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From minority to mainstream sport: establishing basketball in Scotland

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ABSTRACT

The history of wartime basketball in Scotland to date is limited. Gleaning information from local newspapers in the British Newspaper Archive, the article focuses on Scottish basketball during the 1930s and 1940s which were the transformational period of basketball in Scotland. It builds upon early knowledge about Scottish basketball through discussing the changing attitudes and growing acceptance of the game within culture and society. The article also adds to current historiography through documenting basketball's search for recognition and its pre, during and post-World War II (WWII) development. It covers three areas: participatory patterns in perceived aggregate minority sports concerning what approaches worked and which did not; the impact of WWII on a minority sports development; the popularity of non-traditional and quintessential sports in wartime. The findings reveal that basketball became established in Scotland due to three overarching factors; societal shifts around sport; efforts of Scottish sport organizations; and WWII.

PRACTITIONER RELEVANCE STATEMENT

Dr Ross Walker is a Lecturer in Sport Management at the University of Stirling, formerly a Lecturer in Sport Development at the University of the West of Scotland and a Global Fellow at the Academy of Sport, The University of Edinburgh.

IMPACT STATEMENT

The research findings contribute to knowledge of a newly emerging area of study in Scottish-British basketball, particularly around the Second World War which has not been documented. Its implications and significance serve to contradict academic and societal notions that basketball in the United Kingdom was historically a minority sport.

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Introduction

To fully understand Scottish culture, Scotland's history must be recognized by considering its changing patterns of social development and social organization through aspects of popular culture such as sport.¹ This article highlights how Scotland through its activeness in the broader global community has been assisted in developing sport domestically by

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other countries and international events.² While previous research highlights Scotland's influence upon the creation of basketball, only a small body exists on the history of basketball in and pertaining to the country.³ These sources collectively highlight how basketball until the 1930s was a recreational sport sparsely played.⁴ Less is known around basketball pre-, during and post-wartime Scotland. Such lacking scholarly attention leverages the purpose of the manuscript which details how basketball throughout the 1930–1940s transitioned from a minority to mainstream sport in 1946. One with direction, governance, structure and the necessary legitimization to manifest the popularity of basketball which was generated during World War II (WWII). Within the article, the term 'minority sport' is referred to as an activity lacking a mass audience, media coverage, formal organization, and institutionalization, whereas a 'mainstream sport' is one comprising these components.⁵

To evidence arguments made in this manuscript, the empirical information is predominantly gleaned from local newspapers in the British Newspaper Archive, such as the *Dundee Courier*, *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*. Data is also acquired from three reflective accounts produced by former basketball personnel.⁶ While these materials generally discuss Scottish basketball between 1950 and 1990, some provide context around wartime basketball in Scotland. These materials exist as the only contemporarily available documents offering historiographical insight into how basketball transitioned from a minority to mainstream sport with widespread participation. Secondary sources discussing the history of basketball and provide insight into the wider context under investigation are also utilized.⁷ Collectively, these materials contextualize the ecosystem around basketball in Scotland and allow for more in-depth levels of analysis. They provide an understanding for empirical materials which lacked key information, particularly the broader contemporary context and background to published information. As archival data becomes more readily available in the future, an improved narrative might arise. For now, the following argument stems from the information that currently exists.

In closing some gaps about the history of Scottish basketball, the article investigates three overarching areas. The first regards participatory patterns in perceived aggregate minority sports concerning what approaches worked and which did not. The second documents the impact of WWII on the development of a minority sport. The third entails the popularity of a non-traditional and quintessential sport during wartime. The article focuses on Scottish basketball during the 1930s and 1940s, proposing this period to have been transformational to the growth of the sport in Scotland. It begins by providing a background to the game in Scotland before discussing factors which contributed to the changing attitudes and growing acceptance of basketball throughout the proposed era. The article also details steps taken to develop the sport and subsequently formalize it in Scotland. It lastly documents how the years before, during and after WWII were significant in developing the game, culminating in the establishment of basketball as a mainstream sport with the creation of a national Scottish basketball association.

Changing attitudes and a growing acceptance of basketball

'Basketball in Scotland is very much in its infancy, although indications are it is likely to attain immense popularity. Teams, however, seem to be playing to various codes, some widely different in essential points.'⁸

While the *Edinburgh Evening News* described basketball as being ‘in its infancy’ in 1939, the sport arrived in 1895.⁹ This 44-year infancy reflects how from 1895 to 1939, basketball in Scotland developed slowly. Until WWI, basketball obtained limited participation and struggled to grow.¹⁰ Despite the sport’s progress during the 1920s due to the increased settlement of American forces, it was not until American students arrived in greater numbers from 1929 onwards that attitudes towards basketball in Scotland started changing.¹¹ This was because the students demonstrated their version of basketball which was quick and exciting for observers to watch.¹² Throughout the aforementioned period, the development of the sport was stunted by several factors: its introduction and misconception as a ‘girls’ game’; the contemporary genderization of sports; competition from pre-established sports, primarily association football; competition from other ‘new’ sports, particularly netball; reduced publicity in print media; a lack of Springfield-trained YMCA personnel and infrastructure or visionaries to drive it forward; and insufficient facilities along with inadequate resources to play.¹³ Scottish society subsequently deemed basketball a recreational and minority activity, existing on the periphery of the sporting landscape, secondary to more popular, quintessential sports, association football, curling, golf and rugby.¹⁴ From 1930 onwards, the discourse of basketball changed in Scotland, catalysing a new sporting trajectory which sought proper structurization and organization to help formally establish the game amongst society.¹⁵

In the early 1930s, Scotland utilized sport for prosocial outcomes, seeking to improve societal leisure times, physical education and welfarism. Reports in the *Edinburgh Evening News* in 1931 and *Evening Telegraph* in 1932 highlight how the national ‘Keep Fit’ movement was spreading throughout Scotland, aiming to promote general health and fitness.¹⁶ Within, free basketball classes and games were offered in gymnasiums countrywide. The *Dalkeith Advertiser* documented how the National Council of Social Service developed modern methods of physical recreation to spearhead the agenda, advocating sport to help the unemployed through offering social outlets and skill development whilst keeping people physically and cognitively fit.¹⁷ Whereas in schools, the *Dundee Courier* and *Evening Telegraph* showcase how basketball was more extensively integrated within educational games, involving over 7700 youth between 1934 and 1935.¹⁸ The value of basketball was its team-based nature which enabled opportunities for participation *en masse* while the sport itself was simplistic in nature, requiring minimal maintenance and equipment and could be adapted for different demographics and environments.¹⁹ The greater opportunities to play the game assisted with the growing acceptance of basketball because experiencing the game first-hand helped eradicate any misconceived perceptions people obtained about the sport.²⁰

Attitudes towards basketball changed in the mid-1930s when the armed forces adopted the sport.²¹ Articles from *The Scotsman* and *St. Andrews Citizen* showcase how the game was embedded within company training exercises and boot camps drills whilst competitions and matches became commonplace alongside an annual championship and invitational tournaments hosted by battalions.²² Basketball was subsequently utilized by the armed forces for four purposes. The first was to enhance troops health and fitness along with characteristics, such as alertness, balance coordination and quick decision-making.²³ The second sought to bolster company cohesiveness and moral.²⁴ The third prepared personnel for warfare’s physical and mental demands and the fourth stimulated regimental rivalries and socialization.²⁵ Newspaper articles nationwide highlighted how basketball quickly spread to different branches from the Air Raid Precaution Wardens and Home Guard to

the Cadets, Territorials and the Girls and Women's Training Corps.²⁶ This diffusion was hastened by Europe's ongoing hostilities heightening, demanding more athletic team sports to maintain levels of physical preparedness necessary for future warfare.²⁷ As tensions rose, highly ranked military officers advocated and favoured basketball, expediting its regularity.²⁸ Basketball existed within an agenda supplementing The National Service Act (Parts 1 and 2). This saw thousands of males (aged 18–60) and females (aged 20–30) conscripted and introduced to the sport.²⁹ Through the armed forces adopting basketball and their associated masculinity, this helped society accept it as it removed its association as a 'girls' game'.³⁰ The issue stemmed from the sport's arrival whereby local newspapers introduced basketball to Scotland by labelling it as a game for women and girls due to the misconception that it was predominantly played by females in America.³¹ The reputation as a female game affirmed through society believing basketball and netball were the same sport and subsequently remained until the societal shifts in the 1930s.³²

The growing acceptance of basketball improved with the founding of the National Fitness Council for Scotland in 1937. The Council was established following the passing of the Physical Training and Recreation Act 1937 and was responsible for helping address the nation's declining health standards.³³ Under the Act, the *Evening Express* publicised that local towns and city councils lacking provisions received free basketball equipment.³⁴ Through the Council's position, in accordance with national regulations, they assumed responsibility for promoting mass sporting participation by supporting educational facilities and social clubs nationwide.³⁵ A fundamental difference between the Council's previous efforts to improve health through sport was that they now oversaw the goal of mass participation rather than schools or voluntary groups.³⁶ Embracing a 'sport for all' attitude, the Council organized events for males and females aged 14–20 across Scotland along with other demographics.³⁷ Unlike prior initiatives where the pay-to-play system discouraged participation as it put pressure on household budgets, to entice people to attend, opportunities were free.³⁸ To ensure sustainability, the Council worked alongside schools, social and youth organizations to acquire facilities at no cost but also to publicise local activities.³⁹

From 1937 onwards, basketball experienced increased print media coverage nationwide. These included, but were not limited to, *Edinburgh Evening News*, *Falkirk Herald* and *The Scotsman*. Newspapers now contained columns promoting the genuine cross-gender appeal and cheap and vigorous nature of basketball.⁴⁰ Specific localized examples, such as the *Motherwell Times* leveraged basketball for producing citizenship, especially among budding housewives.⁴¹ Alternatively, the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* reiterated how basketball was a man's game and different from netball, offering free handbooks to encourage participation.⁴² Assisting this movement, the *Edinburgh Evening News* detailed how William Browning (an influential figure in the founding of English basketball in the mid-late 1930s) prepared and distributed 20,000 books nationwide on basketball to help spread knowledge of the game.⁴³ Proliferating basketball further, newspapers from the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* to *The Scotsman* publicised the national public talks Browning gave on radio.⁴⁴ The media support was an important factor helping alter societal perceptions of basketball because the media and its portrayal greatly influenced the construction of public opinion which either undermined or enabled sport's development.⁴⁵ For the first time, media outlets promoted basketball *en masse* and challenged negative perceptions of the game.

By the late 1930s, a series of cultural, political and social alterations occurred within Scotland and impacted how society viewed sport. In 1938, the *Brechin Advertiser* stated this shift stemmed from the drastic revolutionary change in public attitudes towards athletic activities.⁴⁶ The acceptance of basketball increased because it offered equal leisurely benefits, opportunities and outputs as other sports but more conveniently, cost-effectively and within much less space.⁴⁷ Basketball was becoming closely associated and tied to the modernizing metropolitan lifestyle which demanded different recreational forms than what contemporarily existed to suffice the needs of the educated urbanites.⁴⁸ The *Port Glasgow Express* reinforced this change in attitude, explaining that people now willingly preferred games like basketball because it involved science, skill and speed with minimal injury risks.⁴⁹ The athleticism involved in basketball in conjunction with its fast action and skill, represented what constituted sporting modernity and the modern lifestyle.⁵⁰ The *Montrose Review* believe these societal changes went unnoticed because they happened so gradually that few realized.⁵¹ Yet, this shift moved beyond the national 'Keep Fit' movement of the early 1930s which spread throughout Scotland, promoting general health and fitness, away from seeing basketball as being a recreational option towards a competitive sport.⁵² The overall societal transformation actively benefitted and led to basketball's greater acceptance, yet the issue remained that opportunities for participation in the game were minimal. These factors collectively necessitated the development and institutionalization of the sport.

By 1939, basketball teams had formed nationwide, predominantly in urban areas. While majority were recreational clubs, given that the university basketball league had existed for almost a decade, they exhibited more competitive standards. The capability of Scottish basketball was epitomized between 5 and 6 April 1939, when the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that Scotland's best sides went head-to-head with England's in London.⁵³ Hailing from The University of Edinburgh, the Edinburgh All-Stars who were Scotland's top side defeated England's national champions, London's Resident Americans (Mormon missionaries), 31–28 afore 2000 people at Earls Court Stadium.⁵⁴ Such attendances continued into the succeeding games at Earls Empress Hall and Harringay Arena where London defeated Glasgow Medicals 28–25 and 26–22.⁵⁵ An article in the *Musselburgh News* noted how these playing standards and skill levels increased due to the growing presence of Americans in Scotland.⁵⁶ Many were students, particularly of medicine.⁵⁷ With Mr J. F. Upfold, Physical Training Director of Scotland, describing basketball in Scotland in 1940 in the *Motherwell Times* as 10 years behind England, this was true for organization and structure as a Scottish basketball association was yet to be established.⁵⁸ Whereas England's and Wales' governing body was formed in 1936.⁵⁹ Yet, the results showcase equal playing standards. With Edinburgh All-Stars becoming the best team in Britain, this helped generate credibility and respect for basketball in Scotland.⁶⁰

Basketball's search for recognition in Scotland

'This week an attempt is being made to introduce basket ball on a big spectacular scale to fill those big stadiums which have sprung up in recent years.'⁶¹

An article in the *Edinburgh Evening News* in 1939 highlights that a conceited effort to establish basketball 'as the national indoor game of Scotland' was undertaken.⁶² To further proliferate basketball, public variety performances diversifying and spectacularizing the

game through alternative variations of the sport spread nationwide. For example, the *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, *Daily Record* and *Falkirk Herald* published articles discussing balloon basketball for children, basketball on bicycles and basketball on skates.⁶³ The basketball on bikes variation consisted of an act called the 'Five Cyclonics' who merged basketball, cycling and comedy, touring Scotland until WWII began with teams existing in cities from Perth to Stirling.⁶⁴ Albeit on a smaller scale, similarly to the Harlem Globetrotters, novelty acts helped spread the gospel of basketball and encouraged people who were otherwise disinterested to watch.⁶⁵ Basketball subsequently became affiliated with superlatives like 'fantastic', 'incredible' and 'humorous'.⁶⁶ These performances helped change the perceived stereotypes of basketball within different countries and communities who had diverging viewpoints about the game by encouraging new demographics to engage with the sport and give it an opportunity.⁶⁷ Yet, only 'ice-basketball', which was a first in Scotland and unknown worldwide, gathered a small following in Aberdeen and Dundee where a league existed until the 1980s.⁶⁸ These variations distinctly separate and are unique to the development of basketball in Scotland.

Aspiring to establish basketball, *The Scotsman* discussed how the National Fitness Council for Scotland in May 1939 devised and funded a programme promoting greater accessibility, awareness and popularization, creating partnerships with local authorities and education boards.⁶⁹ According to the *Edinburgh Evening News*, the focal point of the initiatives was games leaders' who organized matches at beaches, public parks and recreational grounds within twenty-six Scottish towns nationwide throughout every summer thereafter.⁷⁰ The *Edinburgh Evening News* further noted that young adults, particularly males, who struggled to find recreational activities after graduating from school were targeted as means of offering new opportunities.⁷¹ Aside from increasing participation in basketball, organizers' wanted to produce sufficient numbers of leaders who could coordinate sessions and give basketball in Scotland a national footing.⁷² Launching this scheme between 9 and 12 May 1939, the Council's South-Eastern Regional Committee planned free basketball demonstrations from nearby boy's clubs, North Merchiston and Craigmillar alongside The University of Edinburgh in four Edinburgh-based parks, East Meadows, Inverleith, Pilrig, and Saughton.⁷³ The collective findings from a series of newspapers revealed that more than 7500 individuals attended.⁷⁴ Epitomizing the programme's effectiveness were the 150–200 people who attended every Tuesday and Thursday afterwards and the 300–400 people who now played basketball in the previously deserted parks.⁷⁵ As per the *Edinburgh Evening News* and *The Scotsman*, participants in time developed competitive teams and tournaments whilst the programme moved indoors during the winter.⁷⁶ Due to the schemes' successfulness, this initiative was enacted throughout England the following year.⁷⁷

By June, plans progressed towards establishing basketball in Scotland. On 9 June 1939, the *Edinburgh Evening News* highlighted that Edinburgh-based institutions and groups congregated at the South-Eastern Regional Committee's city chambers to discuss the formation of a basketball league in Edinburgh and governing body.⁷⁸ Similarly, people in other cities and towns, such as Fraserburgh met on 14 June to discuss the creation of a league.⁷⁹ Prior to the next meeting of the Edinburgh cohort, in seeking to further develop basketball the South-Eastern Regional Committee organized and sponsored the first international match between Scotland and England.⁸⁰ Given that Scotland were not currently registered with the international basketball federation (FIBA), this was not an official basketball match.

The events' importance connected to the contemporary campaign which *The Scotsman* explained was running simultaneously to form an association to govern basketball, organize leagues, training and coaching.⁸¹ To obtain maximum attention, the match was purposely held at the Highland and Agricultural Society's 108th Show at Saughton Mains, Edinburgh, which attracted people from across Scotland.⁸² This was due to the Show's national prestige and publicity, making it the optimal environment to showcase basketball to broader society. To maximize exposure, the two games took place over 2 d from 22 to 23 June and were played outside for 20 min in the Society's big parade enclosure, featuring as the afternoon performances main event.⁸³

While Scotland's team comprised members from The University of Edinburgh and Midlothian locals, the English side included British champions and several Americans with stateside reputations.⁸⁴ Although Scotland lost 15–4 overall, each exhibition attracted over 10,000 people with the entire Show amassing up to 58,436 daily.⁸⁵ Incurring what the *Edinburgh Evening News* described as a 'lukewarm reception', this was attributed to the unfavourable and unnatural outdoor match environment which impacted proceedings.⁸⁶ While the match did not achieve the desired positive outcome, the overall exhibition was auspicious because it fulfilled the fundamental objective of mass introduction, spreading knowledge of basketball to over 100,000 people. With other newspapers across Scotland, such as the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* and *Evening Express* publishing columns about the match, basketball received broad reaching and somewhat national exposure.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the *Evening Express* commented that basketball earned the reputation as one of the fastest games in Scotland and on grass, deemed to be an exciting spectator sport.⁸⁸ In late June 1939, the *Edinburgh Evening News* reported that basketball had now spread nationwide and efforts were ongoing to form a Scottish Amateur Basketball Association, district leagues and tournaments.⁸⁹

The successes of the movement to establish basketball in Scotland led to some developments for the sport. Following recent events, Scotland's Physical Committee Secretary, Mr T.H. Souter, was quoted by the *Evening Express* stating: 'basket ball is a hot sport among the lads as well as lasses', a 'mecca for the young'.⁹⁰ However, pressure was arising from society to form a national governing body with adolescent basketball enthusiasts pleading in the *Sunday Post* for structured basketball games.⁹¹ Prior to founding a basketball governing body, the foundations for an organization required implementation which the South-Eastern Regional Committee and YMCA were working towards.⁹² Among these developments, basketball was introduced to the Jordanhill College of Physical Education, Glasgow, in July 1939, for future games' leaders and physical education teachers to receive basketball inductions before starting their careers.⁹³ Given the success of the international matches at the Highland and Agricultural Society Show, a matchup between Scotland and 'an American team of champions' was organized for July 29 to maintain but also gather further traction.⁹⁴ Owing to the contemporary popularity of basketball in Edinburgh along with the organizations' spearheading the movement having their headquarters in the city, Edinburgh was earmarked as the first location for a regional committee.⁹⁵ On 24 August 1939, the Edinburgh Basket Ball Association was formed along with a draft constitution and the adoption of the international rules of basketball as established by FIBA.⁹⁶ However, due to ongoing societal uncertainty, the Association stated no other decisions had been made.⁹⁷ Before any further headway towards a national association was enacted, WWII was declared on 1 September 1939. While WWII impeded the infrastructural progress of Scottish basketball, it was an

important period in consolidating basketball's transition from minority to mainstream sport. The global nature of the war was a key factor accelerating and underpinning this transformation.

The impact of World War II on the development of basketball in Scotland

Basket ball is not one of our national games. The war, however, may make it popular ... To get the hang of it, stretcher-bearers ... watched an exhibition match between British and Canadian teams. This was followed by a ten-minute talk of the game. The arrival of the Canadian troops may help to make the game popular. In their country and America, this game means as much to them as football to us and once they get settled down there should be some rousing games between them and the local sides.⁹⁸

While the game progressed pre-WWII, the war expedited the development of Scottish basketball. Many conscripts first acquaintance with the sport was through their national service.⁹⁹ Whereas those with basketball expertise incurred higher performance capabilities through the services graded tournaments.¹⁰⁰ An article by the *Evening Telegraph* documented these facets, denoting how the Royal Air Force were undertaking exhibitions for members of the armed forces and public whilst also engaging in competitions.¹⁰¹ By December 1939, the *Evening Telegraph* proposed that while basketball was not a national game, due to its increased participation and presence, the war would help make it popular due to the sport's growing presence and increased opportunities.¹⁰² Scottish basketball developed because through WWII, they were involved in an ongoing global transformation of basketball. Within this process, multiple nations benefited from the resonating impacts of countries where basketball was popular, such as America and Canada.¹⁰³ America is also one example of where basketball went from popular participant sport to national pastime throughout WWII.¹⁰⁴ The success of basketball during WWII led to the ensuing successful developments in the post-war era.¹⁰⁵ The subsequent effect and intricacies of WWII will be discussed in this section.

Following some introductions at the beginning of national service, Scots were introduced to and played basketball in international bases. Having entered Burma on 14 December 1941, the *Daily Record* revealed in April 1942 that Chinese and British-Scottish troops engaged in daily basketball friendlies.¹⁰⁶ For troops serving overseas, the armed forces offered opportunities 'where men can forget the army' with basketball one of the main sports and free kit provided to prompt participation.¹⁰⁷ During WWII, the realization of basketball being a democratic sport was conceptualized and led to adapted practices such as 'roller ball' developed for players in wheelchairs to help rehabilitate injured veterans.¹⁰⁸ While Scots experienced basketball in different capacities and countries, one commonality from the American experiences of wartime basketball was that it created greater consistency for the sport which previously was dysfunctional and played inconsistently across diverging regions.¹⁰⁹ Service basketball modernized the game and promoted greater integration whereby in WWII's aftermath, troops continued participating and the sport became part of daily life.¹¹⁰ This happened because during WWII, service personnel from non-traditional basketball countries spent considerable time surrounded by basketball culture and immersed in basketball environments.¹¹¹ These first-hand experiences and interactions changed their perceptions of the game and later transferred home upon soldiers return.

Scottish troops also played basketball in Prisoner of War (POW) camps. One example in the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* publicized how Scottish battalion, the Gordon Highlanders, were runners-up in a POW basketball tournament in Oflag VII-C, Germany, on 24 November 1941.¹¹² As POW accounts reveal, examples where US soldiers taught and competed against Scots were global.¹¹³ According to imprisoned Scots testimonies, basketball featured within the daily activities of POW camps in Europe and further afield, proving popular and sparking interests to continue post-liberation.¹¹⁴ Within camps, newspaper articles highlight how Scots integrated with basketball fanatics from America, Canada, France, Poland and Yugoslavia among others, organizing regular matches such as Scotland *versus* England to sustain themselves physically and mentally.¹¹⁵ In POW and refugee camps worldwide, German, Italian and Japanese forces organized systematic basketball practices and tournaments as camps main physical activities.¹¹⁶ In these environments, the sport gained popularity.¹¹⁷ Despite camps limited facilities and resources, internees in Japanese camps in Singapore organized their own daily lives, filling them with games indulged pre-WWII.¹¹⁸ For Scottish service personnel, WWII provided a competitive, international element which was non-existent domestically, planting an appetite which later transferred home.

The influx of allied forces in Scotland augmented basketball. These included Canadian, French, Polish, but mainly Americans. Throughout WWII, around three million American personnel including airmen, sailors and soldiers were deployed to Britain.¹¹⁹ Due to the popularity of basketball among American troops, the Special Service Branch of the American Expeditionary Force shipped basketball equipment to overseas bases.¹²⁰ In an American base in Greenock, various elements of popular culture existed and later survived through servicemen who remained alongside those who interacted with the local community.¹²¹ Although initially used for physical recreation within the barracks, basketball was later employed for socialization to unite American forces with society to expedite comradeship.¹²² Having established connections, this helped foster a greater acceptance of basketball whilst muting any criticism, providing an opening to incept basketball.¹²³ As the *St. Andrews Citizen* showcased, basketball exhibitions from spontaneous affairs to organized matches were widespread.¹²⁴ Some were aimed at drawing funds for injured soldiers and bereaving families.¹²⁵ The presence of the American's enticed large crowds to watch basketball matches which previously were only available in newsreels or feature films at the cinema.¹²⁶ An addition of a commentator helped explain the intricacies before and during the game.¹²⁷ The American-led exhibitions which ensued encouraged spectators during matches to seek information from American observers about basketball.¹²⁸ With basketball-related knowledge and interests subsequently developing, journalists started reviewing the games and writing feature articles promoting the sport.¹²⁹ Radio stations also conducted basketball-focused broadcasts which assisted with familiarizing society with basketball.¹³⁰ Overall, the American forces during WWII did more to explain American games than any peacetime exhibition.¹³¹ They proved to people from other countries that their nationally favoured sports' were as exhilarating and enjoyable as the host nations own domestic activities.

Amidst WWII, the YMCA maintained the domestic development of basketball. In 1941, the *Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser* wrote that basketball was played as extensively as possible with the YMCA's leading officials determined to grow basketball in Scotland.¹³² The *Motherwell Times* mentioned how clubs, competitions, open sessions and training programmes were offered weekly.¹³³ The *Wishaw Press and Advertiser* also highlighted how

basketball was included in youth holiday camps.¹³⁴ Similarly to France, through increased American personnel, the YMCA became a hotspot for basketball.¹³⁵ Foreign soldiers, primarily North Americans, were invited to play basketball under the YMCA's auspices to provide social interaction and learning opportunities between US servicemen and locals.¹³⁶ While these host environments benefited from the American's basketball knowledge, it also helped the military personnel establish valuable connections and contacts.¹³⁷ Recognizing the opportunity WWII afforded, the YMCA representatives utilized the influx of US personnel to elevate basketball in Scotland. Given the quantity of people playing basketball domestically and internationally during WWII, basketball now rivalled more popular sports.¹³⁸

American servicemen brought a solid grounding and enthusiasm for basketball which was non-existent and spread to locals.¹³⁹ Many US servicemen were former collegiate and high-ranking athletes.¹⁴⁰ An example is Maryhill Youth Clubs' founder and president, James Muirhead, who used sport to deter youths from gangsterism through lessons of mutual respect, self-confidence and self-worth.¹⁴¹ Having observed US soldiers playing basketball, Muirhead showed it to his members who formed a team in 1944.¹⁴² This occurrence was common with basketball clubs' assembled throughout Scotland with American's providing training and educating natives on the etiquette and rules.¹⁴³ In Glasgow, teams from Jordanhill College, Maryhill and the Highland Light Infantry competed against American contingencies constituting the white dominated Latter-Day Saints (Mormon missionaries), US Air Force Bullets and other units.¹⁴⁴ Through these experiences, Muirhead became a key figure in developing basketball in Scotland, helping establish the game through his Maryhill team undertaking exhibitions across Glasgow and more broadly to promote participation.¹⁴⁵ The impact of the allies was fourfold. They popularized basketball in struggling areas like Glasgow which was previously not synonymous with the game.¹⁴⁶ The service personnel helped create local competitions and leagues which they joined.¹⁴⁷ They also generated higher playing standards and skill levels due to their expertise and backgrounds.¹⁴⁸ Lastly, they spread and affirmed accurate basketball-related knowledge through first-hand interactions and American-based literature such as newspapers and magazines.¹⁴⁹ Based on the overarching influence, American popular culture evidentially washed over the country.¹⁵⁰

During WWII, basketball was widespread. Upon return, *The Scotsman* documented how service personnel, both Scottish and non-nationals who settled in Scotland, joined teams and where none existed, started their own.¹⁵¹ For example, Borys Szifris, a member of Poland's 1936 Olympic basketball squad formed Polonia Basketball Club in Edinburgh.¹⁵² Polonia helped pioneer and rejuvenate basketball across Scotland with Szifris establishing the first competitive Scottish women's side.¹⁵³ Emigres helped populate and promote the game in a standardized and structured manner, subsequently supporting the systematic development of basketball.¹⁵⁴ The rise of teams provided playing opportunities which were minimal pre-WWII whilst the influx of basketball enthusiasts elevated the necessary sport specific expertise.¹⁵⁵ Some settlers became community leaders in the post-war period through the formal organization and running of basketball clubs.¹⁵⁶ For these non-nationals, basketball provided a sense of community, retaining and reflecting their identity whilst assisting societal integration and assimilation.¹⁵⁷ The game was an expression and method of maintaining and forming national identity, a symbol of self-identification and self-expression whilst also resisting the new host culture to maintain their customs.¹⁵⁸ It was

also a means of escapism, source of national assertion and autonomous self-image, a way to help natives and immigrants understand each other and connect emigres to their homeland.¹⁵⁹ For new residents, basketball became almost a language in itself.¹⁶⁰ These immigrants are accredited with positively changing the basketball environment of their new host countries.¹⁶¹

The aftermath of WWII catalysed new opportunities for basketball in Scotland. Following the war, participation increased whilst the sport was used for international relations, peace and reconciliation.¹⁶² As found in America, wartime basketball had democratizing powers to pacify and unify people from all backgrounds and nations.¹⁶³ After WWII, global organizations, such as the World Friendship Association of London were established in 1945, aiming to create a better world for future generations through educational and sporting programmes.¹⁶⁴ The *Motherwell Times* detailed how pen pal communication pathways and student exchanges were established for youth with similar interests.¹⁶⁵ This connected Scotland with broader Europe through commonalities such as basketball whereby *via* the comradeship of sport, youth could create a future based on peace.¹⁶⁶ Social and youth clubs like Maryhill also forged relationships with groups from across Europe, engaging in friendly exhibitions as seen with French basketball team, Union Sportive de Pont L'Eveque, who travelled to Glasgow the following year.¹⁶⁷ Throughout the mid-late 1940s, these exchanges saw adolescent teams including Maryhill who amassed over one thousand members, travelling throughout Europe, visiting countries including Denmark, France, Holland, Spain and Wales while other Scottish clubs also hosted international teams.¹⁶⁸ Among these opportunities, basketball rapidly and profoundly transformed worldwide.¹⁶⁹

The post-war period sparked the revival of the pre-WWII desire to establish basketball in Scotland. Leading this movement was the newly endorsed Scottish section of the Central Council of Physical Recreation (SCPR) who revealed in the *Sunday Post* that they had reinvigorated societies pre-war intentions of establishing a Scottish basketball association.¹⁷⁰ With measures in place, the aim was to do so through a four-city body incorporating Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow.¹⁷¹ To further promote basketball and maintain the post-war interest in basketball, the sport featured within the programme of the largest inter-city sport contest in Scotland. This was between Edinburgh and Glasgow at Hampden on 29 June 1946, with the *Sunday Post* recording that the match ended 6–6.¹⁷² Other newspapers across Scotland later showcased how the competition's success led to annual contests incorporating Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness and Perth while intra-city 'Olympiads', pageants and carnivals popped up countrywide.¹⁷³ These events, especially in Edinburgh and Glasgow, attracted around 80,000 visitors throughout their 10-d duration, enticing people from across Scotland whilst encompassing diverse sports.¹⁷⁴ The effectiveness of the competition's sparked the yearly East *versus* West basketball clash which occurred every June in Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh.¹⁷⁵

The SCPR, under the leadership of Miss M. K. Brown, Secretary of the Scottish section, sought to manifest the games ongoing popularization by generating the necessary impetus to catalyse the formation of a Scottish basketball association.¹⁷⁶ While simultaneously developing other sports such as netball, the SCPR believed establishing basketball was 'an important development' in the nation-wide drive ... to develop physical recreation in Scotland.¹⁷⁷ As the *St. Andrews Citizen* documented, the SCPR organized the first national summer school course from July to August 1946 alongside multiple physical training courses across Scotland.¹⁷⁸ From Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness to Rosyth and St. Andrews, ex-servicemen,

many of whom were fully trained school instructors and youth organization leaders, were given formal training by various sporting experts in pastimes including basketball.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, students from Dunfermline College, Jordanhill College and The University of Edinburgh were given supplementary instruction on arranging competitions, events, and sports days.¹⁸⁰ The rationale entailed that with this knowledge, upon graduation and acquisition of their first job in schools, they could create these mass basketball events.¹⁸¹ According to the *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, the programme's success was reflected in the yearly increased quantity of enlistees which reached three figures.¹⁸² As participants grew, this generated higher playing standards, player skill levels and helped diffuse the game nationwide and improve accessibility.¹⁸³ These endeavours and results aligned with the SCPR's four main objectives.¹⁸⁴ The first sought to socially improve amateur sports' competitive and non-competitive character and participation. The second wanted more accessible sport for the urban working classes. The third aimed to increase women's accessibility to sport and encouragement to participate. The fourth necessitated how sport development should adopt the best methods of practice surrounding coaching, equipment, facilities and training systems. These aims are accredited with sparking the promotion of modern state Scottish sport.¹⁸⁵

The *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* announced the establishment of the Amateur Basketball Association of Scotland (ABAS) on 1 November 1946.¹⁸⁶ Given their prior support, the SCPR were co-opted as the joint national governing body.¹⁸⁷ According to *The Scotsman*, the fundamental objective was to sustain WWII's impetus and develop basketball as a major Scottish game.¹⁸⁸ This necessitated forming local committees to help govern and align basketball practices countrywide.¹⁸⁹ With the SCPR's sponsorship and assistance, the ABAS cemented footholds that same month in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, becoming the Eastern, Midland, Northern and Western districts.¹⁹⁰ They also adopted and incepted the international rules set out by FIBA upon establishment in 1932 which were concurrently employed in England and Wales.¹⁹¹ With manoeuvres commencing instantly, the ABAS and the SCPR embraced a hands-on approach, undertaking national coaching seminars, demonstrations and lectures.¹⁹² They also introduced a structured basketball syllabus to social and youth organizations alongside other sports entities and groups countrywide.¹⁹³ To make basketball more accessible, in partnership with local authorities, open sessions were enacted nationwide for people of all ages.¹⁹⁴ The nation's first structured league under the ABAS, the 'Inter Works Basketball League', was launched in Glasgow and the opening fixtures announced for 31 January 1947.¹⁹⁵ In the ensuing weeks, competitions for adults, territorials and youth were incepted countrywide in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Inverness and Perth.¹⁹⁶ Lastly, the ABAS affiliated themselves with FIBA and organized Scotland's first international match against England in May 1947.¹⁹⁷ With the forming of the ABAS and the subsequent efforts to coordinate and structure Scottish basketball, basketball had now established itself in Scotland. With the formation of the first governing body, a sustained period of growth for basketball ensued.¹⁹⁸

Evaluating the transition of basketball from a minority to mainstream sport

The 1930s and 1940s are two important decades in the transformation and establishment of basketball in Scotland. The 1930s provided the necessary shift in attitudes required to develop basketball into a mainstream sport, one no longer considered recreational and

devoid of its previous 'girls' game' reputation which prevented it from establishing itself. This was due to five key societal changes. The first was linked to the increased media coverage which the game previously lacked and led to more space in the public eye. The second was the greater prioritization of and emphasis on using sports for prosocial purposes. This was achieved in conjunction with society now embracing and filling the improved opportunities for leisure time which connected to the tangible benefits of sport, such as health improvements and socialization. The third factor stems from support and encouragement from non-sporting entities, such as the YMCA and the state. This led to the establishment of sporting entities purposefully tasked with growing sport where previously individuals and organizations had been left to operate alone without support. The fourth shift stemmed from the adoption of basketball by the armed forces who introduced and integrated it *en masse* through conscription and within their sport-based provisions. The final point concerns the arrival of people across Scotland who had experience of and a passion for basketball and was coupled with the desire and willingness to organize the sport.

The drive to develop basketball was successful because its efforts coincided with key societal changes which helped enable the sport to grow. The approaches of the Scottish sport and newly established basketball community were effective because they built upon and developed ways to overcome factors which previously inhibited the sport's development. The difference between historic and current efforts was that key organizations and institutions assumed responsibility to develop the sport instead of leaving it to those without basketball knowledge. Recognizing that facilities in Scotland were not constructed with basketball in mind, these protagonists utilized outdoor spaces across different regions to resolve lacking and lagging indoor spaces. By doing so, this simultaneously helped increase awareness of the game through a greater public presence. This process involved engaging with and working alongside different authorities and groups directly to achieve shared goals. Through collaborative efforts, this led to basketball being formally introduced in educational environments. Another means was through undertaking exhibitions locally and at national events which drew large crowds and spurred widespread coverage countrywide. Similarly, basketball was also placed in broader sporting competitions next to traditional sports to highlight its equalness. This was supplemented through arranging high-level fixtures to excite and entice participation by showing basketball as a competitive game. Having developed interest and increased awareness, protagonists offered lectures and seminars nationwide to provide guidance and build knowledge bases among vested stakeholders. The process was completed by institutionalizing basketball through forming committees, competitions and a national association to govern the game.

The 1940s expedited the foundations set in the 1930s, transforming basketball nationally and placing Scottish basketball internationally. Progressive attempts to establish basketball pre-WWII existed and would have successfully led to the creation of a national association had war not been declared simultaneously. However, WWII had considerable impact for and upon the development of the sport in Scotland. With basketball played in the armed forces domestically and internationally allied to the later arrival of American troops alongside others with backgrounds in the sport, this immersive basketball culture and first-hand engagements that Scots were exposed to developed interests *en masse*. The widespread introduction of Scots to basketball in a competitive and structured manner during wartime was something which had not been previously domestically experienced or offered. After WWII, these experiences allied to the surge in interest catalysed and underpinned the

necessary impetus to organize and structure basketball in Scotland. By institutionalizing the game, it helped the sport maintain its mainstream status through enabling continued involvement *via* formal governance and competitive opportunities.

Given the accessibility, affordability, media coverage, player skill, popularity and quantity of participants along with the drive and emphasis behind establishing the sport, basketball throughout the 1930–1940s transitioned from a minority to mainstream sport in Scotland and among Scots. Albeit expedited and elevated by an unintended world encompassing conflict, the efforts of people and organizations to cement basketball as a national pastime in Scotland were intentional. The two subsequently benefited one another as WWII enabled basketball in Scotland to reinvent itself as a competitive sport. The Scottish sport and basketball community merely capitalized on and manifested the opportunity WWII created. Yet, it transformed without society realizing because its development was a small and insignificant facet compared to the broader events of WWII. Likewise, the changes occurred so quickly and by contrast to the position of basketball pre-1930, quite extremely, that basketball instantly became part of everyday society in a short timeframe. Overall, the establishment of basketball in Scotland stemmed from three overarching and interlinked factors. It began with the changing societal attitudes of the 1930s. These were developed further through the efforts of multiple Scottish sporting and non-sporting organizations seeking to institutionalize the game. Finally, the chain effects of the global transformation of and impact of WWII on basketball in the 1940s consolidated it.

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