

Introduction

Traditionally, association football's history has been told through a range of narratives that have focused either on the national picture or on specific clubs, with some studies focusing on how football was introduced, developed and propagated across a region.¹ There have been notable studies which have added to our knowledge but, as studies into Spanish football have identified, there are also significant gaps both in our knowledge and in the regions covered.² This publication fills one of those gaps while also providing an example of a framework for sporting origins research which, it is hoped, will be adopted in other regional studies to ensure consistency. The focus here is on the culture of football before 1919 as experienced in Manchester. Manchester provides an important opportunity to study football within a city-region as a result of its rapid growth, with workers arriving from across the British Isles and mainland Europe. This ensured a regular influx of cultures, ideas and skills, including sporting interests, and helped football to become woven into Manchester's cultural fabric. The role and function of cities as places of innovation, production, distribution and consumption is clear, and studying city-regions is important in understanding how cities impact on wider themes, whether political, economic or social.³ The successes of Manchester United and Manchester City have given global exposure to the region and this interest continues to expand in the world's fastest-growing economies, with Manchester's football promoted extensively. While many regions struggle for attention, Greater Manchester is mentioned globally on a frequent basis, and at no direct cost to the city.⁴ Association football has become central to Mancunian life and the sport establishes perceptions of Manchester, its image and power globally. It is for these reasons that a study of cities, and of Manchester in particular, is important, as it can add a level of detail that will provide an understanding of how the sport became significant to the local population. Research has 'returned to the centrality of cities to innovation, technology diffusion and overall economic growth', and the suggestion that the 'three C's of compact, concentrated and connected cities' are the key to 'fostering cohesion', adds to the significance of studying city-regions and their sporting developments.⁵

Prior to 1919 Manchester was the scene of a series of developments which

saw football banned; a professional League established; an international law-making body created; an offshoot of rugby developed; the finest club stadium in England constructed and another major one in the planning stage; participants fighting for rights and establishing their union; scandal rocking the footballing world not once but twice; and the development of an elaborate industry of supporting businesses such as newspaper production. A regional sporting press to challenge that of London was established, which included the *Athletic News*, *Umpire* and *Sporting Chronicle*, while the *Athletic News*' circulation rose from 50,000 to 100,000 between 1891 and 1893. Its proprietor, Edward Hulton, claimed that by using the rail network he could deliver newspapers 'anywhere north of the Midlands' hours earlier than his London-based rivals, and he recognised the significance of the sport when he became a director and chairman of Manchester City Football Club.⁶

Before progressing through Manchester's footballing development, it is essential to outline what is meant by Manchester in this book. By the 1840s it had 'become commonplace to discuss Manchester as the commercial centre of a vast region of towns and villages' which had merged into one city-region, regardless of administrative areas.⁷ Using Manchester's city boundaries is inappropriate, especially as this would exclude prominent Manchester sporting institutions such as Manchester Football Club, the city's traditional Rugby Union club. Similarly, using Mancunian postcodes would be inappropriate, as these are artificial boundaries established after the period under consideration and do not bear any relation to the communities and their connections, employment and social sphere. To overcome the dilemma of what constitutes Manchester this research utilises a rule devised by the Manchester Football Association at its formation in 1884, which determined that the Association represented footballing activity within eight miles of the city centre.⁸ As communities are not restricted by imaginary boundary lines there is flexibility, of course, but within those eight miles are the cities of Manchester and Salford and a series of satellite towns such as Altrincham, Ashton-under-Lyne, Stockport and Hyde, which were connected to Manchester by transport links and, in some areas, an unbroken chain of housing and urbanisation. Some of these towns were boroughs within Lancashire and some were in Cheshire, while the counties of Derbyshire and Yorkshire were also a mere twelve miles from Manchester city centre, adding a level of complexity that was not apparent when walking the streets or kicking a ball around the neighbourhood.

Manchester's city boundaries were still expanding into the twentieth century, with the last major changes coming in 1931 (Wythenshawe) and 1974 (Ringway), when parts of Cheshire were added. Much of east Manchester was still, politically at least, regarded as separate independent boroughs before 1890, while areas such as Moss Side and Didsbury in the south became part of Manchester only in 1904. Even today, west of the city, Trafford, where

Manchester United has been based since 1910, is not within Manchester's city boundaries, nor was the area of Newton Heath at the time of the club's initial formation, to the east of the city. Towns like Ashton, Stalybridge, Stretford, Gorton and Broughton were still outside of the city of Manchester boundaries in 1884, but they all looked towards Manchester. These towns combined to form a whole with many relationships, both business and social, and connections which have endured and resulted in inhabitants of towns such as Hyde, a Cheshire town in the 1880s, perceiving themselves to be Mancunians.⁹ These points can be illustrated, within a sporting context, by the use of the Manchester name. Lancashire County Cricket Club, when first established, utilised the Manchester name, yet it resided outside of the city, as did the rugby team Manchester Football Club. If those clubs considered themselves as Mancunian, then an analysis of Manchester must include them. The ties that bind the conurbation became strong over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ensuring that political boundaries never stood in the way of Manchester's footballing communities.

One of the issues in writing a historical analysis of a subject is that we know our current position, and that can cloud our judgement. Within Manchester's footballing histories some have assumed that the modern-day United, for example, is an indicator of what that club has always been, and this has shaped some analysis of the club. For example, during the 1990s, as United found domestic and European success, Harding claimed that the United of 1908 was the most glamorous and popular club of the era, but the facts show that to be an exaggeration.¹⁰ It is vital that contemporary sources are reviewed and understood without prejudice, regardless of the modern-day stature of any organisation.

Establishing a start and an end for this project was necessary, and football has some natural breaks where it is possible to see the conclusion of a transformational period. This book varies from others in taking as its end 1919, rather than the more typical 1915, when football was suspended due to the First World War. The decision to use this later date was reached after detailed investigation into the Manchester United fixed-match scandal of 1915.¹¹ On the face of it, that game means little, other than that it highlights the greed of some football players; but when a full analysis is made it becomes apparent that this event was the catalyst for a new, transformational period. The scandal could be said to have been the most visible episode in a chain of activities which reached their conclusion in 1919. While 1915 may seem an appropriate point to end a book on football's development, in Manchester's case it was 1919 that brought resolution to the pre-war issues and transformed both the League structure and perceptions of players.

Another necessary decision was to concentrate on soccer, rather than the development of rugby in Manchester. There were sound reasons for both including and excluding the development of rugby, with the main argument

for inclusion being that both sports – or all three, if we consider the two variants of rugby – came from the same roots. Where appropriate, this book discusses some of the key moments in rugby's development within Manchester, but the focus throughout is on association football's development. There is already some published material on the origins of rugby in the Manchester region, but an in-depth study would contribute further to our understanding of how both versions of rugby developed, divided and evolved.¹²

Manchester and football

This book considers one sporting region which, it is hoped, will provide evidence of how a footballing culture develops, focusing on the professional male version of soccer.¹³ Manchester's footballing activity prior to 1919 progressed through eight developmental phases, starting with traditional mob football, which resulted in a ban in 1608.¹⁴ This was followed by informal and sometimes illegal football being played up to the 1860s. The third phase included the formation of the city's first rugby clubs and the development of an association football club, Hulme Athenaeum. Phase four saw experienced Manchester-based footballers create a club which established regular fixtures with teams in Sheffield, Stoke and Cheshire, followed by another soccer team formed by a well-established rugby club. The fifth phase marked the birth of several clubs across the city, the creation of the Manchester Football Association in 1884 and the establishment of cup competitions. The sixth phase ended with Manchester's first national success and the development of a footballing identity, while phase seven saw football grow across Manchester and reach maturity. Phase eight brought the rights of professional footballers to the fore, while match attendance increased.

Most would accept that it would be an error to assume that association football across the world developed in the same way as it did in Manchester, and it should be argued that the development of the sport varied from region to region. What applies in Preston, within the same county but thirty-one miles distant, may not apply in Manchester, as the circumstances of the conurbation, community links and working patterns differ. Rather than publish a study as if it is the definitive word, we need to consider how to frame all these regional and national studies into one framework that accommodates all cycles and regions. This study of Manchester provides an example of how a city-region's footballing development can be researched based on an all-encompassing methodology. This could be applied to any city-region in any location around the world.

Methodology

A history of football, whether regionally based or not, appears as a progression through time, but in truth it is a collection of multiple histories and experiences which include those of people, society, sport, institutions and so on. Each goes at its own pace, but combined they progress the sport. Throughout the new millennium researchers have been questioning some of sport's long-established 'truths' and this has led to healthy debate and, occasionally, unhelpful criticism.¹⁵ Consider the origins of football debate, which is pertinent to this study of Manchester football and has been raging since the beginning of the twenty-first century.¹⁶ Prior to this, historians and the general public felt that they knew how association football was born, developed and propagated around the country, believing that there had been mob football, followed by a rediscovery of the game via the public schools, whose pupils subsequently travelled around the country promoting the sport to communities. This explanation was chronicled extensively; but then historians researching at a local level started to question the earlier findings. Rather than establishing a common theme, this research led to competing theories, with some historians believing in the orthodox position, keeping faith with the traditional view that the public schools were most influential in developing the game, while revisionists argued that the public schools were not as influential as traditionalists thought and that the lower-middle classes were more relevant in the game's development. Some researchers have published academic articles listing every occurrence of the word football that they have identified in online newspaper archives, in the belief that presenting a wealth of material would lead to the acceptance that their viewpoint is the right one. Of course, researchers on all sides of the debate could apply similar logic and, probably, discover material that implies that their version of the game's development is the right one.

The debate between historians has appeared personal, and occasionally the authors of academic papers have conflicted with and ridiculed others for their mistakes or for conclusions disagreed with.¹⁷ Academic rigour is vital, of course, and we should challenge each other's findings, but when we are arguing over minor mentions of the word football and what they mean this can be damaging. It could lead to a return to the days when the social history of sport was looked upon as 'just another discrete historical ghetto where fans with typewriters practice their esoteric craft with little contact with the historical mainstream'.¹⁸ At a time when academia should engage more than ever with the public, it is vital that we co-operate rather than criticise. We have powerful stories of social change to highlight and with which to inform the wider public, and the story of football's development can be utilised to establish good audiences for academia, proving the worth of our work and discipline.

The analytical challenge for those researching the origins of sport or the

centrality of cities is the method of interrogation employed, which is why this book utilises an all-encompassing framework based on the work of French historian Fernand Braudel.¹⁹ In 1958 he published on the *longue durée*, arguing that historians should consider three categories of social time – the *longue durée*, *moyenne durée* and *courte durée*. Although these are not direct translations, the categories can be understood as the long term, cyclical history and the history of events.²⁰ It should be stressed, however, that cyclical history does not mean a repetitive process; rather, it refers to the fact that activities at that level are cycles within a larger time frame. Each definition is explored further later on, but for the purpose of this section it is important to consider these periods at a high level, with the *longue durée* itself an embracing concept, providing the unifying element of human history.²¹ Braudel aimed to show that the historian's focus solely on event-led history was flawed and that only by considering the long term, and indeed the cyclical or middle level, can we establish a true understanding of the manner in which a society was established. He argued that over the long term our collective behaviour is established alongside our enduring societal structures, while the cyclical level includes periods of major change. Some of these cycles may last for several decades or even centuries, while others last just a few years, but each one adds to the overall progression. Braudel believed that his views were marginalised by 'old-fashioned historians who emphasised political events and personalities' and, ironically, short-term history has again dominated since the late twentieth century.²²

The *longue durée* encompasses the full history of a subject and it is worth considering how the framework is relevant to football and to this book.²³ This history of Manchester football up to 1919 uses a version of Braudel's framework based on three adapted levels of time.

Full-time

No game is complete until the final whistle is blown, and it is only then that points are allocated and winners can celebrate, as they have a complete understanding of the game's life. Contestants, spectators and the game's chroniclers have experienced the full length of the contest, and analysis can be made of the entire match, its twists and turns, teams' periods of dominance and possession, goals scored, corners taken, injuries suffered and so on. Each game has phases of play and specific incidents that shape its direction. It is logical to consider the entire history of Manchester football up to 1919 as one of 'full-time' where every moment leads to its development. Based on Braudel's highest level of time, the *longue durée*, this book uses the term 'full-time' for the full duration of the sport up to 1919. On its own, this macro history level is important, but it is only when it is combined with more detailed time frames at lower levels that we can start to consider the complete picture. At full-time in an ordinary

game, scores are known, but only analysis within that game will show how that score was achieved, and the same is true for the full-time history of football. Full-time allows us to contextualise events and their significance over the life of the sport.

Transformational level

This level is characterised by periods where Manchester football has developed or been transformed in some way. Dramatic fluctuations or attention-grabbing events can be better interpreted within cycles, with the trend becoming apparent the more we understand the individual events and the circumstances that surround them.²⁴ The way these middle-level time periods are organised provides the structure and the 'coherent and fairly fixed series of relationships between realities'.²⁵ These cycles, with their influences, outputs and inputs, demonstrate the general tendencies of sporting activity over time without being obscured by the attention-grabbing individual events. An individual game may be significant, but in terms of history it is the general pattern demonstrated within cycles that proves whether the individual game is part of a wider development or simply a one-off based on local influences. The aim of this level is to determine links and comparisons with individual episodes acting as rungs in a ladder moving the development of football in Manchester onwards. Transformational cycles vary in length, as there are some periods where little occurred as football trundled on as an activity for centuries, with the occasional ban or high-profile contest, before the pace of its formalisation quickened. Each cycle has its own causal explanations for how it developed, and these can include environmental conditions, for example the opportunity to use a field for sport; legislation, such as the banning of football activity; employment needs, such as longer working hours in a growing industrial city; or a multitude of other factors.

Episodal level

Event-led history is perceived as important to sports enthusiasts, where we often fixate on specific games, goals, trophy successes and so on. Braudel has documented his belief that events are the dust of time, with many events selected either retrospectively, once a pattern is known, or by those who have something to gain from highlighting one event at the expense of another.²⁶ In the origins debate, significance has been placed on villagers signing up to a Lancastrian football club in 1871, based on a booklet written – some thirty-eight years after the event was alleged to have taken place – by someone with a vested interest.²⁷ It is plausible that Braudel would have taken issue with judgements made on that individual event, especially as others claim that

club's formation as occurring the following year.²⁸ Braudel would have looked for the event's significance within the overall pattern.²⁹ It is important to remember that events on their own are not the 'story', and it may be that data, particularly that unearthed during an online search of a digitised newspaper, is abused if it is considered in isolation. The role of the historian as a challenging, interpretive analyst of all that is uncovered remains central, and, with so much data available, all angles must be considered. To interpret sport's development it is important to look at every angle so as to search for that event's true significance, and we must not abuse or misuse the records of the past.³⁰ Those focusing wholly on data gathering may be unable to appreciate this and may be prone to focus on individual episodes without performing any true critical analysis of intellectual substance.³¹ Analysis is vital, and we must consider if events are relevant to a wider theme, Eureka moments or inconsequential occurrences.

It is the investigation of events that adds to transformational cycles which progress the sport, and we need to interrogate these episodes in order to understand how they develop football. Within a *longue durée* framework it is possible to record and integrate short-term human experiences of the moment with long-range developments.³² Consider Manchester's earliest known club, Hulme Athenaeum, and the suggestion that the club is not significant, as it struggled for opponents and did not progress beyond 1863–72.³³ Looking simply at the individual events for Hulme could indeed suggest little significance; however, this is to overlook that a community was developed via that club which, over thirty years later, had one founding member who was still playing a leading role in developing and promoting regional football. His club may have died, but he remained a leading footballing figure in the region for the rest of his life. The interactions of both the individual and the team tell us a great deal about how football in Manchester developed, and it is that level of detail, analysis and interpretation which is required. Webs of social activity can be identified and their influence on the wider history of soccer can be determined. Social interactions lead to invention and innovation and help to progress the *longue durée* of a topic.³⁴ Considering three levels of time establishes a true understanding of the way a society was established, and this is important to the soccer origins debate, as Curry and Dunning have argued.³⁵

This framework has been used to assess every event/episode identified to date in order to consider how those activities form part of transformational cycles connected with the development of soccer in Manchester. It is essential that a critical reading of the available data is reached, and this enables an increased emphasis on local experiences, rather than a decrease in detail. By researching at three levels of time it becomes clear how football in Manchester developed, and it is apparent how relationships, interdependencies, myths, successes and institutions were formed.

By the time that organised team sports were emerging in the mid-nineteenth century Manchester was a major conurbation with a strong mix of classes and backgrounds. Ultimately, the city would have a strong footballing identity and by the end of the twentieth century would be recognised around the world for that activity more than for any other. Its footballing importance in the twenty-first century, combined with its social and working life in the nineteenth century, means that Manchester provides a good case study to identify the circumstances surrounding the birth of an association football culture. This book adds to the debate concerning the game's growth and demonstrates how football became embedded within Manchester during the formative years of the professional version of the sport. It is hoped that the themes, cycles and events highlighted here provide evidence of the game's transition within a city region. It is inevitably impossible to include every moment and trend witnessed, but it is hoped that enough spread has been included to inform the debate on the origins of football and to engage the reader.

Notes

- 1 A. Benkwitz and G. Molnar, 'The emergence and development of association football: Influential sociocultural factors in Victorian Birmingham', *Soccer and Society*, 18:7, 1027; A. Gomez-Bantel, 'Football clubs as symbols of regional identities', *Soccer and Society*, 17:5 (2016), 692–702; H. Shobe, 'Place, identity and football: Catalonia, Catalanisme and Football Club Barcelona, 1899–1975', *National Identities*, 10:3 (2008), 329–343; G. Curry, 'Football spectatorship in mid to late Victorian Sheffield', *Soccer and Society*, 8:2–3 (2007), 185–204; M. Cooke and G. James, 'Myths, truths and pioneers: The early development of association football in the Potteries', *Soccer and Society*, 19:1 (2018), 5–23.
- 2 X. Torredadella-Flix, J. Olivera-Betran and M. M. Bou, 'The origins of football in Spain: From the first press appearance to the constitution of the first clubs (1858–1903)', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 34:7–8 (2017), 471–497.
- 3 J. Clark, J. Harrison and E. Miguelez, 'Connecting cities, revitalizing regions: The centrality of cities to regional development', *Regional Studies*, 52:8 (2018), 1025–1028.
- 4 *Analysis of the value of football to Greater Manchester* (Sheffield: Sport Industry Research Centre & Cambridge Economics, 2013), 47.
- 5 Clark et al., 'Connecting cities', 1025.
- 6 S. Tate, 'Edward Hulton and sports journalism in late-Victorian Manchester', in D. Russell (ed.), *Sport in Manchester, Manchester Region History Review*, 20 (2009), 57.
- 7 T. Wyke, 'Rise and Decline of Cottonopolis', in A. Kidd and T. Wyke (eds), *Manchester: Making the modern city* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 11 and 83.
- 8 In 1884 the Manchester FA decided to have authority for all football clubs within

an eight-mile radius of St Ann's Square in Manchester, although this was extended in later decades. 'Manchester and District Football Association', *Athletic News*, 17 September 1884, 2.

- 9 For example, the boxer Ricky Hatton was born in Stockport, Cheshire and has lived his entire life since boyhood in Hyde, Cheshire, but perceives himself to be a Mancunian. Similarly, the author of this book was born and raised in Hyde, but is perceived to be a Mancunian.
- 10 J. Harding, *For the good of the game: The official history of the Professional Footballers' Association* (London: Robson Books, 1991), 43–44. Manchester United's average attendance in 1906 was 13,950 and they were the eighth-best supported club. This grew to 20,050 in 1907–8, their first title-winning season, when they were the fourth-highest crowd-puller, but had dropped to 16,950 (ninth highest) by 1910, despite further trophy success.
- 11 F. Braudel, *On history* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).
- 12 G. Norris, *Rugby League in Manchester* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, 2003).
- 13 Braudel, *On history*, 15.
- 14 'Old Manchester', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 November 1847, 4.
- 15 Examples include P. Swain, 'Early football and the emergence of modern soccer: A reply to Tony Collins', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33:3 (2016), 257–71; G. Curry and E. Dunning, *Association football: A study in figurational sociology* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 155–174; R. W. Lewis, 'Innovation not invention: A reply to Peter Swain regarding the professionalization of association football in England and its diffusion', *Sport in History*, 30:3 (2010), 475–488; A. Harvey, 'Curate's egg pursued by red herrings: A reply to Eric Dunning and Graham Curry', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 21:1 (2004), 127–31.
- 16 Articles include T. Collins, 'Early football and the emergence of modern soccer, c.1840–1880', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32:9 (2015), 1127–1142; P. Swain and A. Harvey, 'On Bosworth Field or the playing fields of Eton and Rugby? Who really invented modern football?', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29:10 (2012), 1425–1445; G. Kitching, "'Old" football and the "new" codes: Some thoughts on the origins of "football" debate and suggestions for further research', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28:13 (2011), 1733–1749; R. Lewis, 'The genesis of professional football: Bolton–Blackburn–Darwen, the centre of innovation, 1878–85', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 14:1 (1997), 21–54.
- 17 Examples include P. Swain and R. Lewis, 'Manchester and the emergence of an association football culture: An alternative viewpoint', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32:9 (2015), 1160–1180; Lewis, 'Innovation'; and Harvey, 'Curate's egg pursued'.
- 18 T. Mason, 'Writing the history of sport', unpublished seminar paper, Centre for the Study of Social History, University of Warwick, 10 October 1991, quoted in J. Hill, 'British sports history: A post-modern future?', *Journal of Sport History*, 23:1 (1996), 2.
- 19 Clark et al., 'Connecting cities', 1025; F. Braudel, 'Histoire et science sociale: La longue durée', *Annales*, 13:4 (1958), 725–753.

- 20 I. Wallerstein, *Unthinking social science* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001), 136.
- 21 D. Tomich, 'The order of historical time: The longue durée and micro-history', *The longue durée and world-systems analysis* (Binghamton: Binghamton University, 2008), 2.
- 22 W. H. McNeill, 'Fernand Braudel, historian', *The Journal of Modern History*, 73:1 (2001), 133; J. Guldi and D. Armitage, *The history manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 63.
- 23 F. Braudel, 'History and the social sciences: the longue durée', in R. E. Lee (ed.) *The Longue durée and world systems analysis* (Albany: State University of New York, 2012), 241–276.
- 24 P. Stanfield, "'Pix biz spurts with war fever': Film and the public sphere – cycles and topicality", *Film History: An International Journal*, 25:1–2 (2013): 222.
- 25 Braudel, *On history*, 30–31.
- 26 M. Ermarth, 'On history. By Fernand Braudel', *The Business History Review*, 56:1 (1982): 90; Wallerstein, *Unthinking social science*, 137.
- 27 W. T. Dixon, *History of Turton Football Club and souvenir of carnival and sports* (Bolton: Unknown publisher, 1909), 5.
- 28 C. E. Sutcliffe and F. Hargreaves, *The history of the Lancashire Football Association* (Blackburn: Geo. Toulmin and Sons, 1928), 32.
- 29 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (London: Harper and Row, 1972), Volume II, 901.
- 30 R. Aldrich, 'The three duties of the historian of education', *History of Education: Journal of the History of Education Society*, 32:2 (2010), 136.
- 31 G. M. Hodgson, 'Darwin, Veblen and the problem of causality in economics', *History and Philosophy of the Life Sciences*, 23 (2001), 385–423.
- 32 R. A. Gould, 'Ethnoarchaeology and the past: Our search for the "real thing"', *Fennoscandia archaeologica*, 6 (1989), 7.
- 33 Swain and Lewis, 'An alternative viewpoint'.
- 34 A. P. Molella, 'The longue durée of Abbott Payson Usher: A. P. Usher, A history of mechanical inventions', *Technology and Culture*, 46:4 (2005), 796.
- 35 G. Curry and E. Dunning, 'The power game: Continued reflections on the early development of modern football', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33:3 (2016), 239–250.