rehearsed arguments, embracing educational, commercial and social factors. These benefits include:
 - There concepts of 'team spirit' and 'being part of a team' are well known and are now used widely in business as well as in sport, both for personal and corporate development
 - Team sport provides a vehicle for social interaction for individuals, and enables players to develop inter-personal skills both on and off the field of play
 - Team sport attracts large numbers of very committed supporters, makes outstanding television coverage, and generates high levels of emotion and joy in its spectators - levels that are rarely if ever achieved in individual sports
 - Teams represent **countries** in the Olympic Games and success in Olympic competition is more directly attributable to the nation than in the case of individual sports
- Any nation can and does occasionally produce an exceptionally talented individual, but one player does not make a team (Britain's own relative success in women's beach volleyball tends to bear this out)
- It is more expensive to assemble, train and arrange suitable competition for a team than for an individual.
- A squad for a team sport needs a number of reserves to be trained alongside the leading players in order to have players who can substitute at the last minute if necessary in any position.
- The organisational logistics of preparing a team are much greater than for a group of individuals, because of the need to have frequent co-ordinated training and competition
- In team sport it is vital for players to play regular matches in meaningful competition, against teams of a similar standard. It is not sufficient merely to train regularly - the members of the team must learn to play together and to face the psychological pressures as well as the physical challenges with which they are likely to be confronted. This includes pressure placed on them by the state of the match, the spectators and media, and the actions of their opponents, team-mates, and the match officials. None of these pressures can be simulated. They must be experienced in real-life situations.

BRITISH SUCCESS LEVELS

- Many of the Olympic team sports are sports which were not traditionally played in Britain to any great extent, at least until fairly recent years (eg. basketball, volleyball, handball, baseball, ice hockey, softball), whereas many 'traditional' British team games are not part of the Olympics (cricket, rugby, netball), or we do not compete in the competition (football). Therefore, traditional systems and structures are of limited benefit in helping Great Britain to obtain Olympic success.
- It is unreasonable for Great Britain expect to win many Olympic medals in team sports, in view of how few medals are actually on offer compared with the individual sports. In Atlanta there are only 39 Olympic medals in team sports, compared with nearly 1,000 in individual sports (in track and field athletics alone there were 130 medals in Barcelona, and there will be more in Atlanta). If Britain wins just one team sport medal in Atlanta, this represents over 2.5% of the total medals available; this is equivalent to winning 25 medals in individual sports. This figure is unlikely to be achieved in Atlanta (over the course of the last 7 Summer Olympics (1968-1992) Great Britain has won 145 medals, at a rate of 20.7 medals per Games (3.4% of the total medals on offer) - but this includes three Games with major boycotts (1976 by African nations; 1980 by USA, Germany and several other major western nations; and 1984 by Soviet Union and several eastern bloc nations).
- In our 'national sport' of football, we have only once been placed in the top 3 in the World Cup (and that was when we were the host country) in the 12 competitions in which we have participated since 1950. This gives a medal winning rate of 2.7%, compared with our Olympic team sport record in recent years of 3.3% (Los Angeles), 3.3% (Seoul) and 3.0% (Barcelona).
- There is no good reason to expect a higher success rate in terms of Olympic team sport medals than that which is already being achieved, which compares well with our performance in other sports, many of which have access to considerably more resources than are available to many of the Olympic team sports.

WORLD-WIDE SIGNIFICANCE

- Team sports can be divided into those with small or limited numbers of participating countries (cricket, lacrosse, netball, rugby league, softball,); those with medium numbers, or limited to certain continents (baseball, rugby union, handball, water polo, ice hockey); and those of completely world-wide significance (football, basketball, volleyball).

- The relative strength of Europe needs to be taken into account when considering performance in world terms. Also, it can affect the chances of Britain qualifying for the Olympic Games. Our assessment is as follows:
 - **Basketball and Volleyball** - Europe is one of six continents which are highly competitive (all except Africa).
 - **Ice Hockey** - this is dominated by Europe and North America.
 - **Baseball and Softball** - the strongest continents are North and Central America and East Asia; Europe is relatively undeveloped.
 - **Hockey** - Europe (especially north west Europe) is a significant continent in a sport which is also strong in Commonwealth countries, North America and Korea. In women's hockey the geographical spread is similar to the men, except that the Indian sub-continent is not so significant.
 - **Football** - now becoming competitive globally, having until now been dominated by Europe and South America. North America and Oceania still have a long way to go to realise their full potential when compared with most other sports.
 - **Water Polo** - a sport invented in Britain, which has a very strong European base, which dominates international competition
 - **Handball** - a sport with a very strong European base, which dominates international competition
 - **Rugby Union** - an expanding sport in world terms, but still dominated by the traditional rugby playing nations of the British Isles, France, South Africa, and Australasia. Growth areas include Southern Europe, the Far East and the Pacific islands.
 - **Rugby League** - a sport which has always been concentrated in small pockets in northern England, and parts of France, Australia and New Zealand, but is now gaining strength in the Pacific islands and other outposts of development.
 - **Netball** - a purely Commonwealth sport, strong in Oceania and the Caribbean but unknown in mainland Europe
 - **Cricket** - a sport confined to the major Commonwealth countries.

INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL FACTORS

- The break-up of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia has had a very significant effect in many sports. In theory, the break-up could have been expected to have weakened the performance of the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia teams.

Although this probably has slightly reduced their gold medal winning potential, the more significant impact for British teams is that there are now far more top-rated nations in sports such as basketball, volleyball, handball, and ice hockey (for example, in basketball the top five teams in Europe now include Lithuania, Croatia, Serbia and Russia). The impact of this break-up has been to move Great Britain down the European standings, which are normally the means of qualification to the Olympic Games.

- The Bosman case is likely to lead to a drain of leading British players to play for clubs in other European nations in many sports (eg. basketball, ice hockey, volleyball, handball) where the national leagues in many EU countries (Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Greece etc.) have greater resources than in Britain, and where the limitation on the recruitment of foreign players from EU can no longer be limited. This may enable the players that go abroad to experience a higher standard of competition, but the players left behind and the up and coming younger players will suffer, and the national team will be faced with considerable logistical and economic problems in assembling their best players for preparation and competition.
- The Bosman ruling may open the way for the recruitment of an influx of dual-nationals to play for clubs in Britain in many sports. These dual-nationals will be from north America in particular (especially in basketball and ice hockey, and perhaps baseball and softball if these leagues were to become professional) and may not be able to represent our national team, either because the regulations of the international federation prohibit it, or simply because their dual nationality is (say) USA-Greece or Canada-Netherlands and they derive their eligibility to play for a British club from the Bosman ruling.

SPORTS COUNCIL PRIORITY SPORTS

- The assumption that an Olympic sport is automatically guaranteed Sports Council grant aid has been threatened, especially by the suggestion that the British Academy of Sport may concentrate on those sports most likely to win World Championship medals. Many Olympic sports are not in the English Sports Council's list of priority sports (see Appendix).
- The ability of a team sport to win a medal is significantly less than for that of an individual sport. Firstly there is usually only one medal in Olympic competition per team sport whereas in individual sports there are likely to be a wide variety of disciplines and events. Furthermore it is necessary to find a complete team of high quality performers whereas in an individual sport a single performer can be identified

and resources concentrated in that one outstanding individual. This could have serious ramifications for the selection of sports for the British Academy.

- Most countries put in significantly more resources, and attach more importance to Olympic sports rather than non-Olympic. The intensity of competition increases, and the number of countries participating in international championships rises whenever a sport or an event gains Olympic status. Therefore it is generally more difficult to succeed in international competition in those sports and events which have Olympic status.

BRITISH CONFLICTS

- Conflict between English and British organisations is largely counter-productive and frequently leads to duplication of effort and adds complications to the funding and administration of the sport. The 'island mentality' which established competition between England, Scotland and Wales as a main priority may have contributed to the decline of British team sports in international competition, by creating a false sense of well-being based on frequent victories over the other home nations, rather than referring to the wider world as the yard-stick by which to measure success.
- The continued rivalry and conflict in programmes of England/Scotland/Wales and Great Britain is not beneficial, and frequently leads to difficulties for team coaches and administrators.
- In those sports that are organised on separate English, Scottish and Welsh lines there is conflict when Great Britain teams are to be assembled and this is manifested in terms of duplication of effort, selection difficulties, difficulties in assembling squads, financial problems and friction between administrators.

PROFESSIONALISM

- The level of professionalism in a sport is a significant factor in the possibility of Great Britain being successful. Often, the level of professionalism in Great Britain mirrors that of the sport in world terms (e.g. football, basketball and ice hockey are the most professionalised in Britain, which is a similar situation to that in the rest of Europe). Where a sport is highly professional the gap between the successful and the less successful is generally lower, but more difficult to climb, and the injection of moderate levels of funding does not have a significant impact.

- In some sports the Championships are still notionally amateur even though in many parts of the world the players are professional in all but name. The term 'amateur' should not be mistaken to mean that the players are not paid - often they are able to earn significant sums of money from playing the sport.
- The degree of professionalism of a sport is reflected in the degree of conflict between club and national teams. In the sports where clubs are highly professional there are significant difficulties in assembling national teams and paying the players. In less professional sports (e.g. hockey) it is possible to assemble a national team with the co-operation of the clubs and the payments to players need to be viable but do not need to compare with the professional athletes' salaries.

CLUBS

- Success of British clubs in European Competitions can have a two way impact. The experience gained by the players and club concerned is very valuable, but if the club is to compete successfully in Europe, it is essential that they move into a higher financial gear. This can lead to their seriously outperforming other British clubs and ruining competition in the domestic national league. In addition, if the European venture is not entirely successful, the club may encounter considerable financial problems of its own. These concerns were recently expressed in respect of the possible inclusion of a British club in the proposed European Basketball Super League.
- The British tendency is for each sport to be independent and each team within that sport to be similarly independent. This creates a host of small, insular 'teams' with few resources and no long-term development plans. This is especially true if they are unable to own any permanent facilities. If this could be altered, if necessary by legislation from within the governing body, to encourage the formation of Multi-sport clubs and large single sports clubs, it would enable them to:
 - have more security and permanence and to make long-term development plans with a reasonable chance of being able to deliver them
 - improve their facilities and attract grant aid from, inter-alia, the national lottery
 - provide for player progression within the club rather than inhibiting development of promising young players or risk losing them to other clubs
 - be more efficient in maximising use of facilities and resources
- In those sports that have professional players, clubs have significant influence over the structure of the sport and the availability of players to represent the national team, and the programmes that national teams can undertake.

- When a sport reaches a certain level of professionalism, the desire of the first division clubs to run their own 'independent' league becomes very powerful, and governing bodies need to accommodate this wish as best they can or risk complete separation.
- In many sports (e.g. hockey) the professionalism of leading clubs in some other countries recently has developed rapidly and British clubs are in danger of being left behind.
- The existence of an elite amateur club scene (e.g. in hockey and until recently in rugby union) means that the national team has a much higher significance in the minds of the players and the media than in those sports in which the elite club scene is professional (eg. basketball, ice hockey) unless the national governing body can pay the national team players significantly.
- There may be a loss of goodwill when professional players emerge in what were previously wholly amateur sports and some volunteers (both administrators and officials) will tend to resent the fact that players are being paid while they are not and may be less willing to give their time and energy free of charge in the future.
- In sports where clubs are professional, the England team may be regarded as 'an amateur club' by comparison both in terms of the money that players can earn from playing and in terms of the benefits that the players receive.

COACHING

- Many sports have identified the need to have foreign coaches, although we are not convinced that in terms of quality these are necessarily required in some sports. In particular the technical skills available in Great Britain for Hockey and Basketball, Volleyball and Water Polo may be high but unrecognised. The assumption that 'they must be a good basketball coach if they are American', or 'they must be a good Rugby League coach if they are Australian' has considerable currency but limited validity in practice. A significant amount of money is wasted by paying overseas coaches whose quality is not high and who are not necessarily aware of the culture and the fundamental groundwork that domestic players may or may not have experienced.
- Just as important as coaching for the long-term development of the sport is coach education to ensure that a wide number of domestic coaches are better qualified and more expert.

SPORTS SCIENCE & MEDICINE

- The sports science and sports medicine expertise that is available in this country is not used to the full benefit of our national teams. This may be because of the funding pressures under which many national governing bodies are forced to operate, which means that the funding that is available is deployed directly on the immediate programme rather than to support some of the longer term interests.

WOMEN'S TEAMS

- It appears to be more difficult for the Great Britain women's hockey team (and probably for the national women's teams in all the other sports) to obtain the necessary leave of absence from work and in some cases from domestic responsibilities, in order to operate as a unit for the critical part of the build up for the Olympics or other major championship, than for the corresponding men's teams.
- Women's ice hockey and softball do not have any significant profile in Britain and are unable to recruit from a wide talent base in preparation for becoming an Olympic sport.
- The opportunity of participation in Olympic competition can have a very strong developmental impact on Women's Football and also produce significant media coverage.

MEDIA

- Exposure of major international or world competition in Great Britain (e.g. NBA, NHL, MLB) is not always viewed as a good thing. For example the national basketball league clubs are very concerned that considerable television exposure of the NBA may affect their own product.
- Ice hockey does not have a strong London presence and this is reflected in relatively poor levels of media coverage. The overall popularity of the sport is therefore likely to be understated by the national media.
- The opportunity for significant media coverage is based on:
 - a successful national team
 - a well-supported national league competition.

A successful national league will ensure regular media coverage for the sport. To rely simply on the national team means that for considerable periods of the year there is

nothing of significance to report. However, international activity and success lends credibility to the domestic programme and is more likely to be of interest to television.

RECRUITMENT & CULTURE

- The competition for recruitment of talented players is likely to increase. Many sports feel that they are not able to recruit the best talent because other sports over-recruit unnecessarily (e.g. handball losing players to football; basketball losing (tall) players to rugby union; basketball and volleyball losing players to netball (and vice versa); water polo losing players to swimming; etc.). This is particularly the case where there are financial incentives for coaches and organisers to maintain large numbers in their training squads. Multi-sports clubs could help to resolve this dilemma.
- The perceived culture within some sports is counter-productive to the successful recruitment, retention and development of players from the whole population (e.g. basketball may be viewed as a (black) American sport; hockey as a sport played by white professional people;)
- In some sports (e.g. baseball, handball) there is currently no popular culture in Britain to promote the sport widely to the entire community.
- Promising young players are frequently over protected by small local clubs instead of being encouraged to move forward quickly to larger clubs playing at higher standards.
- Many promising juniors are over playing and frequently playing below their ability. This leads to poor technical habits and skill development and also encourages them to play below their peak performance in order to rest for future matches.
- In some sports (baseball, softball, handball, men's lacrosse) high level development in Great Britain is concentrated in small geographical pockets. This may be for historical reasons (e.g. the location of the United States airforce bases) or for the fact that special enthusiasts in an area form 'centres of excellence' around them. In the former case, relocation of individuals would not significantly affect the level of activity (e.g. baseball in Hull) but in the latter case the movement of highly significant individuals could lead to the virtual demise of a club or the sport in a particular area.

CAREER MANAGEMENT

- In order to compete successfully in international competition at Olympic level it is believed to be necessary for a team to operate full-time for a considerable period (say, six

months prior to the Championships). There is unlikely to be enough money to be available in the sport for this to be possible over a four year period (e.g. hockey clubs do not have the resources to enable the players to be full-time employees of the clubs. Therefore the international players must be 'professionals' for a period prior to major international competitions and then try to revert to normal full-time jobs thereafter.

- In many sports the players may not want to become full-time athletes, and sacrifice their normal job and career opportunities. The returns for professional players are usually not very high (with the obvious exception of football), and they be better off following another career. However, in many of the countries with which they are competing, the financial rewards for members of national teams are very significant and players do find it worth there while to become full-time players, even if this does jeopardise long-term career prospects.
- There is a need in Higher and Further Education for courses that are flexible, and allow and encourage outstanding sports performers to undertake their studies and their sporting programmes within conflict, or disadvantage either to their sport or their programme of study.

FUNDING

- The government grant-aid via the Sports Council directly to the national governing bodies of hockey in Great Britain amounts to some £1 million in the current financial year. To this must be added the substantial grants from the Sports Aid Foundation. There is no doubting that this money is being wisely spent and to good effect, but it is unfair to compare the performance of hockey with that of the other team sports, since they might well argue that, given resources of that level, then they could also be bidding for medals. Certainly, in some cases this would be a realistic claim.
- There are major problems in funding patterns for team sports who only receive money (e.g. from SAF) if they qualify. Qualification for the Olympic Games is not usually determined until the latter part of the four-year Olympic cycle and therefore it is not possible to plan more than a relatively short time in advance or for budgets to be worked out so that players know their likely commitment prior to qualification. This affects their ability to make a full commitment to the national team programme to help Great Britain to qualify in the first instance.
- The demands perceived by national governing bodies to have been placed by Sports Council to deliver 'success' on relatively short timescales, to justify grant aid, encourage

national governing bodies to focus on the performance of current national teams, rather than placing the emphasis on building for the long-term future.

- Where clubs are run for commercial purposes (e.g. basketball or ice hockey where some clubs are being run in order to attract spectators to an arena to bring in money for the promoter or arena owners) there may be a lack of sympathy shown to the NGB by the club owners.
- The success of a doubles pair in Women's Beach Volleyball suggests that Great Britain does have talented performers who are able to compete at the highest level when they are freed from the normal restrictions of competition and are able to dedicate themselves exclusively to the goal of Olympic performance.

FACILITIES

- Many sports play with facilities which do not provide significant opportunity for spectator following on a regular basis (e.g. handball, water polo, hockey, netball).
- Some sports (ice hockey, handball, water polo etc.) do not have their own dedicated facilities and it can be difficult to obtain training time in suitable facilities or at the times or frequency that is necessary.

GENERAL PROBLEMS

- The following general factors need to be recognised:
 - 1) Britain (and especially England) is not a significantly 'nationalistic' nation and performance by national teams does not carry as much significance as in many other countries.
 - 2) Our 'island mentality' means that competition is often parochial (e.g. England v Scotland is seen to be important than internationals against foreign opposition) and there is a tendency to pay little regard to other results as long as the team is doing well in the 'home' internationals.
 - 3) The significance of sport in the conscience of the nation is not high compared with many other countries (eg. Australia, USA, Italy etc.)
- Even in hockey, which has been successful, there are many problems of qualification for the Olympic tournament, and these problems seem to be getting progressively more difficult to solve.

- There appears to be a general lack of understanding by various agencies (including BOA) of the difficulties of preparing team sports and enabling them to qualify for the Olympics.
- The personnel who are going to be in the final Olympic squad are much more difficult to identify for team sports than for individual sports, especially in the early part of the Olympic cycle - a combination of all the best players does not necessarily make the best team.

Recommendations

1. BOA needs to be aware of the important differences between team sport and individual sport and to ensure that the Sports Councils and the Government are made fully conversant with these differences.
2. BOA should decide the relative merits of success in international competition in sports which have little world or European significance, compared with relatively modest levels of performance in sports of major world significance, and advise Sports Councils, Government and other agencies accordingly.
3. There seems to be significant potential benefits in the establishment of national Academies of Sport for junior players or those just reaching senior level (although it would be more difficult in the case of professional sports to ensure their allegiance and to avoid confrontation with clubs). BOA should seek to ensure that the format of the British Academy of Sport meets the needs of sport. In particular, team sports may find a single national centre of little value in developing successful national teams (eg. Who would they play against on a regular basis?)
4. The relationship of water polo with ASFGB and their constituent bodies should be examined to see whether there might be a better arrangement for the sport. BOA should seek to initiate such an examination.
5. BOA should discuss with the relevant football authorities in the United Kingdom the position of Great Britain related to the Olympic Games, especially in the case of women's football. For example, it might be possible for the four countries (England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) to stage a competition to enable one of them to then carry the Great Britain 'flag' in Olympic qualifying competitions along similar lines to that used in hockey.
6. BOA should have discussions with the Rugby Football Union and the corresponding associations in Scotland and Wales regarding any aspirations

they may have in respect of becoming an Olympic sport, and if that is one of their objectives then to formulate suitable plans.

7. BOA should discuss with the national governing bodies of any sports seeking Olympic recognition (e.g. netball) their Olympic aspirations, and evaluate the likelihood of any such move being successful.
8. BOA should evaluate team sports (this might also apply to individual sport) based on the world-wide significance of the sport, the level of competitiveness in international competition and the likelihood of Olympic qualification or success by Great Britain and make this information available to the Sports Councils and other funding agencies.
9. Key issues for many of the new and smaller sports should be to establish a national curriculum for any version of the sport, which delivers many of the requirements of the National Curriculum and to approach Universities and colleges that specialise in the coaching of Physical Education teachers to acquaint them with these National Curriculum opportunities and to give the students a chance to experience the sport. BOA could help in this respect.
10. BOA should encourage local authorities to establish and run their own team sports clubs, based at local leisure centres, rather than simply hiring out facilities at commercial rates if and when a team approaches them.
11. BOA should support efforts to enable international players to become full-time athletes during the critical parts of the international programme and yet still receive the necessary support and career guidance and long-term opportunities.
12. Efforts should be made by BOA and other national agencies to negotiate block time release from employment for national team players without any disadvantage or penalty being incurred by the players in terms of their employment.

13. BOA should have discussions with Sports Aid Foundation regarding the possibility of supporting employers to grant players block release time, rather than making payments direct to the players, thereby safeguarding their long-term employment.
14. BOA should identify and negotiate with a range of appropriate providers of higher and further education, with a view to securing agreements with these institutions to provide flexibility in their course provision to meet the needs of elite performers, to enable them to complete their studies and undertake their sporting activities successfully.
15. BOA should explore fully the possibility of providing improved funding for members of national teams and for talent identification from the recently established National Lottery talent fund.
16. BOA should discuss with Sports Councils some form of objective measurement of 'success' and acquaint them with the findings from this research. Although the implementation of policy may be complicated by limited flexibility from Government, nevertheless it is important to ensure equitable and worthwhile funding and support for all sport in the future. This could be particularly important when identifying sports to be included in the British Academy of Sport structure, and other priority lists.

Footnote - A Personal View

“The performance of British teams in international competition is distorted and disguised by our apparent competitiveness in sports with a narrow band of competition, and by the rose-tint of history, which reminds us of the time when we were successful, but when few other nations approached sport with the fervour and intensity that they do today”

Any review of the state of British sport must conclude that we fail to achieve our potential and could do better in international competition. An assessment of the performance of Great Britain in the nine Olympic team sports presents the alarming statistic that Great Britain has failed to qualify to participate in the Olympic Games in any team sport, with the notable exception of hockey, since qualification was introduced in the 1960s. This seems to represent failure in those sports, and cast doubt on the work of the governing bodies concerned. However, closer investigation shows a rather different situation.

Let us examine the performance of British teams in the so-called (by the Minister for Sport) ‘five traditional team games’, namely football, rugby union, cricket, hockey, and netball.

In the recent cricket world cup, England reached the quarter finals courtesy of wins over Netherlands and United Arab Emirates (hardly countries renowned for their cricketing prowess), before being soundly beaten in the quarter-finals. Prior to that, England had been clearly second best in South Africa, a country which has only recently returned to the international sporting fold after its long years in exile. Realistically England ranks, at best, seventh in the world at the present time.

Last year the rugby union world cup came to life when England defeated Australia in the quarter finals before suffering ignominious defeat by New Zealand and losing to France, eventually finishing fourth. Scotland and Wales fared worse than England. No British team has ever won either the cricket or rugby union world cup.

The world netball championships took place in Birmingham in 1995. England finished fourth, but were outclassed by Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Wales (17th), Northern Ireland (18th) and Scotland (22nd) were well behind such countries as Malawi, St Vincent and the Cook Islands.

In association football the four British nations failed to qualify for the 1994 World Cup. The performance by British clubs in the 1995/96 European club competitions was an almost continuous story of failure, which suggests that the Premier leagues in England and Scotland are

failing to keep pace with the development of clubs in Europe. In contrast, the Panathinaikos club of Athens reached the European Champions cup semi-final in football, and won the European Cup in basketball in the 1995/96 season - probably the two most prestigious club sporting competitions in Europe.

Only in the sport of hockey can we claim any recent success. Great Britain won the men's Olympic gold medal in 1988, and the women took bronze in 1992. Great Britain has consistently qualified to play in the Olympic Games, despite the complications of a structure which involves the home nations playing independently in many international competitions. There is no professional club structure in this country, and all the players are strictly amateurs. Finance is conspicuous only by its absence.

But hockey does not attract significant media coverage and in those team sports which the media, and therefore the general public (and equally importantly the sponsors and the politicians) are most aware, we fail to achieve success. Cricket (7th), rugby union and netball (4th), rugby league (consistently second best to Australia), and football (currently ranked outside the top twenty), promise much, but fail to deliver in world competition.

Is our assessment fair or are we being too hard on our sports teams? In fact our expectations are unreasonably high when applied to most sports. We condemn our 'traditional' sports for their failure to achieve world championship winning status. In practice they are usually headed by the same handful of countries - notably Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. In cricket, rugby union, netball and rugby league, most of the significant opposition comes from our former colonies. These are essentially Commonwealth sports, in which we seem to assume some kind of divine right to expect success based on our former glories. Contrast these with the major world team games, such as soccer, basketball, and volleyball, in which over one hundred and fifty nations compete seriously on the world stage. Think for a moment of the impact the Cricket World Cup will have had in USA, Russia, Germany, China, Brazil, Italy, Cuba, Spain, Japan, Yugoslavia, Canada,!

We are deluding ourselves if we consider that we are major players on the world sporting stage. In the major world sports we often find it difficult to command a place in the top twenty nations in Europe, and have little or no prospect of success in the foreseeable future on a world or Olympic stage.

Our performance in sports such as volleyball, basketball, handball and ice hockey is, in relative terms, no less successful than in cricket, rugby union or netball. We need to consider realistically how we would fare in cricket, rugby union or netball if the whole of Europe were to adopt them with the same enthusiasm that they embrace volleyball, basketball or handball.

The performance of British teams in international competition is distorted and disguised by our apparent competitiveness in sports with a narrow band of competition, and by the rose-tint of

history, which reminds us of the time when we were successful, but when few other nations approached sport with the fervour and intensity that they do today.

A clear decision must be made - do we wish to continue trying to be a big fish in a small (predominantly Commonwealth) pond, or seek to be a significant player (though not a perennial champion) in the wider world of sport? In either case we need to be realistic and recognise that we have a long way to go, and that only one nation out of over 200 can win Olympic gold in any team event. We have no justification at present for thinking it should often be us.

The above comments represent a personal view, and are not necessarily the collective opinion of the research team.

Mei Welch

“Our Schools should concentrate on the five traditional team games”

(Iain Sproat, Minister for Sport)