

# National sports of great britain

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Many kinds of sport originated from England. The English have a proverb, "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy". They do not think that play is more important than work; they think that Jack will do his work better if he plays as well. so he is encouraged to do both. Association football, or soccer is one of the most popular games in the British Isles played from late August until the beginning of May. In summer the English national sport is cricket. When the English say: " that's not cricket" it means " that's not fair", " to play the game" means " to be fair". Golf is Scotland's chief contribution to British sport.

It is worth noting here an interesting feature of sporting life in Britain, namely, its frequently close connections with social class of the players or spectators except where a game may be said to be a " national" sport. This is the case with cricket in England which is played and watched by all classes. This is true of golf, which is everywhere in the British Isles a middle-class activity. Rugby Union. the amateur variety of Rugby football, is the Welsh national sport played by all sections of society whereas, elsewhere, it too is a game for the middle classes. Association football is a working-class sport as are boxing, wrestling, snooker, darts, and dog-racing. As far as fishing is concerned it is a sport where what is caught determines the class of a fisherman. Walking and swimming are the two most popular sporting activities, being almost equally undertaken by men and women. Snooker (billiards), pool and darts are the next most popular sports among men. Aerobics (keep-fit exercises) and yoga. squash and cycling are among the sports where participation has been increasing in recent years. There are several places in Britain associated with a particular kind of sport. One of

them is Wimbledon where the All-England Lawn Tennis Championship are held in July (since 1877). The other one is Wembley - a stadium in north London where international football matches, the Cup Finals and other events have taken place since 1923.

### Table Tennis

Table tennis was first invented in England in about 1880. At first the game had several strange names: Gossima, Whiff Whaff and Ping Pong. It wasn't until 1926 that the International Table Tennis Association was formed with international championships and rules. Although the game was invented in England British players don't have much chance in international championships. It's the Chinese with their fantastic speed and power who win almost every title. Table tennis looks more like gymnastics when the Chinese start playing, with the ball flying over the net at speeds of over 150 kilometres per hour.

### Racing

There are all kinds of racing in England - horse-racing, motor-car racing, boat-racing, dog-racing, and even races for donkeys. On sports days at school boys and girls run races, and even train for them. There is usually a mile race for older boys, and one who wins it is certainly a good runner. Usually those who run a race go as fast as possible, but there are some races in which everybody has to go very carefully in order to avoid falling. The most famous boat-race in England is between Oxford and Cambridge. It is rowed over a course on the River Thames, and thousands of people go to watch it. The eight rowers in each boat have great struggle, and at the end

there is usually only a short distance between the winners and the losers. The University boat-race started in 1820 and has been rowed on the Thames almost every spring since 1836.

### Squash

Squash began at Harrow School in the mid-nineteenth century, but has since worked its way into almost every city and district in Britain and throughout Europe. Squash is one of the fastest games in the world. Two people play in a small confined space surrounded by high walls with no net to keep them apart. The aim is to get to the point at the centre of the court and to stay there. Squash players hope that the game will make them stronger and fitter, but, like many sports, squash can be very dangerous. The most obvious danger is the small ball that shoots through the air extremely fast.

### Windsurfing

Windsurfing was invented in the mid-sixties by two southern Californian surfers, Hoyle Schweitzer and Jim Drake. Surfers need strong rolling waves, and hate days of calm sea. Schweitzer noticed that on days when waves were not high enough to surf, there was often a strong wind and he set about finding a way to use it. His first experiments involved standing on his surfboard holding out a piece of sail cloth in his hands. Gradually he and Drake refined this idea into a basic design for a sailboard, similar to a surfboard, but holding a mast and a triangular sail which could be tilted and turned in any direction. The windsurfer operates a boom which controls the amount of wind in the sail, for speed and change of direction. Schweitzer immediately went into business designing and making the new sailboards

and taking the idea abroad. By mid-seventies, the sport had spread to Holland, Germany and France.

### Olympic Games in London

London was host for the first time in 1908. With 1, 500 competitors from 19 nations, the Games were by now an institution of world-wide significance. The programme, moreover, was augmented by the inclusion of Association football (which appeared in 1900 but only in a demonstration match), diving, field hockey, and ice hockey, as well as other sports since discontinued. The most dramatic episode of these Games was in the marathon, run from Windsor to Shepherd's Bush in London, the site of a new stadium. Pietri (Italy) led into the arena but collapsed and was disqualified for accepting assistance from officials. The gold medal went to the second man home, Hayes (USA), but Queen Alexandra, who was present opposite the finishing line, was so moved by the Italian's plight that she awarded him special gold cup. The 400 metres provided an opportunity for Halswelle (GB) to become the only man in Olympic history to win by a walk-over. The final was declared void after an American had been disqualified for boring. Two other Americans withdrew from re-run final in protest, leaving Halswelle an unopposed passage. Britain won the polo, and all the boxing, lawn tennis, rackets, rowing, and yachting titles as well as five out of six cycle races.